



DATE: September 17, 2018

TO: Mayor Chelminiak and City Councilmembers

FROM: Mac Cummins, Director, 452-6191
Mike McCormick-Huentelman, Assistant Director, 452-4089
Mark Heilman, Community Engagement Lead, 452-2735
Community Development Department

SUBJECT: 2018 Neighborhood Walks

For information only; No action is required.

Policy Direction

One of the City Council's Vision Priorities 2018-2020 for being a High Performance Government includes "Building trust in government by developing and implementing a comprehensive communication plan with proactive strategies..." This priority builds on the principle that "The more we listen, the more responsive we are."

Background

During four Summer Chats in 2017, City Manager Brad Miyake and department directors visited with the community at coffee shops and community centers in their neighborhoods. Residents shared what's important to them in their neighborhoods, including a variety of Citywide and neighborhood topics, and asked that conversations continue at future informal gatherings. Summarizing the Summer Chats, City Manager Miyake wrote: "As we grow, we need to pay attention to how our growth contributes to our overall quality of life. We can only figure that out together. Let's keep the conversation going."

For February's 2018 Neighborhood Leadership Gathering over 750 people completed an online survey and several respondents asked City leaders to come out to see and enjoy what is unique about their neighborhood. One writer represented what others requested: "Spend time in the neighborhood. Early morning, during commute times, and later in the day. Walk the neighborhood, bring your team and include a member of the community."

Building on the Summer Chats and responding to numerous requests, this year the City Manager and the Leadership Team launched Neighborhood Walks in eight neighborhood areas of Bellevue. The neighborhood areas where staff members walked included: Downtown, Northwest Bellevue, Lake Hills, Crossroads, Northeast Bellevue, Newport, Eastgate, and Cougar Mountain/Lakemont.

Quick Stats

- **6 walks** were held in eight areas of the City during June and July
- **44 Leadership Team directors and City staff** walked with residents
- **95 residents** walked, including ages 8-80
- **14.3 total miles** were walked in Bellevue neighborhoods

Summary

Each of the Neighborhood Walks was 2.0 to 2.5 miles in length and included stops at parks, specific areas of concern and other landmarks. Walks were attended by 8 to 35 residents and by 5 to 10 City staff and were about two hours in duration.

At the beginning of each walk, community members shared with the group their area's history, assets and emerging issues. Comments varied by neighborhood (including area-specific concerns that were also documented), but in every neighborhood comments included:

- Appreciation for their neighbors and the history of the neighborhood;
- Concern about continuing development and the impact on neighborhood traffic;
- Gratitude for neighborhood and Citywide parks and services;
- Concern about vacant homes and "absentee owners" which diminishes their ability to connect and to be a cohesive neighborhood;
- Appreciation for the tree canopy and desire for the natural assets to be valued and preserved.

Participants walked through residential areas and City parks. There were extended conversations, as the walks provided opportunities for the Leadership Team to see and hear what is important in the neighborhoods, discuss their responsibilities, and learn about neighborhood specific priorities. City staff also documented local concerns, such as requests for additional park services or crosswalks, and responded to participants with updates.

At the end of each walk, the Leadership Team shared what they heard during the walk. Walkers from the neighborhood had "the final word" at the end of each walk. Some of the general comments shared included:

- "Very concerned about traffic, congestion is really a big issue, you can't get out of the neighborhood during certain times of the day."
- "Surprised to see diverse faces in leadership and staff. Great to see some representation."
- "Aging in place? Seniors will get priced out sooner or later. Property tax is very high."
- "It's impossible to get to City Hall for meetings from south Bellevue, I-405 is awful. You should consider having more meetings in south Bellevue or have it at the library."
- "Thank you for coming to walk our neighborhood. It's amazing to have so many staff come out."

Next Steps

Evening and Saturday Neighborhood Walks were well-attended, and the community followed and responded to online reports and photos. There were also several requests for additional walks in the future. Ideas for improvement for 2019 Neighborhood Walks include considering "theme walks" (such as accessibility and pedestrian routes to parks, retail and school) and partnering with neighborhoods to include food and drinks, making the walks more inclusive and more of a community event.