



**Regular Meeting of the Library Board of Trustees
Tuesday, June 17 – Central Library Lecture Room – 3:30 p.m.**

Minutes of Actions and Decisions of the Library Board of Trustees of the Bellingham Public Library as authorized by RCW 27.12.210 and SEC. 7.02 Charter of the City of Bellingham.

Board Members Present: Rebecca Craven, Kristy Van Ness, Kendra Bradford, and Shirin Deylami, Deborra Garrett

Library Management Staff: Rebecca Judd, Annette Bagley, Katrina Buckman, Bethany Hoglund, Jon McConnel and Jennifer Vander Ploeg

Absent: Hannah Stone, City Council liaison

FOBPL Representative: Carol Comeau, Friends of BPL Board Liaison

Call to order and introductions: Regular session was called to order at 3:33 p.m. by Chair, Rebecca Craven.

Approve/modify agenda: Kristy Van Ness moved to approve the agenda. Shirin Deylami seconded. Motion carried.

Public comment: No public comment.

Consent agenda: Kendra Bradford moved to approve the May 20, 2025 Regular Meeting minutes. Kristy Van Ness seconded. Motion carried.

Board Chair report:

- No report.

Board member reports:

- No reports.

City Council liaison report:

- No reports.

Friends of BPL report:

- Carol Comeau reported:
 - The Friends made \$20,720 at the May Book Sale. Bellingham Public Library staff member Miranda LeonJones worked with the Friends of the Bellingham Public Library (FOBPL) Board to obtain a large donation of books from Ridwell. Most of the items

were able to be sold. Ridwell contacted Miranda again and offered a large Children's book donation. The donation will likely be received in November. The Friends are considering whether to hold a stand-alone Children's sale or fold the donation into the regular January sale.

- The FOBPL received an anonymous donation of \$25,000 which will be donated to the Central Library Renovation Fund at the Whatcom Community Foundation.
- The FOBPL Board offered advocacy help, specifically contacting local City officials and state representatives as needed.

Library Director report:

- Library Director Rebecca Judd reported:
 - Saturday, June 14 was the No Kings protest on steps of City Hall and in Lee Memorial Park, with about 6,000 people in attendance. A lot of planning was done prior to the rally, including working with Public Works to bring in porta potties. Security Supervisor Cam Birman worked to create an event safety plan with City and Library staff in preparation for the large event. Many library staff were on-site, and thankfully everything was peaceful and calm.
 - Library Night with the Bellingham Bells is coming up on Thursday, June 26. Bring your public library card for free entry to the game.

Strategic Planning

- Sydney Prusak, Planner 2 in Planning and Community Development, presented on the Community Wellbeing and Civic Practices of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- The Comprehensive Plan is called The Bellingham Plan (*see Attachment #1 at the end of the minutes*). The Plan was last updated in 2016 and current proposed revisions were shaped through community engagement and feedback. Specifically, the need for a Community Wellbeing and Civic Practices chapter emerged during multiple listening sessions.
- Rebecca Judd will send Trustees the link for Engage Bellingham, where the chapter is posted and open for public feedback and comment.

Staff Safety and Mental Health/Welcoming Public Space update

- Rebecca Judd reported that Kristy Van Ness, Rebecca Craven, Carol Comeau and a number of staff attended the 5-year Homeless Housing Plan Open Houses. Attendees were asked to help prioritize the seven goals moving forward on the plan, and write-in anything not captured on the draft plan.
 - Of the seven goals going forward, two are community driven and five being driven by Federal Housing Policy.
- At the Lynden open house, Kristy inquired about how feedback could be submitted by community members not able to attend either of the open houses. Rebecca Judd will follow up on this.
- Rebecca Judd reported that she met with a provider from Road2Home who is working on a proposal to provide day shelter services in our community. Road2Home, as an agency, is interested in year-round services rather than seasonal services. Road2Home is not working on

a proposal to answer the current winter shelter RFP out for bid, rather focusing on how to provide sustainable services.

