

NEIGHBORHOOD

LIAISON · PROGRAM

City of Bellevue ~ AWC Municipal Achievement Awards ~ May, 1998

Neighborhood Liaison Program ~ An introduction

For years, Bellevue residents wanted an "inside connection" at City Hall.
Now they have one.

For years, the City Council looked for a way to generate timely, reliable information about issues and concerns arising in the neighborhoods.
Now there's a way.

For years, residents wondered how to get connected with one another -- to identify their mutual interests and speak with one voice.
Now they're connected.

Bellevue's Neighborhood Liaison Program is creating a solid link between the City and its neighborhoods -- providing neighborhoods with the information they need to be effective participants in government; bringing critical information to the City Council and City decision-makers before problems become crises; facilitating communication at the neighborhood level so that people have a chance to address their own problems.

What is the Neighborhood Liaison Program ~ And how does it work?

The Neighborhood Liaison Program is a low-cost, no-frills communications strategy that draws upon the skills and experience of an 11-member interdepartmental Neighborhood Liaison Team. Chosen for their skills in dealing with the public and their knowledge of City government structure, services, policies and procedures, the Liaisons hold regular, full-time jobs within the City, but make themselves available -- during and after regular working hours -- to answer questions, attend meetings, and address neighborhood issues.

Each Liaison serves as a point of contact for specific neighborhoods, becoming familiar with the features, issues, strengths, problems, organizations, and community leaders within those neighborhoods. Each Liaison also serves as an internal consultant for City departments seeking information or connections within a specific neighborhood.

Throughout the year, Liaisons work:

- *individually* -- developing channels of communication with neighborhood leaders, organizations, and residents;

- *as a team* -- sharing information and applying collective knowledge and resources to resolve neighborhood issues and concerns; and
- *in partnership with City departments and community associations* -- bringing stakeholders to the table to develop creative approaches to neighborhood challenges.

The Liaison Team meets twice each month to discuss emerging issues with the City Manager. Liaisons meet as needed with individual department directors and managers, and issue regular written reports to both the Bellevue City Council and the Leadership Team (department directors). In addition, the Liaison Team pursues an aggressive public information program: writing a quarterly column for Bellevue's *It's Your City* newsletter; publishing and distributing a program brochure; securing media coverage and seeding neighborhood newsletters with important information about City projects and events.

Purpose of the program ~ Building ongoing communication

With the launch of the Neighborhood Liaison Program in March of 1997, the City of Bellevue recognized a long-standing need for a positive, productive, and *permanent* channel of communications with neighborhoods. Unlike other City programs which effectively, but narrowly, respond to specific requests or react to immediate issues, the Neighborhood Liaison Program is designed to cultivate long-term relationships -- the kind of permanent connections that lead to creative dialogs and partnerships.

First year track record

In its first year of operation, the Neighborhood Liaison Program:

- Established regular communication with 64 neighborhood associations;
- Addressed 381 separate issues raised by neighborhood associations and residents;
- Helped eight new neighborhood associations organize;
- Developed a comprehensive neighborhood data base for the City;
- Compiled a resource manual to aid in making referrals to City and community resources;
- Launched the Neighborhood Networks, a series of City-facilitated networking opportunities for neighborhood leaders.

Program cost ~ Easy on the budget

The Neighborhood Liaison Program made its '97 debut after the Bellevue City Council asked staff to come up with a strategy for improving communications and rapport with neighborhoods. The strategy, according to Council direction, was to address the need for stronger ties with neighborhoods, but:

- have minimal budget impact;
- add no positions to City staff; and
- add no bureaucracy or complexity to the structure of City government.

Working through an interdepartmental team, the program adds *no additional bureaucracy*. Utilizing existing staff, the program *adds no new positions*. In its first year, the program's total

operating cost was \$750 -- a *negligible budget impact*. For the two-year budget of 1999-2000, the Neighborhood Liaison's total proposed budget of \$2,580 will be covered by existing resources in the Department of Planning and Community Development budget.

Community impact ~ A stunning reception

Public reaction to the Neighborhood Liaison Program and its Neighborhood Networks spin-off have been overwhelmingly positive. Neighborhood leaders have praised the programs for their simple effectiveness in connecting people to government, and people to people. Both the City Council and the Leadership Team have publicly commended the program, and City Manager Steve Bauer has commented that the Neighborhood Liaison Program has "far exceeded expectations."

