

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Report on the findings of the 2019-2020 Human Services Needs Update

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Parks & Community Services

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

INFORMATION ONLY	Staff will update Council on the key findings of the 2019-2020 Human Services Needs Update.
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RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The City allocates funds from the Human Services Fund (ultimately funded from property tax) 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 2019-2020 biennial cycle.

Every two years, Human Services staff conduct 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 April and May 2019; 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, 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 2020, the Human Services Commission will develop recommendations to Council for the 2021-2022 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:

- *Livability in Bellevue:* Satisfaction with living in Bellevue remains very high. In 2019, 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 to ratings in 2017 and 2015.

- *Affordable Housing:* Since the mid-1990s using telephone and more recently with the addition of online surveys, Bellevue residents consistently have rated lack of affordable housing as the top community problem. In 2019, 75 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 be on the rise with the number of unsheltered people steadily and visibly increasing. In 2018, over 2,000 men, single women, families, and young adults experiencing homelessness stayed in low-barrier shelters in East King County. 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 295 in 2018-2019.
- *Substance Use Disorder:* King County, like many places across the country, has seen an increase in the use of methamphetamines and continues to see an increase in the use of heroin and prescription opiates. In King County, there was an increase in drug overdose from 45 in 2009 to 130 in 2018. In Bellevue, there were 12 overdose deaths in 2018 and 9 as of September 2019. The region lacks services and treatment beds to address the crisis.
- *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. Twelve percent of households in the phone/online survey reported not being able to pay for medical insurance as a problem. 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.
- *Behavioral Health:* 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. In the provider survey, 78 percent reported that their clients needed mental health care but cannot access it.
- *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, 50 percent of residents rated not having jobs that pay enough for basic needs as a major or moderate problem in the community, an increase of 46 percent from 2017. Bellevue School District reported an increase from seven to eight schools where at least 30 percent of the students qualify for the free and reduced-price lunch program. 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 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 2012-2017 American Community Survey estimates that over 5,300 veterans currently reside in Bellevue, nearly a 20 percent decrease since 2015. The decline is based on the large number of veterans over 65 and decreased 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 and unified manner.
- *Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Populations:* The cultural and ethnic diversity in Bellevue continues to grow, with nearly 40 percent of Bellevue's population being foreign-born and nearly 55,000 households 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 98 languages spoken, with over 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 2019 was that 25 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 9 percent of residents in 2019 compared to 4 percent in 2015.
- *Transportation:* Inadequate public transportation is an ongoing concern for Bellevue residents; 40 percent of Bellevue residents rated inadequate public transportation as a major community problem in 2019. 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 Tim Ma, 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 and safe community.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The 2019-2020 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 2021 and 2022. 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 2019-2020 Human Services Needs Update