



Bellevue Planning Commission

February 22, 2023

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Scope of policy amendments to the BelRed Subarea Plan being brought forward as part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

STAFF CONTACTS

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POLICY ISSUES

Targeted amendments to policies within the [BelRed Subarea Plan](#) will be recommended to the Planning Commission as part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update to strengthen guidance for effective implementation and achievement of the BelRed vision and to help the city achieve its Comprehensive Planning goals. Recommendations will reflect new information, community input, and will address impacts identified during the environmental review of growth alternatives.

The following BelRed Subarea Plan policies also call for a review of implementation outcomes periodically to assure successful achievement of the BelRed Vision:

Policy S-BR-42: ... A review of housing affordability strategies should occur three to five years after the 2009 adoption of the Subarea Plan.

Policy S-BR-85: Monitor and assess the implementation of the Bel-Red Subarea Plan and make adjustments to assure success of providing affordable housing, parks and open space, a mix of uses, and other aspects of the BelRed vision. A review of the implementation of the BelRed Subarea Plan should occur approximately five years after the Plan's initial 2009 adoption and periodically thereafter.

Reviews of progress occurred midway through the decade. However, with the Great Recession following adoption of the Subarea Plan, implementation was delayed, and capacity to revise the Plan was not sufficient until now.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



Confirm the recommended scope of work for policy amendments to the BelRed Subarea Plan occurring as part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

LOOKING BACK

BelRed Vision

The BelRed Subarea Plan, adopted in 2009, set out a bold vision for transforming the light industrial area into a model of sustainable, compact, mixed use development. Key elements of the vision included achieving:

- a broad range of housing at various levels of affordability,
- a vibrant economy with a diverse mix of commercial uses,
- a distinctive and sustainable urban form and design including:
 - a nodal land use pattern,
 - an appropriate scale of development,
 - mixed use, walkable neighborhoods, and
 - a sense of place with a unique cultural environment featuring a BelRed Arts District,
- a comprehensive, connected parks and open space system,
- a model of environmental sustainability including:
 - stream corridor restoration,
 - reduction of impervious surface and use of natural drainage practices,
 - expanded tree canopy, and
 - environmentally sensitive building design, and
- a complete, connected and well-balanced multi-modal transportation system that contributes to BelRed's sense of place and sustainability.

Recent Investment

Since plan adoption in 2009, substantial public and private investments have been made within the subarea including development of over 2,700 new housing units including townhomes, housing for older adults, and housing for low-income households. A mix of non-residential space has also been developed with over a million square feet of office in the Spring District, 86,000 square feet of educational space with the development of the Global Innovation Exchange (GIX), 73,000 square feet of institutional space with the development of Seattle Children's Hospital, nearly 70,000 square feet of light industrial space with the development of Sound Transit's Operations and Maintenance Facility East (OMFE), and retail and services with

the renovation and development of several auto dealerships. More housing and office projects are in the pipeline as private developers assemble properties to enable cohesive redevelopment.

Investment in public infrastructure since 2009 has been notable. Sound Transit has finished construction of four light rail stations serving BelRed along with its Operations and Maintenance Facility. The City has constructed portions of Spring Boulevard and expanded 124th Avenue NE and 120th Avenue NE as well as advanced the design of other roadways in the 130th development node.

Additionally, nearly 8.9 million dollars of fees in lieu were collected to support construction of new affordable housing and preservation of 36 units of existing affordable housing serving very low-income households. Permits for more affordable units are in the pipeline. The City is also supporting major projects in both the 120th and 130th development nodes that will bring several hundred more affordable housing units online – the first, located just south of Sound Transit’s Operations and Maintenance Facility, will add 235 units of affordable housing for 99 years, 52 units of affordable housing for 12 years through the MFTE program, 266 market rate housing units, about 435,000 square feet of office, and about 49,000 square feet of retail development. The details of the second project located just north of the 130th Station are still being worked out.

In 2009, the City of Bellevue and King County established an interlocal agreement for a regional transfer of development rights. The City also received funding as part of that agreement that supported acquisition of properties surrounding the West Tributary. Since that time, all the available development rights allocated to BelRed were purchased enabling protection of King County farmland. In addition, since 2009, over 8.5 million dollars of in-lieu fees have been collected to support the acquisition and improvement of parks and restoration of streams. A master plan for the West Tributary park site is scheduled to begin in 2024.