- Rebecca has a desire to convene a meeting of interested providers to work on the question, "what can we work on/put in place for this upcoming winter?"
- Rebecca shared that the idea of a protection area around the Library has been raised as a way to address ongoing safety concerns. This question has led to a deeper exploration about Library property boundaries. This work is ongoing in collaboration with Legal.
- Carol Comeau voiced frustration at the 5-Year Homeless Housing Plan meeting and the lack of the topic of a day shelter. The Friends are concerned about the staff, the patrons and children, and support Rebecca's idea about the collaborative approach between service providers to provide year-round shelters and, in turn, a year-round safer library.

Budget Planning Update:

- Rebecca Judd acknowledged that City Budget deadlines aren't necessarily in line with the Library Board meeting schedule.
- All departments were asked to submit the following by July 11:
 - Any budget increase requests for 2026
 - A budget reduction exercise: 5% and 10% budget reduction scenarios for 2026
- Rebecca does not recommend asking for any budget increases.
- Rebecca acknowledged that the Board's Special Meeting in May was helpful in crafting the requested budget scenarios.
 - At the May meeting, the Library Board decided to not go below the low Level of Service (LOS) for library materials. As a result, Rebecca will not put forward any additional materials cuts.
 - The freezing of the Outreach Services position was discussed and agreed upon in May.
- Rebecca walked the Board through the proposed budget reduction scenarios that include:
 - Anticipated savings from the frozen Branch Specialist III position (savings, as the position was not vacated until May 2025. These savings would be for the salary paid in 2025 prior to retirement).
 - With the anticipated upcoming closure of the Central Library for renovation in 2026, there are expected savings for utilities.
 - If needed, we could explore voluntary reductions for staff. It is important that staff do not feel compelled to give up voluntary hours through leave without pay. Additionally, Rebecca acknowledged that such furloughs would need to be worked on in collaboration with bargaining units.
 - If further reductions are needed, we will need to begin closing open hours. At the Board Retreat, a takeaway was that further cuts need to be visible to the public, rather than just absorbed by staff.
- Rebecca acknowledged that the numbers do not add up to exactly the 5 and 10% target numbers. At this time, this is an exercise to craft and consider scenarios so that crisis decisions can be avoided. Rebecca extended gratitude to Mayor Lund for her thoughtfulness and leadership in this process.

- Rebecca Craven voiced strong support for making cuts visible to the community rather than absorbing internally. Kristy Van Ness voiced additional support; staff simply cannot absorb cuts. Kendra voiced that there is power in having some public impacts.
 - Kristy is hopeful that we will be able to message *why* we are having to make hard changes that impact the public if we do need to make drastic changes.
 - Shirin pointed out that messaging will be crucial, especially in light of the ongoing capital campaign and how operational costs are different from capital costs and campaigns.
- Carol Comeau reinforced that the Friends are happy to support the library, but gift funds are not meant to be used in-lieu of the City's obligations to fund the library, specifically the materials budget.

Central Library Renovation Update:

- The library issued a news release about securing State funding for the renovation.
- In addition to thank you letters, Rebecca will invite local legislators to the library to be able to say thank you in person and show the representatives the Children's Library. The two dates identified at this time are July 14 from 10am – Noon and July 25 from 11am – 1pm. The July 25 time is during the Children's Craft Fair.
- Kristy Van Ness reported out from the Fundraising Committee. The Whatcom Community Foundation will meet with the Fundraising Committee on June 24. Kristy is hopeful we can get more clarity around what roles and responsibilities are needed, and by who. This will hopefully inform the question of whether or not the Board needs to hire a consultant.

New Business:

- No new business.

Agenda items for next meeting:

- Andy Asbjornsen, City Finance Director, will provide a budget presentation.

Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.

Next Regular Library Board Meeting Tuesday, July 15, 2025 – Central Library – 3:30 p.m.

Chair, Library Board of Trustees

ATTEST

Library Director, Library Board of Trustees

Attachments:

- Attachment #1: The Bellingham Plan, Community Wellbeing and Civic Practices

THE BELLINGHAM PLAN



Community Wellbeing and Civic Practices

Library Board of Trustees | June 2025

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Proposed Process & Schedule for 2025

1. Staff drafts Plan (underway)
2. Planning Commission reviews drafted material (February – June)
3. Planning Commission public hearing and recommendation to City Council (July – August)
4. City Council public hearing, discussion, and final plan approval (September – December)

Other Boards and Commissions provide feedback on relevant drafted material to Planning Commission between Steps 1 and 2.

