

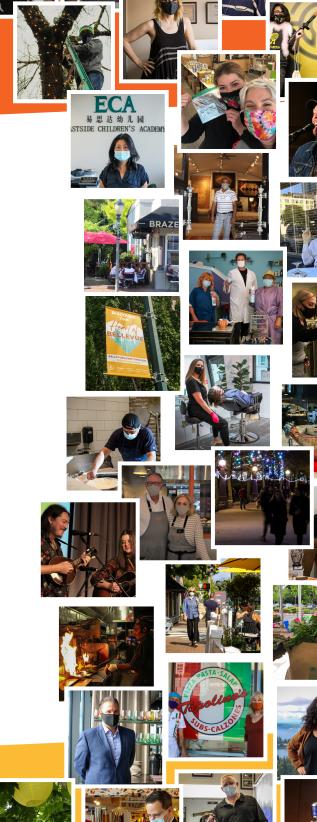
HEART OF BELLEVUE A DOWNTOWN RECOVERY CAMPAIGN

REPORT FOR KEY PARTNERS

BELLEVUE DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION JANUARY 2021



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INTRODUCTION

In the wake of COVID-19, the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA) launched a Downtown-wide business engagement and place-marketing program, connecting customers and community in the Heart of Bellevue. We built on the success of the 2019 "Grand Connection" activation pilot, in close collaboration with the City of Bellevue and other key Downtown and business community stakeholders.

OBJECTIVE

STRENGTHEN OUR CORE.

We embraced the opportunity to support the resiliency and economic recovery of Downtown Bellevue. Campaign elements focused on convening, promoting and activating our businesses as more customers and a broader representation of our workforce returned. Working through changing conditions, we remained nimble in our tactics, relying on frequent problem-solving and collaboration with the City of Bellevue and other key partners. The effort created new capacity for stakeholder partnerships, marketing efforts and activation of the built environment – ultimately leading to Downtown and community-wide public benefits.

GOALS & OUTCOMES

Recognizing the need to redirect energy and resources to respond proactively to the crisis, we worked collaboratively to redesign and adapt the scope of our 2020 placemaking efforts, integrating marketing and small business outreach in a new way. Activating the Grand Connection, while still important, was de-prioritized in favor of a multi-faceted recovery campaign designed to support and promote activity in Downtown Bellevue aligned with Washington's Safe Start plan.

Our overarching intent and end result for the community:

- Increase activity and engagement Downtown.
- Connect customers and residents with Downtown businesses to build awareness and customer loyalty.
- Revitalize economic activity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Strengthen Downtown Bellevue's sense of place.
- Further develop the capacity of businesses, property owners and residents to partner with the City to support placemaking needs.
- Promote and support Washington's Safe Start plan.

The program focused on <u>citywide benefits</u> such as:

- Increase downtown visits, consumer spending and associated tax revenue.
- Retention of businesses and jobs as businesses reopened and rehired.
- Activations in the public realm encouraging visitation, leisure, recreation and general enjoyment.
- Robust stakeholder organizations that can better connect and inform businesses of available resources.
- Increase private sector participation, support and contributions to public realm activations and placemaking efforts.









THE CAMPAIGN

HEART OF BELLEVUE: A DOWNTOWN RECOVERY CAMPAIGN

Launched June 25, 2020 - Present

Opportunity:

The spirit of this campaign is about connections, both virtual and in person. The campaign focuses on people and places with an active campaign element of bringing life back to the core, specifically with patronage of restaurants, retail and cultural institutions/exhibits. The campaign is designed to connect and promote local businesses while building vibrancy in Downtown Bellevue. We're sharing stories of activity, creativity and recovery to bring vitality back to our urban core.

EFFORTS INCLUDED:

1. DIRECT OUTREACH

Extensive one-on-one, in-person engagement with business owners. Includes on-site check-ins, phone interviews, and direct email outreach.

2. CREATIVE ASSETS

Development of a multi-faceted print, online and social media marketing campaign that engages residents, workers, visitors, businesses and property owners to support the return of foot traffic and revitalization of economic activity needed for businesses to succeed upon reopening.

3. STORYTELLING

Interviews and profiles with Bellevue businesses and artists highlighting stories of activity, creativity and recovery in the community.

4. PLACEMAKING

Execution of multiple placemaking activations with key properties and businesses, including lanterns and banners along the Grand Connection in the downtown core, the "Al Fresco" outdoor dining in Old Bellevue, and holiday lights installed in the Downtown Park, Grand Connection and Main Street.

5. VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Adaptation of arts and cultural programming for online/virtual audiences.

6. COVID-19 RESOURCES

Provide COVID-19 tools, resources and support to all Bellevue businesses impacted by the pandemic.

7. CITY COLLABORATION

Work with the City of Bellevue staff regularly to cross-promote messaging, generate stories, and streamline the permitting process for small businesses.

8. KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Partner with key organizations, retailers and institutions, such as Visit Bellevue, The Bellevue Collection, The Bravern, Bellevue Library, KidsQuest Children's Museum, Old Bellevue Merchants Association and the Bellevue Arts Museum to cast a wide net and stretch the message to support your city's core.

RESULTS

EFFORT #1 - DIRECT OUTREACH

Over the course of six months, the BDA had extensive one-on-one, in-person engagement with small business owners. Overall, we completed **117+ on-site check-ins** with business owners. This included businesses throughout Downtown, Old Bellevue and beyond.

In addition to in-person visits, we also initiated phone interviews and direct email outreach. This allowed us to curate a new small business contact database, which currently has 172 active business contacts.



EFFORT #2 - CREATIVE ASSETS

This multi-faceted campaign included print, online and social media marketing. Branding was bright and used noticeable, vibrant colors (orange, gold, turquoise).

Deliverables included magazine ads, 11"x17" posters, 4"x5" handouts, pole banners, construction fence panels, weekly e-newsletters, blogs and BDA social channels.

PRINT

425 Magazine Ad

3 - Full page advertisement in the October, November and December issue of 425 Magazine. Distributed/ displayed by: paid subscribers, hotel rooms newsstands, community space, offices and events. Readership per month: 199,897

4"x5" Postcard

152 - 4"x5" Postcards distributed to Downtown Bellevue business owners that explained the campaign.

11"x17" Poster

200 - 11"x17" Posters distributed to small business owners and residential buildings to display in their storefront windows and/or community bulletin boards.

OUTDOOR

Pole Banners

14 - 2' x 4' light pole banners with event logo were displayed along the Grand Connection between BAM and the Transit Center [18,508 pedestrians/day, pre-Covid]

Construction Fence Panel

1 - Panel alternating along Vulcan's 555 Tower construction signage along 108th and 6th.

DIGITAL

E-Newsletters

25 - Weekly dedicated newsletters emailed every Monday, sent to 10,413 subscribers, with an average 30% total open rate.

Blogs

120 - Spotlight blogs featuring an interview with a small business owner, accompanied by photographs.

37,333 - Total Blog Post Pageviews

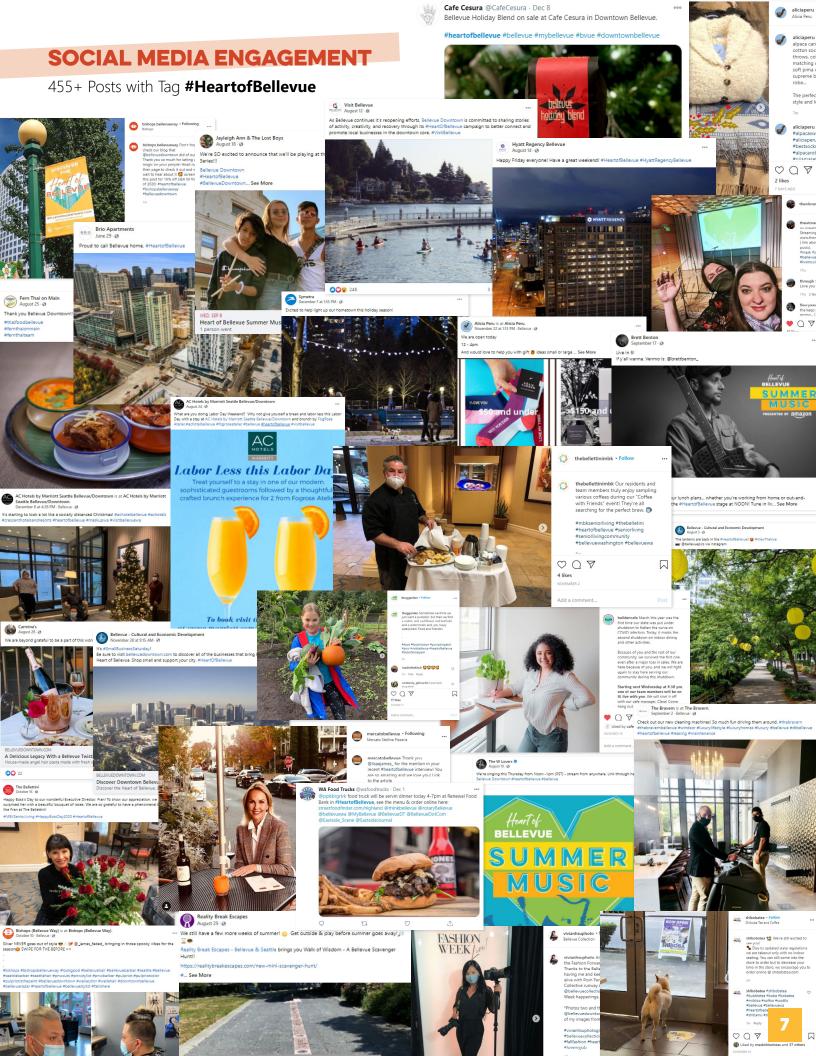
Website (BellevueDowntown.com)

