

## **CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM**

### **SUBJECT**

Report on the Findings of the 2015-2016 Human Services Needs Update.

### **STAFF CONTACTS**

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### **POLICY ISSUES**

The 2015-2016 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 2017 and 2018. 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.

### **DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**

☐ Action  
☐ Discussion  
☒ Information

### **BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

The City allocates funds from the Human Services Fund (ultimately funded from general tax sources such as property tax, sales tax, etc.) and a portion of the Community Development Block Grant program (from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) on a two-year cycle to support community-based non-profit social services agencies that provide services to Bellevue residents. The City is currently in the 2015-2016 biennial cycle.

Every two years, 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 over 400 Bellevue residents during March and April 2015; surveys completed by consumers of human services and providers; small focus groups (Community Conversations) conducted with groups such as older adults, multi-cultural communities, and youth; 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 2016, the Human Services Commission will develop recommendations to Council for the 2017-2018 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, citizen groups, City staff, staff in other local jurisdictions, and a number of faith communities for planning purposes.

Key emerging and ongoing trends and issues include:

- *Quality of Life in Bellevue:* Satisfaction with living in Bellevue remains very high. In 2015, 96% of Bellevue residents who responded to the phone/online survey rated the overall quality of life in Bellevue as either “excellent” or “good”, the same rating as in 2013 and similar to 2011 when it was 98%.
- *Affordable Housing:* Since the mid-1990s in phone and more recently in online surveys, Bellevue residents consistently have rated lack of affordable housing as the top community problem. In 2015, 68% of those surveyed rated it as a major or moderate problem, compared to 51% in 2013. About 16% of renters and 13% of renters are considered “severely cost-burdened”, paying over 50% 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 increase in East King County, with the number of homeless men, single women and families in the Eastside Winter Shelters more than doubled between 2014 and 2015. Those numbers are on track to increase in 2016. Data from the Bellevue School District indicates that over the past seven years there has been a steady increase in students who are experiencing homelessness, from 86 in 2008 to 224 in 2015.
- *Affordable Health Care:* In the phone/online survey, Bellevue residents have historically rated lack of affordable medical care and medical insurance within the top tier of major community and household problems. However, after the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, in 2015 fewer Bellevue survey respondents (35%) rated lack of affordable medical insurance as a major or moderate problem compared to previous years (41%, 2013 and 51% in 2011). Gaps in access to healthcare for some Bellevue residents still exist due to high co-pays and premiums or not being eligible for medical insurance. 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 Medicare.
- *Mental Health and Substance Abuse:* Mental health services continue to be identified by providers and residents as a growing need for children, youth and adults, with more reports of depression, suicide ideation and anxiety, especially for youth. Substance abuse both by adults and youth is increasing according to providers and law enforcement, with heroin and prescription drugs the most widely used.
- *Ongoing Impact of the Economic Downturn on Bellevue Residents:* Though unemployment rates are low and the job market is improving, the impact of the economic downturn is still being felt by some Bellevue residents who report they need two jobs to make ends meet. Although the percentage of students in the Bellevue School District free and reduced price lunch program decreased slightly in 2014-2015 to 19% compared to 21.2% in the 2013-2014 school year, there are still seven schools in the district with at least 30% of students qualifying for assistance. The demand for services from non-profit agencies continues to remain steady, with staff reporting that they cannot meet the need for services such as financial assistance, dental services, subsidized childcare and mental health counseling.
- *Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault:* 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. Services that are linguistically and culturally appropriate are 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.
- *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 (13.9%) 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. Some older adults expressed the need for help with finding jobs as retirement savings and other assets have not kept up with the increasing cost of living. 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. Providers of services to children with disabilities report an increase in those diagnosed with autism and emotional issues but there has been no increase in state funds to provide needed interventions.

- *Veterans:* The 2009-2013 American Community Survey estimates that over 7,000 veterans currently reside in Bellevue; the largest percentage (72%) is 55-75+ and the smallest percentage (8%) is 18-34 years old. Providers report a slight increase in the number of veterans and their families seeking services, primarily in the areas of mental health (e.g. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), substance abuse, housing, employment, domestic violence and Military Sexual Trauma (MST). More outreach and education to veterans, particularly women veterans, is needed about federal, state and county programs for which they may be eligible.
- *Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Populations:* The cultural and ethnic diversity in Bellevue continues to grow, as evidenced by the 2011-2013 American Community Survey estimates showing that over a third of residents age 5 and over (35.5%) are foreign born and about 40% of this population speak 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 87 languages spoken, with a third of students speaking a first language other than English. As the City of Bellevue's Diversity Advantage Plan 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 was the second highest rated household problem reported by respondents to the phone/online survey in 2015 (22%), similar to 2011 and 2013. 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.
- *Collective Action:* The collective action approach mobilizes the entire community and leverages resources to get faster results, bringing organizations together for social change. This model is used in many settings, but in Bellevue Eastside Pathways is a key collective impact initiative which partners with the Bellevue School District, the City of Bellevue and over fifty other community partners to support every child, step by step, from cradle to career.

The presentation will include brief remarks from Rev. Jim McEachran, Human Services Commission Chair, regarding the need for the City to support a broad spectrum of human services programs to continue to help residents access needed health and human services, and the value of a strong human services infrastructure or "safety net" maintaining a vibrant, safe community.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

N/A

### **RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

### **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY**

Draft 2015-2016 Human Services Needs Update