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Past Engagement: The Numbers

» 8,992 Total Survey Responses

- » 4,287 Community Vision Survey responses
- » 1,475 Housing Preference Survey responses
- » 3,230 Growth Survey responses

» 14 Open Houses

- » 980+ total participants

» Engage Bellingham Online Engagement

- » 750+ Engaged participants
- » 9,880+ site visits

THE BELLINGHAM PLAN PHASE 1 SUMMARY REPORT
FEBRUARY 2024

THE BELLINGHAM PLAN PHASE 2 SUMMARY REPORT
OCTOBER 2024

THE BELLINGHAM PLAN PHASE 3 SUMMARY REPORT
JANUARY 2025

Under-represented groups we made specific efforts to reach:

- Latino and/or Hispanic community
- 18-24 age and/or students

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What the Community Said

These descriptions summarize the most common opinions we heard relevant to this chapter.

I want to gather with my friends in a place that feels authentic to my identity.

We like to know what the City is working on and how our ideas might be incorporated.

Everyone should have a voice, and we should put extra effort into reaching those who aren't represented yet.

We like learning new things in welcoming spaces.

We want to foster safe, vibrant, and unique places, especially in our City Center.

A connected community is a stronger, more resilient one. We want more ways to connect with each other.

The best decisions come from listening to many viewpoints and choosing directions that benefit everyone.

Community engagement is important. It is a part of what makes us Bellingham.

Multi-generational relationships are important, especially when considering ways to combat loneliness.

We want to reduce food deserts and provide more access to basic essentials and services.

Equity is important. We want our choices today to benefit everyone in the future.

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Proposed New Chapter for the 2025 Plan

Why are we proposing this new chapter?



Community feedback: We heard how important the wellbeing of the community is throughout the engagement process. Part of this feedback included support for equitable and inclusive civic practices.

Significance: This topic is important and should be consolidated so relevant and new information is easier to find.

State Requirements: We must meet legislative requirements to plan for and accommodate housing that is affordable to all income levels. HB 1220 (2021) requires Bellingham to examine and address racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing policies and regulations.

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Community Wellbeing topics in 2016 plan

In the Land Use Chapter

- Healthcare (physical access)
- Arts & Culture
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Human Services
- Food Access, Systems
- Childcare
- Community Connectedness

In the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Chapter

- Active Living
- In the Transportation Chapter
- Active Transportation Types

In the Economic Development Chapter

- Skill Training
- Healthcare (physical access)
- Community Safety
- Food Access/Systems

In the Capital Facilities & Utilities Chapter

- Arts & Culture
- Life-Long Learning

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Civic Practices topics in 2016 plan

In the Land Use Chapter

- Public participation in planning
- Reaching out to underserved populations
- Culture of dialogue & partnerships
- Transparent Processes

In the Housing Chapter

- Equitable and inclusive community involvement in planning

In the Economic Development Chapter

- Collaboration with County, Port, and regional partners

In the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Chapter

- Park improvements & service partnerships for underserved areas
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion training for staff
- Public participation in Parks planning

In the Transportation Chapter

- Equitable public engagement
- Equitable investments
- Accessible facilities

In the Capital Facilities and Utilities Chapter

- Public participation in planning facilities and improvements

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Community Wellbeing Chapter Draft Topics

Each blue box represents a topic that will later become a goal in the Community Wellbeing Chapter. These will be the overarching goals for the City, with more specific policies to support them.

Proposed Goals

Community Health and Wellbeing

Confront systemic and regional community health and wellbeing issues through ample social services, a resilient food system, and interactive programming.

Equity and Inclusion

Expand and strengthen equity and inclusion throughout the City's civic processes and practices.

Vitality and Belonging

Foster community vitality, reduce loneliness, and promote a positive sense of belonging through safety and connection.

Community Engagement

Foster a welcoming environment for outreach and engagement by inviting and enabling community members to be involved in City government.

Arts and Culture

Promote and celebrate Bellingham's arts and culture.

Tribal Relations

Strengthen relationships and engagement processes with tribal nations and indigenous community members through informed practices that respect tribal sovereignty and honor treaty rights.