234,023 - Total Pageviews 110,842 - Total Users (108,601 New Users)

Social

196 - Small businesses featured via social posts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) 203,867 People reached by BDA Facebook page 129,175 Total impressions from Facebook posts







Discovering the 'Heart of Bellevue'

The City Highlights Businesses' Resilience With New Campaign

19 outbreak, as businesses across the state closed when Gov. Jay Insl

some businesses to close for good. Others have been able to stay afloat, a or reopening in phases, according to the state's Safe Start plan

When King County recently entered Phase 2, some businesses began to reor challenges remain. The struggle to reconnect with their communities is one address this concern, the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA) has develop reconnect its members to the Bellevue community.

The Heart of Bellevue, launched in partnership between the BDA and the Cit campaign to connect and promote the local businesses in downtown Bellevue. the campaign showcases stories of resiliency through the pandemic and e

With the goal of bringing life back to its urban core, the Heart of Bellev activity, creativity, and recovery of local businesses via the BDA's onlin campaign also includes virtual and in-person events for businesses a

"This is a big opportunity for us to help downtown thrive," BD wanted to recast our work to best support our businesses a

"Our response has been an evolution," BDA communica by just sharing information about our businesses and k happening. The Heart of Bellevue is the next phase. It

The campaign has a large storytelling function, Luve business owners to highlight their stories as they r

Mike Schaefer, owner and founder of Soaring Hear Bellevue, is among the campaign's first examples.

At the beginning of the pandemic, Schaefer realize making natural pillows and mattresses to instea Bellevue Boys & Girls Clubs, Seattle Children's F

EFFORT #3 - STORYTELLING

One of the major components of this campaign was storytelling. The BDA published 120 blog spotlights, highlighting the stories of activity, creativity and recovery from business owners and artists in the community. Stories were collected via an online form, through referrals, and discovered through direct BDA outreach.

> Stories featured the places people would shop, dine and get personal services at in Bellevue. Business owners were given a platform to share their story to the Bellevue community. This included the history of their business, any specials or promotions happening, and new safety procedures they put in place during the pandemic.

The range of stories created several earned media spots for the BDA, including a feature in 425 Business Magazine and mentions in the Bellevue Reporter.

When a story was written, it was cross-promoted across all BDA channels. This included the BDA blog, e-newsletter and social pages. This maximized the reach for each published story.





SOCIAL











E-NEWSLETTER



CONVERGE AT CAFÉ CESURA



































PEOPLE BEHIND THE #HEARTOFBELLEVUE































EFFORT #4 - PLACEMAKING

The BDA worked with local property owners and city officials to implement small-scale enhancements and place-branding elements across Downtown. Organizing our community members around the **care of the physical place** and overall livability provided the BDA with an active stakeholder body to turn to when tasked with larger scale conversations.

Since June 2020, the BDA executed multiple placemaking activations with key properties and businesses, including lanterns and banners along the Grand Connection, an "Al Fresco" outdoor dining program in Old Bellevue, and holiday light installations in the Downtown Park, Grand Connection and Main Street.

YELLOW LANTERNS ALONG THE GRAND CONNECTION

In the summer of 2019, the BDA partnered with property owners and the City of Bellevue to unify the Grand Connection with colorful lanterns. Our 2020 activation built on 2019's success by re-installing 500+ yellow lanterns along the Grand Connection route (Bellevue Square to the Bellevue Transit Center). Lanterns were installed from July 6 - September 27, 2020.

