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# Part I

## Strategic Vision and Core Initiatives

This section outlines a vision for arts and cultural development in Bellevue over the next ten years. From this vision, the consultants have abstracted and assembled three Core Initiatives that embody that vision. This Cultural Compass presents a road map to creating this envisioned Bellevue.

### ***A Vision of Arts and Culture in Bellevue in 2015***

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By 2015, Bellevue's cultural sector will have reached adulthood. The following statements articulate some of the significant ways in which Bellevue and its cultural organizations will have an impact on how residents live.

**Residents of Bellevue take advantage of compelling arts and cultural opportunities on multiple levels as part of the fabric of their lives.** Children have a strong introduction to the arts and culture in school, augmented by a variety of affordable and convenient extracurricular experiences. By young adulthood, they have had hands-on experience in many art forms and cultural programs.

**Families and friends take advantage of cultural festivals and informal arts and cultural activities on a regular basis.** These festivals, including the expanded Bellevue Art Museum (BAM) Arts and Crafts Fair, are a Bellevue signature and draw tourists and visitors locally, regionally, and nationally. The festivals showcase the increasingly diverse cultural mix of Bellevue and use this as touchstone in building community pride and building bridges of understanding.

**The business community works hand in hand with arts and cultural interests to enhance the quality of life experience for both Bellevue residents and employees.** Workplace benefit programs take advantage of and encourage life-long cultural participation. Three major commercial districts

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(Downtown, Crossroads, Factoria/Eastlake) have distinct cultural attributes. Public art is a visible marker of these districts and reflects the distinguishing characteristics of each community.

**Arts and cultural organizations located in Bellevue are part of an active matrix of communication and coordination.** Resource sharing among cultural organizations is common and is strengthened by the leadership of the City of Bellevue as a convener and facilitator. Organizations that serve avocational interests are valued and work in partnership with professional organizations to cultivate shared facilities and audiences. Performances and exhibitions by the nation's leading professionals are available in balance with Bellevue-based offerings.

**The City of Bellevue is known nationally as a model of urban cultural cultivation for cities of its scale.** Clear, consistent policies and tools have been implemented to assist organizations and individuals to create vibrant cultural opportunities. The emphasis is on creating connections and collaboration and lowering barriers for developers, arts and cultural groups, and artists to explore new and innovative ways of working in Bellevue.

**Residents of the Eastside come to Bellevue for leisure and educational arts and cultural opportunities – festivals, major professional offerings, and classes – often in conjunction with shopping or dining in Bellevue establishments.** Eastside cultural organizations make regular use of a diverse range of cultural facilities in Bellevue to provide public access to their programs. These facilities are available to both amateur and professional cultural organizations at a competitive rate that encourages usage and this is supported by adequate public transportation access and parking. Audiences find these cultural activities complemented by the strong commercial offerings of Bellevue businesses.

## ***Core Initiatives***

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The following four initiatives represent the core of the “big picture” synthesis of the consultants’ findings. They highlight the qualities and opportunities on which Bellevue can build a dynamic and unique approach to arts and culture. The goals and strategies detailed in other sections of this report embody these core initiatives.

### **1. Bellevue offers extraordinary cultural participation and learning opportunities for people of all ages.**

Bellevue prides itself on being an excellent place for families and children, in large part because of the range of educational activities available. Arts and

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culture are already a strong component in the community's appeal to families. Bellevue's reputation can be enhanced further by expanding on and building new and dynamic cultural opportunities for residents of all ages.

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Providing "arts and culture encounters" in cultural districts to encourage new experiences. (Strategies 2.2 and 4.2)
- Linking Parks Department and other introductory arts and cultural programs to more advanced classes and opportunities to view professional arts and culture presentations. (Strategy 4.3)
- Building new alliances and communication between the Bellevue School District and cultural organizations that provide programs in schools. (Strategy 4.1)
- Building audiences of residents and employees through new programs that bring arts and cultural experiences, discounted tickets, and exhibitions into the workplace (Strategies 2.3 and 4.3)

## **2. Distinctive cultural districts are linked to Bellevue's bustling commercial districts.**

Given Bellevue's geographic location and its urban infrastructure, the City has emerged as a commercial and transportation hub for the Eastside. It is particularly well suited to serve as a center for arts and culture as well. Such a center can be built in synergetic relationship to the commercial retail sectors in the City by defining specific cultural districts that overlap with existing commercial areas of the City. In addition, Bellevue's ethnic diversity – stronger than other Eastside communities – can be used as a distinct component in creating lively and interdependent cultural and commercial sectors. :

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Designating cultural districts in Bellevue's existing commercial areas to strengthen cultural amenities and social activities. (Strategies 2.1, 2.2)
- Developing year-round festival-type events and other programs to capitalize on the rich ethnic traditions of Bellevue's residents and focusing these programs in cultural districts (Strategy 3.1)
- Utilizing public art and graphics to enhance the energy and visibility of cultural/commercial districts. (Strategy 6.3)

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- Using “cultural encounters” to make shopping or running errands in Bellevue’s commercial areas a unique experience. (Strategy 4.3)

### **3. Bellevue’s maturing cultural sector builds its visibility, identity, and capacity.**

As a City, Bellevue has begun to articulate a consistent and strong image for itself as a major urban center on the Eastside. The cultural sector is not as far along in that process. To develop and carry the banner as an Eastside cultural hub, Bellevue must ensure that Bellevue-based cultural organizations have the capacity to sustain their operations. Building cultural audiences is, in part, a function of developing and maintaining the cultural sector’s visibility and identity, especially for the City’s newer residents.

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Providing enhanced information about arts and culture to Eastside residents and visitors. (Strategy 1.2)
- Using arts and culture as incentives for locating and doing business in the City. (Strategy 2.1)
- Promoting the cultural expressions of various ethnic groups in Bellevue. (Strategies 2.2, 3.2, and 3.3)
- Fostering alliances, collaboration, and training among Bellevue and other cultural entities in the region to build their capacity. (Strategies 1.1 and 7.5)

### **4. Bellevue develops and attracts strong leadership in support of its cultural sector’s infrastructure and funding.**

Bellevue is a young city. While its residents have interest in and commitment to arts and culture, the necessary underpinnings of a vibrant cultural sector are not yet fully in place. This plan outlines what is needed. Few of the strategies in this plan are likely to be implemented without the active cultivation of three key ingredients: **leadership** in support of cultural priorities, City of Bellevue **staff capacity** to coordinate the implementation of planning initiatives, and adequate **funding** from both the public and private sectors. The plan addresses these concerns forcefully.

Examples in this plan of ways to achieve these ends are:

- Building the City’s leadership role in the implementation of this plan through coordination, alliance development, and policy direction. (Strategies 1.4 and 7.1)

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- Developing appropriate community mechanisms and guidelines for setting public priorities for arts and cultural development. (Strategies 2.1, 5.2, 6.4, and 7.2)
  - Providing an appropriate city administrative structure, adequate staff, and appropriate funding levels to implement plan priorities. (Strategies 7.3, 7.4, and 8.1)