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Walking through the Topics

Now, we'll walk through an overview of the proposed updates for each goal. Each bubble represents a concept within that goal. Each concept may become a single policy or several in the final document.

Existing Concept

This concept exists in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan already.

Some Updates

Either this concept will be emphasized more than in the current plan, or something minor is being changed about it.

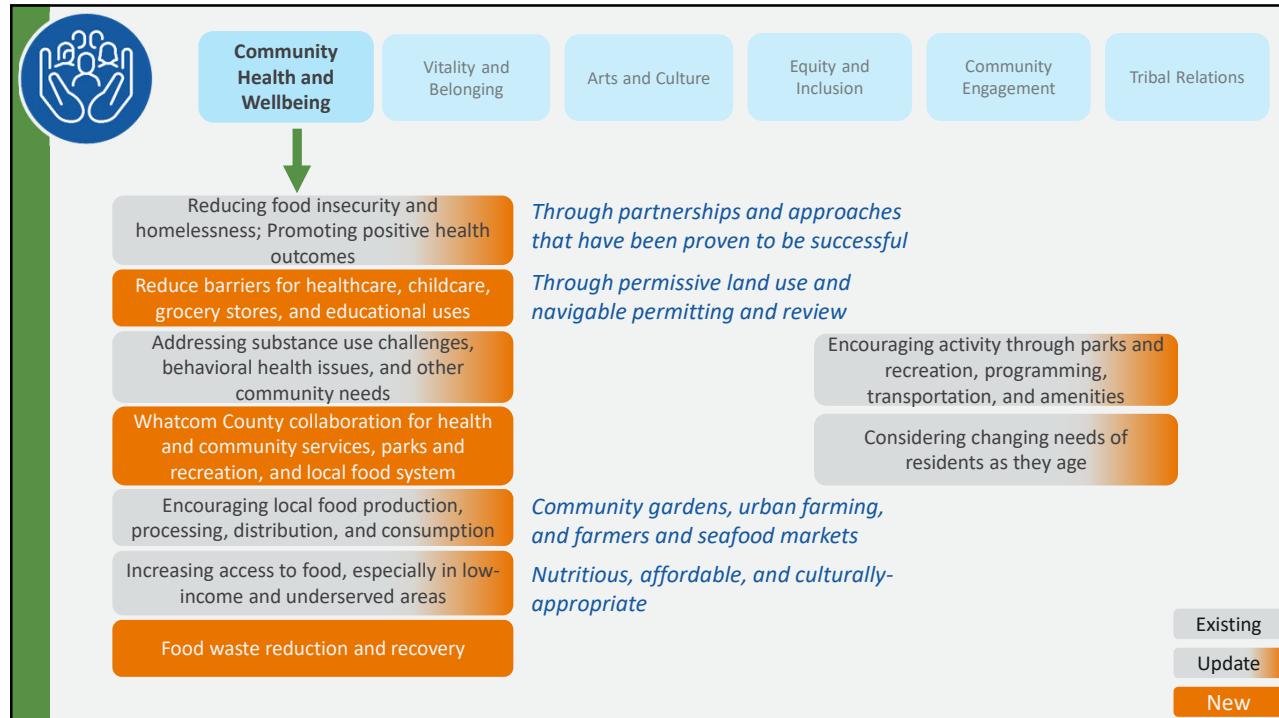
New Concept/
Major Updates

This concept does not exist in the 2016 plan at all or will include significant changes.