AL FRESCO OUTDOOR DINING PROGRAM

To support local restaurants, the BDA, Microsoft and the City of Bellevue partnered with business owners to expand outdoor dining options along Main Street. The Al Fresco outdoor dining program was created to utilize empty parking spots and sidewalk space as pop-up patios - complete with dining sets, safety barriers and fencing. Seven popular eateries participated, offering up more opportunities to dine outside in Downtown.

The program ran from August 4 - October 4, and helped revive foot traffic and activity along the corridor during crucial summer months. In late September, the City conducted a survey for users of the on-street dining activation. The overwhelming majority of respondents were supportive of the on-street dining areas and wanted to see them return in the future. Almost one-third of those who used the on-street dining areas made a purchase at a retailer during the same visit. A typical visitor spent about \$50-\$150 per visit to Main Street. Those leaving an open-ended response were overwhelmingly (72%) positive, and many expressed a desire for the patio areas to continue into the fall and winter, or come back as a permanent, year-round installation.

HOLIDAY LIGHT INSTALLATIONS

With social distancing requirements in place, many Bellevue holiday traditions were impacted this year, including the cancellation of the BDA's annual Downtown Ice Rink. In response, the BDA installed more than 2,200 dynamic LED holiday lights in the Downtown Park, creating a vibrant connection of lighting between The Bellevue Collection's reimagined Snowflake Lane to Main Street in Old Bellevue.

In addition to the Downtown Park, traditional holiday lights were wrapped around trees and light poles along Main Street. Holiday-themed uplighting was also installed along the Grand Connection route (Key Center South Center). Lights were installed from November 27 - January 4, 2021.









EFFORT #5 - VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Due to restrictions on in-person gatherings, the BDA had to adapt all community event programming for 2020. As a result, we produced two virtual music series and a local artist blog series.

The core principles of these virtual music programs remained the same as in-person experiences: concerts were free, open to all ages, and featured a variety of music genres. In addition to giving artists a platform to share their work, we promoted their Venmo or PayPal accounts as a "virtual tip jar." This was a new idea and well-received by artists in the online community.

In total, we produced **39 virtual concerts** from July-October, 2020 and featured **92 local musicians** and **9 local Arts Fair artists**. The online concerts were well-received by the community as many Bellevue residents were missing live, in-person performances. The shows were especially loved by the musicians, who were desperately seeking platforms to share their music. In total, we earned **over 51,000 impressions** and **15,748 views** from these videos which are still being watched today. Our reach was broadened beyond Bellevue, WA - viewers tuned in across the country to watch the live shows. Our ultimate goal to showcase local artists and encourage community and conversation was successfully achieved (100% digitally).

LIVE SUMMER MUSIC SERIES

Heart of

SUMMER

The Bellevue Downtown Association was to celebrate 20 years of Live at Lunch summer concerts this year, where Downtown workers, residents, and visitors gathered in-person for live music at lunch hour. Rather than cancel the series, the BDA decided to produce a virtual music experience as the *Heart of Bellevue Summer Music*

Series. We restructured our live music programming into an online format, so the community could enjoy concerts safely from home.

Shows were live-streamed from
Resonance Events every Wednesday and
Thursday from July 15 - September 24, 2020.
Viewers watched the live shows on Facebook
or the BDA website. Concerts were one hour
long, and featured 32 local artists. Musical genres

included Native American Flute, Americana, Reggae, Vintage Pop, Folk, Country, Delta Blues, Flamenco Soul, and others.

Quick stats:

- 19 live, one-hour shows featuring 32 local musicians
- 43,586 total video impressions
- 14,304 total video views
- Average 753 views per show
- 11 dedicated emails sent to 6,735 subscribers with 18% total open rate



JAZZ & BLUES MUSIC SERIES

For the past twelve years, the Bellevue Jazz & Blues Festival has welcomed local and national acts to Downtown Bellevue. This year, the festival was produced virtually with 20 performances streamed over five evenings, October 5-9. The Bellevue Jazz & Blues Music Series was free and premiered on Youtube each evening from 5:00-9:00pm.

Each show was recorded live in advance from Resonance Events in Downtown Bellevue, and an array of local restaurants offered takeout promotions in partnership with the event. Attendees were encouraged to purchase dinner from a local restaurant and tune in for each evening's show. Participating takeout partners included 520 Bar and Grill, Andiamo Italiano, Bake's Place, Castilla Restaurant, Central Bar and Grill, Fogo de Chao, Fogrose Atelier, John Howie Steak, Mercato Stelino, Paddy Coyne's Irish Pub, and Seastar.