It has been 14 years since the BelRed plan was adopted. While parts of BelRed have flourished, other areas have been slower to take shape. There is still work to do to fully realize the BelRed vision in terms of stream restoration, use of low impact development for onsite infiltration, park land acquisition and improvement, and in establishment and investment in the BelRed Arts district.

LOOKING FORWARD

As the City looks ahead to 2044 and updates its Comprehensive Plan, the BelRed Subarea will continue to play a major role in housing a significant portion of the City’s future job and population growth. And while the vision for the BelRed Subarea is still relevant today, some of the policies and land use map designations in the plan could be updated to strengthen certain implementation strategies and to reflect new information gained since 2009.

Scoping Comments

Many public comments received during community engagement activities for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update expressed concern over the high cost of housing in Bellevue and called for increasing residential capacity within the City to expand both the supply and diversity of housing stock in terms of rental and ownership housing. During the scoping period for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), stakeholders called for increasing capacity for both housing and commercial development in BelRed by allowing greater density and height around the light rail stations. Another comment from King County Public Health, while supporting transit oriented development, cautioned about increasing capacity for sensitive uses, including residential uses, near high-volume roadways such as I-405 and SR-520 due to higher exposure risks to air pollution.

BelRed Land Use Alternatives

Considering the final location of East Link light rail stations, the City's pressing need for housing, stakeholder comments, and the growth alternatives for the rest of the City, three action alternatives were developed for analysis in the EIS. In each of the action alternatives, the higher intensity nodal zones were expanded in every direction. In alternative 2, expansion southward was increased slightly to reflect proposed changes to land use designations further south. In alternative 3, higher development intensities were proposed within the nodes, and the amount of area focused on residential development was expanded except in areas adjacent to freeways.

Key Policy Issues and Summary Scope of BelRed Subarea Plan Policy Changes

Similar to other elements within the Comprehensive Plan, topical sections of the BelRed Subarea Plan include introductory narrative text, goal statements, and policies in support of the goal. The introductory text provides the planning context and explains the policy direction the city is taking. Proposed amendments will include the addition of new policies, the repeal of outdated policies, and the modification of existing policies to reflect revised policy intent.

The introductory text will be updated to reflect the current planning context and policy content. Below is a list of the key policy issues for each section of the plan. Additional policy amendments may emerge from the analysis in the EIS and continued community engagement.

Land use

- Expand nodes to reflect final light rail station locations and a half mile walk shed.
- Increase development capacity within nodal zones to take full advantage of light rail investment and to reflect latest development typologies.
- Expand residential land use designations, except within proximity to high-volume roadways.

Environment

- Strengthen protection and restoration of streams and other natural features.
- Remove barriers to onsite infiltration with low impact development.
- Reference the Watershed Master Plan for improvements to surface waters.
- Consider calling for a detailed evaluation of the ability to open stream channels, and of the city's ability to require opening.
- Suggest changes to the Critical Areas Ordinance when it is next updated.

Parks

- Move specific projects to the Parks and Open Space System Plan and add policy referring to that plan.
- Add policy to expand access to trails and waterbodies.
- Replace policy regarding linear parks along Spring Boulevard with an expanded idea.

Housing

- Look for ways to incentivize larger multifamily housing units in addition to affordable units.
- Incentivize affordable housing for artists within the BelRed Arts District.
- Reference citywide housing policy regarding targets for affordable housing, and other mechanisms for achieving affordable housing.

Arts

- Define Arts District boundary to prioritize the provision of affordable art production, education, practice, and performance space.
- Identify strategies to prevent displacement of existing arts uses.
- Remove regulatory barriers to allow more artisanal uses.
- Consider policies that would encourage provision of an event space.

Transportation

- Clarify east to west ped/bike connections.
- Expand grid where needed.
- Call for improvements across 148th Avenue NE to enable a safe, convenient, and comfortable connection to the Overlake Light Rail station to the east.
- Explore ways to support easier implementation of the BelRed Street Grid.

Implementation

- Contextualize Amenity Incentive System to consider location and features of a site.
- Review financing strategy policy to provide greater clarity.

- Explore policy calling for a BelRed Infrastructure Fund to help with implementation of the street grid.

SCHEDULE & NEXT STEPS

Any direction Planning Commission gives to staff will be incorporated into the scope of work to develop policies. Staff will return to the Planning Commission in April and then again in June to report on the progress of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, which may include updates related to the BelRed Subarea Plan.

OPTIONS

1. Confirm the recommended scope of work for policy amendments to the BelRed Subarea Plan occurring as part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.
2. Suggest modifications to the scope of work.

ATTACHMENTS

A. None