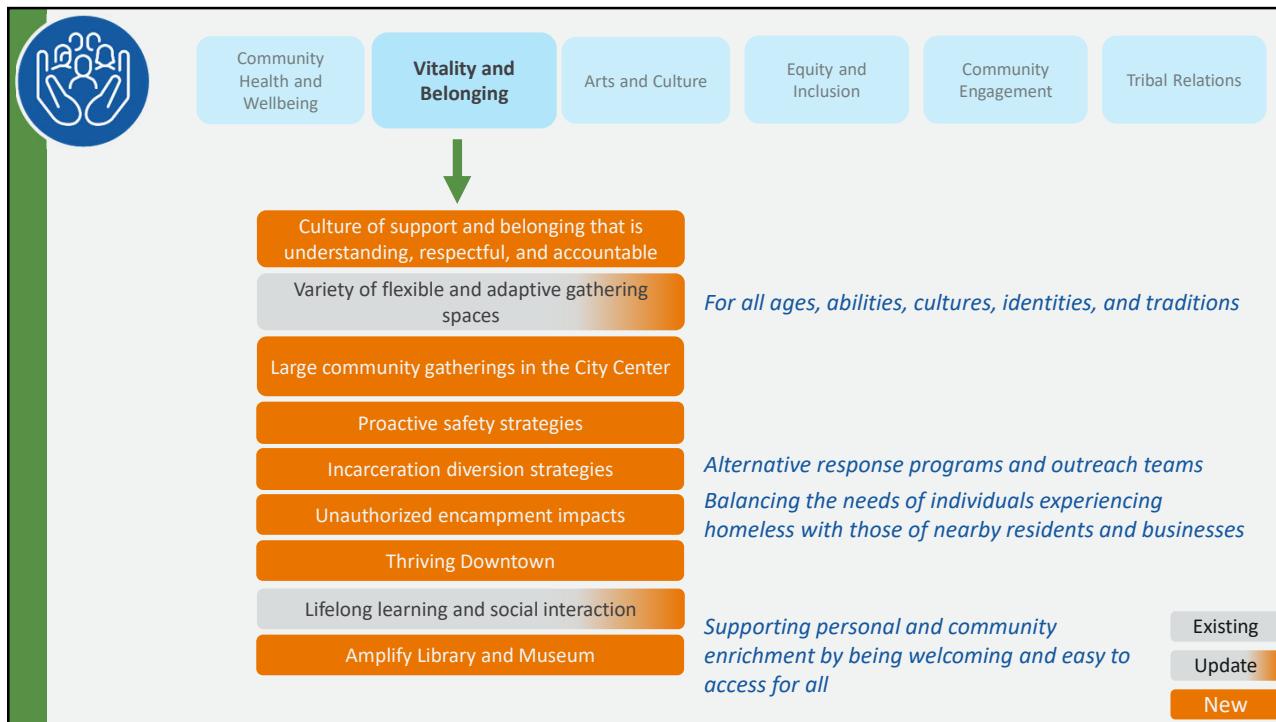


This icon indicates this concept is related to state requirements or legislation.