Quick stats:

- 20 premiered, one-hour shows featuring 60 local musicians
- 8 dedicated emails sent to 8,296 subscribers with 19% total open rate
- 11 local restaurants promoted as takeout partners
- 7,749 total video impressions
- 1,444 total video views
- Average 289 views per show

HE(ART) OF BELLEVUE BLOG SERIES

As an alternative to the 6th Street Arts Fair, the BDA - in partnership with Amazon - featured nine local artists who would have participated in this year's festival through a blog series: he(ART) of Bellevue. Throughout August, we profiled artists each week and earned **1,592 pageviews**. In addition to profiling local artists, we supported all 159 artists who would have participated in this year's 6th Street Arts Fair by showcasing their artwork and portfolios on our website.



EFFORT #6 - COVID-19 RESOURCES

Supporting the health and safety of the Bellevue community is of critical importance to the Bellevue Downtown Association. Throughout the Heart of Bellevue campaign, the BDA consistently stayed in communication with local and regional governmental officials, King County Public Health and the City of Bellevue on COVID-19 recommendations, requirements and available resources. We continually

spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 support for small businesses included online interviews with guest speakers (Downtown Talks and BDA Takeaway series), a State of the City live-stream (featuring Mayor Lynne Robinson and Deputy Mayor Jared Nieuwenhuis), direct email advisories from BDA President Patrick Bannon, and small business and nonprofit resources on our website

emphasized the preeminent need to take steps to limit the



The Downtown Talks series and BDA Takeaway series were created as a platform for stories of resiliency, recovery and growth within Downtown Bellevue. Videos were released monthly and featured local business and community leaders talking about how their organization adapted

during the pandemic. The content in each video provided a direct connection to what's ahead for Downtown Bellevue, free and available to the public.

Businesses featured:

• Microsoft (Colleen Daly, Public Health and Wellness Lead)

• The Bellevue Collection (Jennifer Leavitt, VP Marketing)

- Primrose School of West Bellevue (Shannon Peterson, franchise owner)
- QFC (Tiffany Sanders, Corporate Affairs Manager)
- Hermanson (Geoff Vestman, Business Development Manager)
- Overlake Hospital (Dr. Thomas Miller, Medical Director of Quality & Safety)
- **Bellevue Police** (Chief Steve Mylett)

In addition to the two video series, we also produced a live-stream *State of the City* with Bellevue's Mayor Lynne Robinson and Deputy Mayor Jared Nieuwenhuis on July 30. This event received over 781 views during the broadcast, and over 2,670 impressions from the live-stream.

In total, our video programming related to COVID-19 response received over **2,619 video views** and over **10,189 impressions** across all platforms.

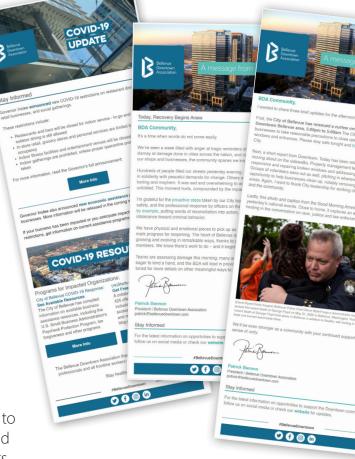


SMALL BUSINESS & NONPROFIT SUPPORT

In response to the many businesses and workers impacted by the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic, we compiled a list of available resources, programs and updates from local, state and federal sources. The pandemic also severely impacted our member nonprofits: canceling fundraising events, changing daily operations and more. We included a section on our COVID-19 resource page dedicated to promoting how to support these essential community organizations.

Direct email advisories were also sent from BDA President Patrick Bannon's email account. Eight dedicated advisory emails were sent, including updated information on COVID-19 restrictions, community safety alerts, Washington's Safe Start plan updates, and recommendations concerning City curfews and protest precautions during the pandemic.

The BDA also amplified any notices about grant opportunities to small businesses. Announcements were shared on LinkedIn and emailed directly to our database of 172+ small business owners.



EFFORT #7 - CITY COLLABORATION

Working with the City of Bellevue was crucial to the campaign's success. The BDA met with City staff regularly to cross-promote messaging, generate stories, and streamline the permitting process for small businesses. From bi-weekly meetings with the Economic Development team, to engagement with City review/permitting staff, to regularly partnering with the City Communications team to amplify messaging, we made sure to collaborate as much as possible with this key partner.