About the Neighborhood Liaison Program, community leaders say:

"The Neighborhood Liaison Program is an invaluable service to our community. It has the ability to reduce an entire city hall to one person and one phone number."

Christina Zavell, Board member, Somerset Community Assoc.

"Our liaison can get to the right people in the City."

Dick Morris, President, Sunset Community Assoc.

"It's helpful to have that level of familiarity with neighborhoods--to have someone who is looking at an area, and not just focusing on departmental functions."

Zee Straight-Wright, President, Newport Hills Community Assoc.

About Neighborhood Networks, community leaders say:

"I am just delighted with this forum. All neighborhoods share the same problems and concerns. Now there's a way for us to address them."

Barbara Kenney, Past President, E. Bellevue Community Council

"This is more than a forum for communications. This is a way for us to make a difference."

David Marks, President, W. Lake Sammamish Community Assoc.

Six major community benefits of the Neighborhood Liaison Program

1. Improved communication between the City and its neighborhoods.
2. An increase in trust and respect, as Liaisons put a face on government.
3. Stronger, more active and involved neighborhood associations.
4. Higher quality of public participation as neighborhoods work through Liaisons to fully understand public issues and opportunities for involvement.
5. Better "intelligence gathering" in the community, enabling the City to anticipate and respond more effectively to emerging problems.
6. Improved interdepartmental communication, resulting in better service to neighborhoods at all levels of City activity.

**Coordinated
neighborhood programs
from the City of Bellevue:**

Mini City Halls
Neighborhood service centers in Cross-roads and Factoria, emphasizing service, information, and referral.

Neighborhood Enhancement
A program working with citizens to identify and fund small local improvement projects.

Neighborhood Liaisons
City staff members working with neighborhoods to enhance communication and access to services.

Neighborhood Mediation
A program offering alternative conflict resolution for neighborhood disputes.

Neighborhood Planning
Efforts involving citizens in land use planning issues at the neighborhood level.

New in 1997-98

Neighborhood Networks
Networking meetings for neighborhood organizations.

Neighborhoods Conference
Citywide conference with speakers and workshops focusing on neighborhood issues.

Neighborhood Handbook
A guide to City structure, departmental services, and effective citizen participation.

City of Bellevue
Community Outreach
452-6880

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Planning and Community Development
11511 Main Street
Bellevue, WA 98009-9012

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**YOUR
CITY HALL
CONNECTION**



Ever wished for a personal contact inside City Hall?

Now you've got one!

Whether you're a resident, a student, a business person, or a member of a neighborhood organization, you have a Neighborhood Liaison — a direct connection to City information and resources.

Your Neighborhood Liaison is someone who cares about you and your neighborhood — a City staff member who is responsible for seeing that citizens in your area receive the best possible customer service from the City of Bellevue.

What is the Neighborhood Liaison Program?

The Neighborhood Liaison Program is part of the City Council's overall plan to strengthen relationships between Bellevue and its neighborhoods. The program is designed to serve citizens by giving them a reliable point of contact with the City, and to serve the City itself by generating information about neighborhood issues and trends.

How does the program work?

The program operates through a 12-member interdepartmental team which reports directly to the City Manager. Each team member serves as the liaison to a specific geographic area, becoming familiar with the features, issues, strengths, problems, organizations, and community leaders within that area.

Liaisons hold other jobs within the City, but also are available to answer questions, attend meetings, and address issues that pertain to their assigned areas.

Individual liaisons, and the areas they serve, are listed inside this pamphlet.



What can Liaisons do for you?

Your Liaison can connect you to the information and resources that you need to get things done.



Be sure to call when you:

- Need information, and don't know where to find it;
- Want a connection to City staff or resources;
- Wonder how to get more involved with the City;
- Need advice on influencing City decisions;
- Want a City Hall contact for your neighborhood association;
- Need help forming a neighborhood association;
- Want help resolving a neighborhood issue or concern.

You're the reason!

The Neighborhood Liaison Program was created with you in mind! The concept evolved from the suggestions of Bellevue

