

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**

Report on the summary of key findings from the 2021-2022 Human Services Needs Update.

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*Parks & Community Services*

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

Staff will share the key findings of the 2021-2022 Human Services Needs Update with Council.

**RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

**BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

Every two years, the Human Services staff conducts an extensive human services needs assessment to obtain a comprehensive picture of needs and issues in Bellevue. Data used in the report comes from a number of sources: a phone/online survey completed by nearly 400 Bellevue residents during June and July 2021; surveys completed by consumers of human services and providers; small focus groups (Community Conversations) conducted with groups; such as older adults, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities; key informant interviews; conversations with City employees and faith community representatives; and extensive use of Census data, reports, and websites that provide information on national, state, county, and sub-regional trends.

In spring and summer 2022, the Human Services Commission will develop recommendations to Council for the 2023-2024 biennial funding cycle. The Human Services Needs Update presented to Council will provide the background information upon which the recommendations will be developed. The Needs Update is also used extensively by community-based agencies and their boards, resident groups, City staff, staff in other local jurisdictions, and faith communities for planning purposes.

We recognize that disparate outcomes exist based on race regarding the prevalence of and responses to the issues covered in the Human Services Needs Update. As part of the City's ongoing efforts to continue growing as a culturally competent and racially equitable organization and City, we have, when possible, highlighted racial disparities throughout the update, denoted by the phrase Racial (In)Equity Data Point.

Key emerging and ongoing trends and issues include:

- *Livability in Bellevue:* In the 2021 phone/online survey, Bellevue residents gave Bellevue an overall rating of 4 stars out of 5 questions related to the City's overall health index. While the data is new to the Human Services Needs Updated phone/online survey, it has been asked and trended for several years in the Performance Measures study, and the 4-star rating is the highest rating in Bellevue since 2017.

- COVID-19:* The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone in our community, but certain groups, including racial and ethnic minorities, are more vulnerable than others. The pandemic has highlighted that health equity is still not a reality as COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted communities of color, putting them more at risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. COVID-19 also had an enormous impact on human service providers who faced capacity challenges, even without a global pandemic. COVID-19 has caused not only a tremendous increase in service need, but it has also necessitated substantial adjustments to how services are delivered, both of which have stretched organizations' already limited resources. Human services providers have experienced increased expenses, reduced revenues, heightened services demands, and services delivery adjustments.
- Affordable Housing:* Bellevue residents have consistently rated lack of affordable housing as the top community problem in the phone/online survey. In 2021, 74 percent of those surveyed rated it as a major or moderate problem, compared to 51 percent in 2013. Thirty percent of Bellevue households are considered "cost-burdened," paying over 30 percent of their income for housing, and almost one third of older adults are considered "severely cost-burdened", paying over 50 percent of their income for housing. There continues to be an increased need for housing that is affordable to meet the needs of all economic segments of the community, including workforce housing, housing for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Homelessness:* Homelessness continues to rise with the number of unsheltered people steadily and visibly increasing. In 2020, 1,360 men, single women, families, and young adults experiencing homelessness stayed in low-barrier shelters in East King County with nearly 67,000 bednights. Data from the Bellevue School District indicates that over the past 10 years there has been a steady increase in students who are experiencing homelessness, from 86 in 2008-2009 to 332 in 2020-2021.
- Substance Use Disorder:* King County, like many places across the country, has seen an increase in drug- and alcohol-related deaths. In King County, there were 515 drug and alcohol caused deaths in 2020, of those, 60 (12 percent) of those occurred in Bellevue. The number of fentanyl-involved overdose deaths in King County between March and June 2020 was triple the number in the same months in 2019, resulting from the inclusion of fentanyl primarily in counterfeit prescription pills. The region lacks services and treatment beds to address the crisis.
- Behavioral Health:* Mental health services have been identified as a rapidly growing need by providers and residents, with increased reports of depression, suicide ideation and anxiety, especially for youth and individuals isolated due to COVID-19. In the provider survey, 58 percent reported that their clients needed mental health care but cannot access it.
- Affordable Health Care:* In the phone/online survey, 45 percent of Bellevue residents rated lack of affordable medical insurance as a major or moderate community problem. Thirty-two percent of provider survey respondents report that their clients need health care but cannot access it. Lack of dental care due to cost continues to be a significant gap particularly affecting adults, including older adults as dental care is not covered under basic Medicare.