Working with the City of Bellevue allowed for better lead generation for Downtown stories and kept the line of communication open as things evolved. Philly Marsh, Economic Development Manager, provided many business referrals for Downtown stories. Michelle DeGrand, Deputy Communications Officer, was essential for cross-promoting messaging across the City's channels and ours. We also met with Yuriana Garcia Tellez, Diversity Outreach & Engagement Administrator for the City's Diversity Advantage Initiative to discuss future ways of partnering and embracing the diversity in Bellevue through our programming.

EFFORT #8 - KEY PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to the City of Bellevue, we partnered with several key organizations to cast a wide net and stretch the message to support our city's core. This included retailers and institutions, such as Visit Bellevue, The Bellevue Collection, Downtown Bellevue Network, The Bravern, Bellevue Library, KidsQuest Children's Museum, Old Bellevue Merchants Association, and the Bellevue Arts Museum.

We also leveraged private property owners, businesses and private contributions to partner in the marketing and activation efforts. Our supporting sponsors for the Heart of Bellevue campaign included **Amazon**, the **City of Bellevue**, **Microsoft**, **Puget Sound Energy** and **Vulcan Real Estate**. We could not have done this work without their generous support.

TAKEAWAYS

Through the learnings gathered from the Heart of Bellevue campaign, three key takeaways have emerged:

- In times of stress, the resilience of local economies and their small businesses is closely connected to the presence and strength of local partner organizations with the capacity to reach and support them with connections to available resources, programming and advocacy.

 The ability to connect with and provide ground-level support to Downtown

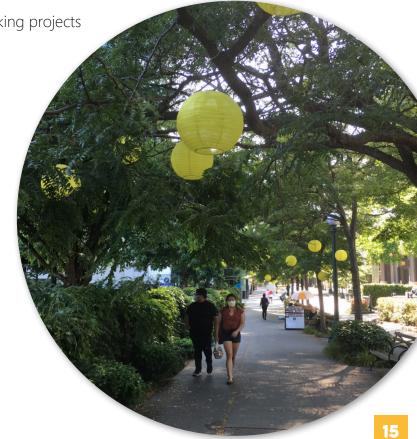
 Bellevue businesses has proven essential to assess needs and ensure the broadest reach with available resources.
- Ground level-implementation of placemaking activations in the public realm is critical, but challenging, tedious, and time-intensive work. It requires extensive relationship building with property owners, small businesses and residents, and dedicated resources to be successful. Even the smallest of public realm activations requires skilled staff, time and money.
- Cities that are truly committed to creating vibrant, active places don't do it alone. They rely on partnerships and **invest in growing the capacity of local organizations to help support placemaking goals**. This will be especially critical for the Grand Connection due to the fact that the majority of the route consists of private property.

NEXT STEPS

Throughout the campaign, the BDA was able to build connections, engage the community, and support economic recovery. We shared stories of activity, creativity and recovery while creating an attractive and fun environment for the community. We look forward to continuing this work and have outlined how to build on this success in these next steps.

 Discuss feasibility and support for 2021 placemaking projects with City and property owners

- Evaluate conditions and identify scope for 2021 virtual programming in addition to in-person events
- Engage stakeholders and document feedback for future opportunities and potential guidelines for public realm activations, events, and complementary uses
- Find funding to expand BDA staff to sustain and expand future storytelling projects – including visual communications, copywriting and placemaking activations
- Continue direct outreach with small business owners to gain insights into Downtown offerings and status of economic activity



TESTIMONIALS

"Especially during these challenging times, the support and resources they have provided have been invaluable. We are so grateful to their partnership and helping the Bellevue community!"

- ANNA WALLACE, FOGO DE CHAO



"The BDA is making a difference in supporting & promoting our businesses to continue bringing the downtown area to life."

- REYES CAMINO, ANDIAMO RISTORANTE



"The BDA has been a fantastic partner and resource. We love working with your staff. They are always open, available, and eager to be involved in embracing opportunities and finding solutions."

- KRISTOPHER JENKINS, RESONANCE EVENTS



"We really appreciate the boost in exposure, especially since opportunities like markets are so limited this year. Thank you, again, for the opportunity!"

- ANDREW & MELINDA KINDRED, KINDRED INDUSTRIAL



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Trank you!



OUR MISSION:

TO STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL VITALITY OF DOWNTOWN BELLEVUE.

BELLEVUEDOWNTOWN.COM