

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Neighborhood Enhancement Program Update

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DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

This memo will provide an update on the Neighborhood Enhancement Program.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Launched in 1988, the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP) provides residents the opportunity to select small capital projects for City-funded improvements in their neighborhoods. The success of NEP has been attributed to the philosophy that residents are in the best position to decide how to improve their own neighborhoods. The NEP rotates through 14 NEP areas over a seven-year cycle, allocating funds based upon the number of households in the designated neighborhood area.

The NEP successfully provides a method for funding small but important improvements that cannot compete successfully for funding against larger or higher-priority CIP projects. It also provides a way to engage residents in a democratic process to direct City funds for local improvements that could be accomplished in the near-term. Since 2015, residents have submitted over 1,100 ideas for improving their neighborhoods. These ideas have all been shared with the relevant departments and routed as community input for consideration for future neighborhood investments.

Since 2015, 24 Neighborhood Enhancement projects have been selected by area residents and eight projects have been completed, with 16 NEP projects still in design and construction stages. NEP projects are completed within three to five years after they have been voted on and selected by residents.

Reflecting the varying character and creativity of each neighborhood, Neighborhood Enhancement projects range in type, including gateway landscaping, wetland enhancements, park and playground improvements, trails and crosswalks, lighting and even the addition of bat houses for the Lake Hills Greenbelt. A complete list of NEP projects and corresponding details is attached (NEP Project Status – July 2020).

During the 'Stay Home. Stay Healthy' COVID-19 environment the City is experiencing in 2020, this CIP-funded program has continued, with Bellevue residents in the Crossroads and Wilburton neighborhood areas able to participate through mail and online engagement.

NEP is in the fifth year of its current seven-year CIP cycle. Four neighborhoods remain to participate and receive funding: West Bellevue and Woodridge in 2021 and Newport and Somerset in 2022.

Program Outreach Expansion

In the past year, Neighborhood Outreach has increased its effort to broaden participation from Bellevue residents with the NEP program. A couple of highlights include:

UW Livable City Year Participation

In 2019, a NEP-funded project from the Eastgate/Factoria neighborhood area, *SE 38th Street Gateway Landscaping*, was the subject of a 2019 Livable City Year study in association with the University of Washington's School of Environmental and Forest Sciences department. [*The Health Assessment of a Neighborhood Enhancement Project in Eastgate*](#), studied the impact that beautification of a neighborhood entrance had on residents' sense of community. Results found that a majority of respondents felt the streetscape enhancement improved the walkability and safety of the neighborhood, making the project site more pleasant to pass by. Additionally, the study showed that women reported feeling safer and that younger residents experienced greater improvements in their sense of community as a direct result of the streetscape enhancement.

Multi-Family Outreach

According to the 2018 American Communities survey, 43 percent of all housing units in Bellevue are multi-family, with 30 percent of the population living in multi-family units.

Recognizing these statistics, especially with the recent increased housing growth in the City, Neighborhood Outreach worked to increase outreach in the Downtown/BelRed, Lake Hills, Crossroads and Wilburton areas in reaching multi-family communities. This effort included direct contact with over 120 condominium, apartment and affordable housing complex property managers to inform them about the program and how their residents could participate. These efforts have been crucial as City staff are building relationships with apartment, condominium and affordable housing managers, including learning from them the prevailing interests, needs and languages of the respective communities. As a result, participation from multi-family residents in this program is increasing.

Spanish Language Translation in Crossroads

With the goal to broaden participation from traditionally under-represented communities, the NEP this year has launched a pilot Spanish language translation program in the Crossroads neighborhood area. NEP mailing materials have and will be translated throughout the process, and Spanish language specific webpages and program-related online submission forms have been created. This effort is part of an ongoing commitment to improve accessibility for Bellevue residents to participate in the democratic process of the NEP and will be evaluated to inform future practice.

NEP Informational Video

In January 2020, NEP staff, in collaboration with BTV, created and produced a three minute informational video to help inform Bellevue residents of the program and its process and to encourage resident participation in the program. Residents from three Bellevue neighborhood areas shared their thoughts and input about their own engagement with NEP. The video can be found on the City of Bellevue NEP webpage at www.bellevuewa.gov/nep.

The NEP is appreciated by residents for the level of input and creativity that the program promotes. Hundreds of residents in each neighborhood provide unique ideas and opportunities for their own area. The program has produced great local assets that are highly appreciated and utilized. City staff have been able to leverage the reach and credibility of the program to secure other funds to maximize the amenities that residents enjoy. As the community grows and evolves, NEP is one of many efforts to learn from and serve our residents through outreach, relationship, and local projects that residents have requested and democratically selected.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The Neighborhoods Element of Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan includes the following policy:

N-10. Provide programs and support for residents to make a difference in local neighborhood improvements. This includes ways to direct neighborhood enhancement projects, neighborhood identity signage, gateways, park enhancements, neighborhood art, and maintenance of public rights-of-way.

Fiscal Impact

The Neighborhood Enhancement Program has been a longstanding program that supports neighborhood leadership, engagement and community-directed investment for neighborhood enhancement projects. In the 2015-2021 General Capital Investment Program (CIP) Plan budget, Council approved allocating \$5M for the Neighborhood Enhancement Program over the seven-year CIP cycle.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. NEP Information Sheet
- B. NEP Project Status – July 2020

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A