- Cost of Living:* Unemployment rates have risen both nationally and in the Seattle-Bellevue area due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, there are also people who are underemployed and do not have enough income to make ends meet. In the phone/online survey, 49 percent of residents rated not having jobs that pay enough for basic needs as a major or moderate problem in the community. In the 2021 consumer survey, 36 percentage of the respondents with an income below \$50,000 reported that they either rarely or never can find work that supports themselves or their family. Many of the human services providers serving Bellevue residents stated that they are experiencing a staffing shortage due to their inability to pay a competitive wage. They reported that with the cost of living is so high in East King County, it has added an extra challenge in maintaining staff since many cannot afford to live here. However, the demand for services from non-profit agencies continues to increase or remain steady.
- Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault:* Twenty-seven percent of phone/online survey respondents rated domestic violence (DV) as a minor or moderate community problem, which is a 9 percent increase from 2019 (18 percent). Many community conversation participants stated that people have been isolated over the last year and a half due to COVID-19, which has led to increased stress for many households and resulted in more reports of domestic violence. Providers of both domestic violence and sexual assault services continue to report increases in the number of limited-English-speaking survivors who need their help, making linguistically and culturally appropriate services critical. Community education efforts are needed to address topics such as the effects of bullying, older adult abuse, human trafficking, and on-line victimization of vulnerable youth.
- Hate Crimes and Bias Incidents:* Thirty-five percent of community phone/online survey respondents rated racial or ethnic discrimination as a major or moderate community issue, a 10 percent increase from 2019 and 22 percent increase from 2009. In the consumer survey, 28 percent of the consumer survey respondents reported that someone in their household is experiencing racial or ethnic discrimination most of the time or sometimes and 31 percent of respondents reported that someone in their household is experiencing discrimination other than racial or ethnic discrimination. The Bellevue Police Department received reports for 10 hate crimes and 12 bias incidents, for a total of 22 hate crimes and bias incidents reports between January and June 2020. In 2020, there were a total of 23 reports: 18 hate crimes and five bias. Hate crimes and bias incidents often go unreported. King County Coalition Against Hate and Bias (KCCAHB) is a community-led initiative to address hate and bias incidents by strengthening and networking communities who experience racist and bigoted treatment and all forms of oppression. The Coalition Partners are the administrators of the Hate and Bias Incident Response Survey, which collects data from communities affected by hate and bias. Between April 2020 and May 2021, KCCAHB received 87 reports of hate and bias incidents in East King County.
- Services for Older Adults and People with Disabilities:* Providers and residents identified the need for more services for the growing population of older adults in Bellevue so they will be able to age in place. These include affordable and accessible housing, transportation, in-home assistance with daily tasks, support for family caregivers, and adult day health programs. A growing issue for adults with intellectual/developmental disabilities is that many are living with their aging parents who no

longer can adequately care for them, and resources such as assisted living and other housing are scarce.

- *Veterans:* An estimated 5,100 veterans live in Bellevue, roughly 5 percent of all veterans in King County. The total number of veterans in King County has been declining for more than a decade, since 2010 there has been over a 20 percent decrease. The decline is based on the large number of veterans over 65 and less recruitment. There needs to be a more seamless system for veterans seeking services, primarily in the areas of mental health (e.g. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury), substance use disorder, housing, employment, domestic violence and Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Ongoing partnerships between federal, state, and county programs for veterans and human service agencies are needed to ensure that veterans are aware of the benefits when they are eligible and are assisted in a coordinated, unified manner.
- *Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Populations:* The cultural and ethnic diversity in Bellevue continues to grow, with over 40 percent of Bellevue's population residents foreign-born and nearly 44 percent of Bellevue's population speaking a language other than English at home. Other indicators include the high demand for English-as-a-Second-Language classes and an increase in interpretation services at health clinics and human services agencies. The Bellevue School District reports 104 languages spoken, with 41 percent of the students speaking a first language other than English. As the City of Bellevue's Diversity Advantage Initiative notes, it is critical that all public and nonprofit service providers emphasize culturally competent human services that are easily accessible to all.
- *Transportation:* Inadequate public transportation is an ongoing concern for Bellevue residents; 41 percent of Bellevue residents rated both inadequate public transportation and lack of other transportation options as a major community problem in 2021. Providers and consumers indicate that not having a convenient and affordable way to access human services or to get to work is a major barrier, especially for older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income people.

The presentation will include brief remarks from Ben Piper, Human Services Commission Chair, regarding the need for the City to continue to support a broad spectrum of human services programs. These programs help residents achieve their full potential and demonstrate the value of a strong human services infrastructure or "safety net" in maintaining a vibrant, safe community.

## **POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

### **Policy Impact**

The 2021-2022 Human Services Needs Update, along with the Human Services Element of the Comprehensive Plan, will guide the recommendations to Council from the Human Services Commission on the use of Human Services Fund and Community Development Block Grant resources for the years 2023 and 2024. The Needs Update findings also guide the Commission and staff in their roles as facilitators and planners in prioritizing projects over the next two years.

### **Fiscal Impact**

There is no fiscal impact associated with this update.

**OPTIONS**

N/A

**ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

N/A

**AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

Draft 2021-2022 Human Services Needs Update