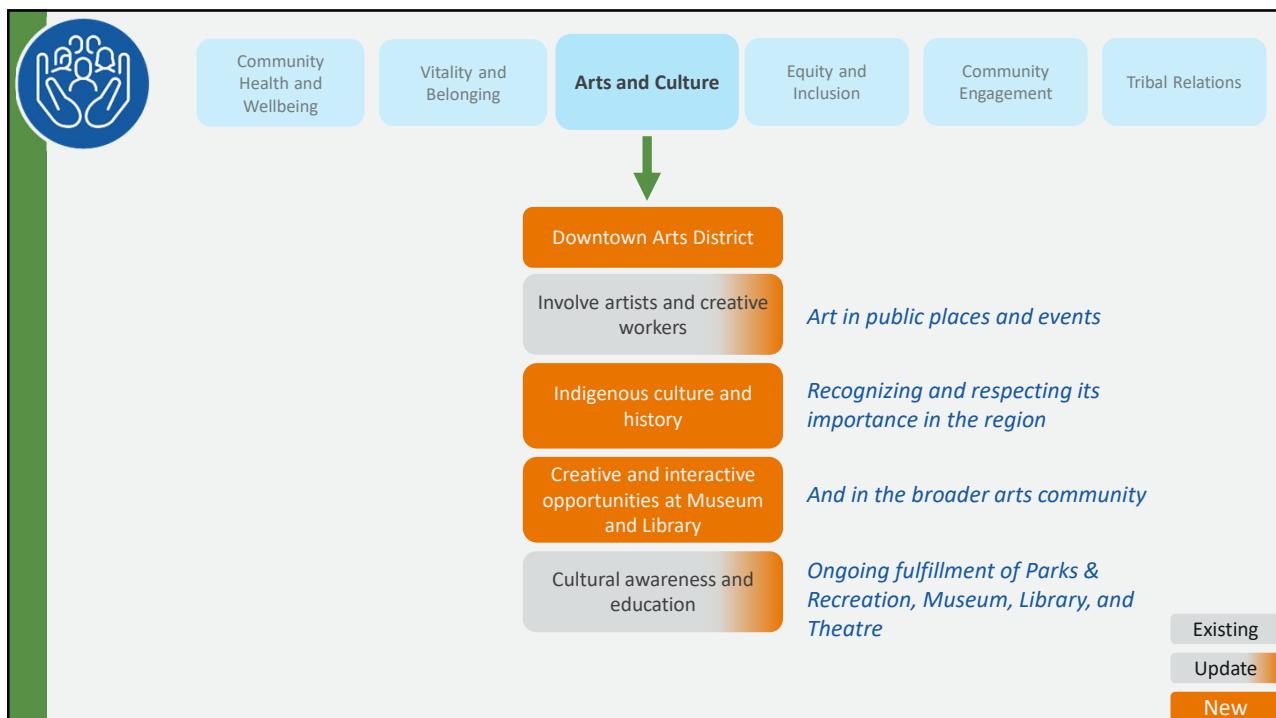
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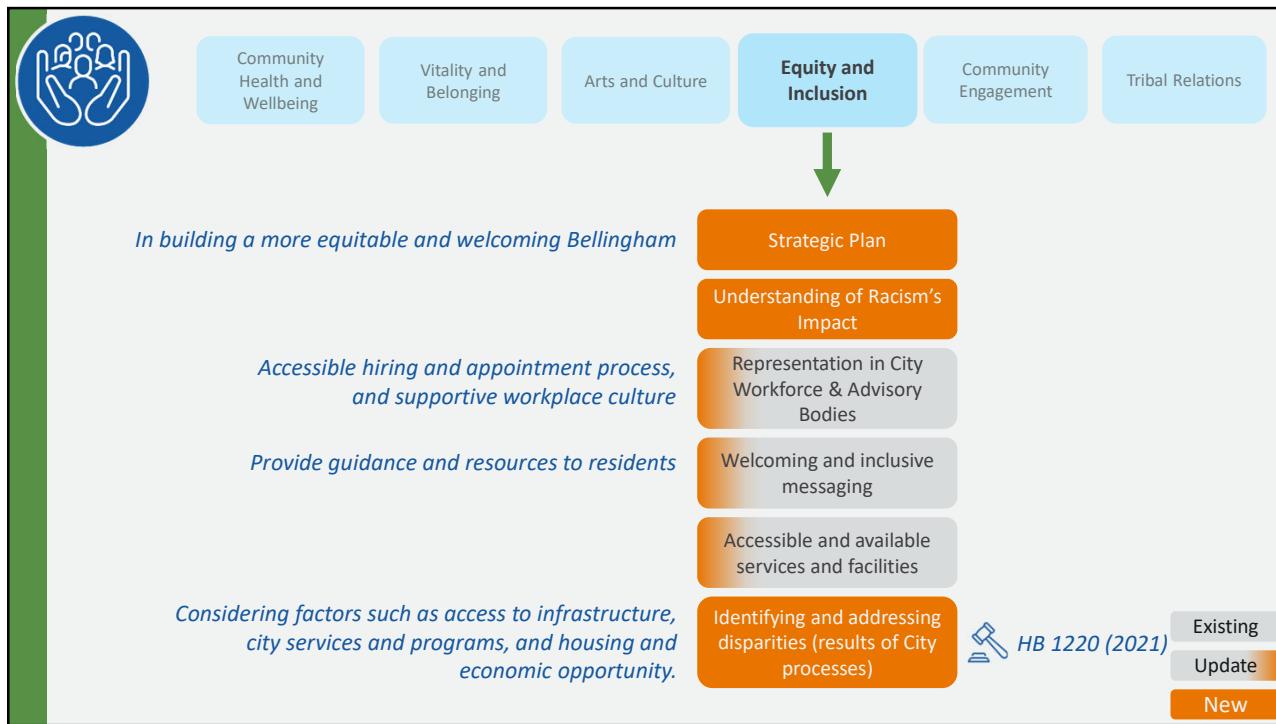
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