

February 5, 2018

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Report on the Findings of the 2017-2018 Human Services Needs Update.

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POLICY ISSUES

The 2017-2018 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 2019 and 2020. 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



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



Staff will return to Council in Fall 2018 with recommendations for human services funding for the 2019-2020 biennium. These recommendations will be based on information from the Needs Update.

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 2017-2018 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 February and March, 2017 surveys completed by consumers of human services and providers, small focus groups (Community Conversations) conducted with groups such as older adults, immigrant and refugees, people with disabilities, low-income consumers of human services 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 2018, the Human Services Commission will develop recommendations to Council for the 2019-2020 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 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 2017, 95 percent of Bellevue residents who responded to the phone/online survey rated the overall quality of life in Bellevue as either “excellent” or “good”, similar rating in 2015 and 2013.
- *Affordable Housing:* Since the mid-1990s in phone and more recently with the addition of online surveys, Bellevue residents consistently have rated lack of affordable housing as the top community problem. In 2017, 77 percent of those surveyed rated it as a major or moderate problem, compared to 51 percent in 2013. About 31 percent of Bellevue household are considered “cost-burdened”, paying over 30 percent of their income for housing, and almost one third of seniors 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 be a crisis with the number of unsheltered people steadily and visibly increasing. In 2015-2016, over 1,200 men, single women and families experiencing homelessness received temporary shelter in East King County. Those numbers are on track to increase in 2017. 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 257 in 2016-2017.
- *Heroin & Prescription Opioid Use:* King County, like many places across the country, is seeing a sharp increase in the use of heroin and prescription opiates. In 2016, there were 332 drug-caused deaths in King County and 219 of them were from heroin and prescription opioid overdoses. The region lacks services and treatment beds to address the crisis. In Bellevue, human services providers, Police and Fire Department personnel, and school district staff report an increase in the number of youth and adults who are affected by Substance Use Disorder including heroin and prescription opioid use.
- *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, a significant increase compared to 2015 (35 percent). This increase could be due to the gaps in access to healthcare for some Bellevue residents because of high co-pays and premiums or not being eligible for medical insurance subsidies. 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.
- *Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder:* 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.
- *Cost of Living:* Though unemployment rates are low and the availability of jobs has increased, Bellevue residents report that wages have not kept pace with the cost of living. In the phone/online survey, 44 percent of residents rated not having jobs that pay enough for basic needs as a major or moderate problem in the community. In other surveys, it was reported that residents sometimes 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 2016-2017 to 18.2 percent compared to 19 percent in the 2014-2015 school year, there are still seven schools in the district with at least 30 percent 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, civil legal assistance, 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 (14 percent) 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.
- *Veterans:* The 2011-2015 American Community Survey estimates that over 6,600 veterans currently reside in Bellevue; the largest percentage (74 percent) is 55-75+ and the smallest percentage (7.6 percent) 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 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, seamless manner.
- *Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Populations:* The cultural and ethnic diversity in Bellevue continues to grow, with over a third of residents age five and over (37 percent) foreign born and about 42 percent 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 95 languages spoken, with a third of 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. One finding from the phone/online survey in 2017 was that 24 percent of residents rated racial or ethnic discrimination as a major or moderate community problem, a significant change compared to 2015 when it was 17 percent. In households, this issue was rated as a major or moderate problem by 7 percent of residents in 2017 compared to 4 percent in 2015.
- *Transportation:* Inadequate public transportation is an ongoing concern for Bellevue residents; 39 percent of Bellevue residents rated inadequate public transportation as a major community problem in 2017 compared to 38 percent in 2015. 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 Jude Mercer, Human Services Commission Chair, regarding the need for the City to support a broad spectrum of human services programs. These programs will continue to help residents achieve their full potential and will demonstrate the value of a strong human services infrastructure or “safety net” in maintaining a vibrant, safe community.

OPTIONS

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY

A. Draft 2017-2018 Human Services Needs Update