

BELRED ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

The BelRed Look Forward LUCA aims to align development regulations with updated policies such as housing, job growth, and transit-oriented development, and will refine strategies for affordable housing, street network improvements, daylighting streams, and strengthening the BelRed Arts District. The engagement for this project is divided into two phases.

Phase 1 was focused on establishing a shared understanding of the project, gathering early input on BelRed priorities, and building relationships to support deeper collaboration in Phase 2. The engagement was designed to introduce the project scope; clarify its relationship to the Comprehensive Plan and the long-standing BelRed vision; preview core concepts to be advanced through the Land Use Code Amendments (LUCA) and gather input.

A working draft LUCA was released in December 2025, reflecting feedback received through Phase 1. Phase 2 builds on the foundation laid in Phase 1 to focus on reviewing and revising the working draft, and continued collaboration with stakeholders from Phase 1.

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

A multi-channel engagement strategy was used to reach a broad and diverse range of stakeholders. Outreach methods included in-person events, small-group information sessions, engagement through the Bellevue Development Committee (BDC), a residential mailer, and online questionnaires. These methods were selected to balance broad awareness-building with opportunities for more detailed, qualitative input.

Phase 1 engagement generated a wide range of feedback reflecting diverse perspectives, priorities, and experiences within the BelRed area. Input gathered through staff listening sessions, BDC meetings, and the online questionnaire identified recurring themes related to land use, development patterns, amenities, mobility, housing, and implementation considerations.

Feedback from Phase 1 informed the initial public working draft, which was published on December 31, 2025. As the project advanced into Phase 2, engagement was specifically tailored and refined to focus more narrowly on key themes that emerged during Phase 1 and responding to comments on the draft. As the project advanced into Phase 2, there has been additional refinement of the LUCA in response to feedback.

Engagement activities were organized into three primary formats:

1. Staff listening sessions and internal work groups
2. Technical engagement through the Bellevue Development Committee (BDC)
3. Broad public engagement through in-person events, an online questionnaire, and online activities through Engaging Bellevue

SUMMARY OF KEY FEEDBACK THEMES

Each section below summarizes the engagement approach and highlights themes that emerged from that format for both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

1. STAFF LISTENING SESSIONS AND INTERNAL WORK GROUPS

During Phase 1, city staff conducted a series of internal Listening Sessions to identify opportunities to improve code clarity, address recurring implementation challenges, and better align regulations with adopted policies. These sessions consisted of hour-long meetings with staff across multiple departments and divisions, including land use, housing, transportation, utilities, parks, and community development. Feedback from these sessions emphasized areas where code amendments could clarify regulatory intent, reduce friction during implementation, and better support policy outcomes across disciplines.

In Phase 2, additional listening sessions were conducted in the same format to workshop specific concerns and areas in the draft code. These groups provided a diverse range of expertise that enabled a broad range of feedback and ideas to help inform draft revisions. The working sessions covered a range of topics including developing solutions for better local street grid alignment, balancing the amenity incentive system, and further enforcing and defining the BelRed Arts District Intensive Area. Staff were often able to rely on previous policy decisions and conversations from the Wilburton LUCA as a baseline and build and modify elements to best suit BelRed.

2. TECHNICAL ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE BELLEVUE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Technical engagement was conducted through a series of structured Bellevue Development Committee (BDC) meetings held between June 2025 and February 2026. These meetings were designed to obtain focused, iterative input from stakeholders with technical expertise and local knowledge of the development industry, with particular emphasis on BelRed.

JUNE 2025 BDC MEETING – LOCAL STREETS AND FACILITATED GROUP EXERCISE

PHASE 1

The June meeting included a technical breakout session focused on the local street system. The session:

- Reviewed adopted policy direction
- Presented examples of flexibility within the current Land Use Code (LUC) to solicit feedback on whether the flexibility is effective, sufficient, and perceived as flexible, and to gather perspectives on how additional or alternative flexibility could be structured
- Identified locations where local street improvements are underway
- Acknowledged challenges associated with completing the street grid
- Included a facilitated table exercise to identify perceived problems with the local street approach, with participants required to pair each identified problem with a proposed solution

JULY 2025 BDC MEETING – LOCAL STREETS SUMMARY AND EXPANDED TOPICS

PHASE 1

The July meeting provided a summary of feedback received from the June problem/solution exercise related to local streets and expanded the discussion to include:

- Land use approach
- Dealing with existing non-conformities
- Supporting projects with multiple phases in a Master Development Plan (MDP)

AUGUST 2025 BDC MEETING – STREAM DAYLIGHTING AND CRITICAL AREAS CHANGES
PHASE 1

The August meeting focused on potential amendments related to stream restoration and daylighting, with discussion centered on:

- Context on the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) update, including an overview of the update process and how proposed changes intersect with development and local streets in BelRed
- Overview of existing policies related to streams in BelRed, including long-term restoration objectives
- Potential amendments to stream restoration and daylighting development incentives, including questions about how incentives could better support restoration outcomes while maintaining development feasibility
- Consideration of innovative mitigation approaches
- Updates on local streets and next steps for the street grid, with emphasis on coordination between local street map changes and environmental conditions

SEPTEMBER 2025 BDC MEETING – LOCAL STREETS FOCUS AND FACILITATED GROUP EXERCISE
PHASE 1

The September meeting returned to a primary focus on the local street system and included a facilitated group exercise to identify:

- Actions or tools most useful for addressing perceived challenges
- Actions or tools least useful for addressing challenges
- Newly identified issues and potential solutions

FEBRUARY 2026 BDC MEETING – BELRED CODE LAB GROUP EXERCISE
PHASE 2

At the February meeting, city staff facilitated a deep dive into the BelRed LUCA. The session was interactive with three different activity stations for participants to move through, learn more about specified topics, and provide feedback for consideration. The activity stations were designed on key themes relevant to the project:

1. Local Streets Station. This station was designed with an understanding that local streets are integral to support redevelopment and intensification of BelRed and are necessary to ensure reliable connectivity to the greater city. In addition, staff recognized the need for increased flexibility where site constraints exist. At this station, participants were asked to use their “flexibility tokens” to suggest alternative and constructive solutions that address the specific local street segment concerns while also still aligning with the city’s overall connectivity and access goals. At the end of the activity, staff collected annotated maps that highlighted areas of concern and specific issues with potential solutions that were helpful for further code refinement after review.
2. Implementation Station. This station was designed with an understanding of the importance of recognizing the implications of implementation early in the process to minimize the chance of any surprises or issues surfacing later. Knowing that there are many different departments all

with their own nuances involved with implementation, participants were provided with a “responsibility map” that provided the policy context for local streets as well as the regulatory framework and responsible departments. Staff members from different city groups such as transportation, land use, and utilities, were also present to help answer questions, provide insight into the process, and facilitate the discussion. Participants also were provided with relevant local street code sections to identify any “code bonks” they could either see or anticipate. The highlighted sections provided staff with more insight on where additional code clarity could be added as well as where applicants could benefit from additional internal coordination and process improvements.

3. **Affordable Housing & Amenity Incentives Station.** This station included two activities, one for neighborhood priorities and another for cost drivers and amenities. In the neighborhood priorities activity, participants were asked to rank their top priorities (e.g., affordable housing, arts and creative spaces, parks and open space, stream restoration) for each neighborhood district in BelRed. The ranking of these priorities informed staff on how best to weigh the amenity incentive system based on the neighborhood district. In the cost drivers and amenities activity, participants were asked to identify cost drivers (e.g., infrastructure, labor and materials, interest rates, land acquisition) and rank them in order of impact they have on a project. Participants were also provided with a list of common amenity incentive options and asked to provide insight on which are easier to deliver versus which are more aspirational in terms of implementation. Combining the two aspects, staff requested suggestions on how to make the more aspirational amenity bonuses easier to achieve given the shared understanding and recognition of the cost driver impacts. This activity outlined the tradeoffs that must be acknowledged by the City when setting development incentives, calibrating requirements, and establishing policy priorities in the LUCA.

SUMMARY – BDC ENGAGEMENT

In Phase 1, stakeholders identified several challenges related to the local streets provisions of the existing BelRed Land Use Code. The most frequently cited issues involved street grid alignment. Commenters expressed concern that the current prescribed grid does not adequately account for existing property lines, topography, or other site-specific constraints. As a result, the required alignment can be difficult or impractical to implement on many parcels and, in some cases, significantly reduces redevelopment feasibility. Respondents noted that strict adherence to the grid may necessitate substantial regrading, property consolidation, or infrastructure construction that is disproportionate to the scale of individual redevelopment projects.

Additional challenges raised included the use and feasibility of “half streets”, the level of detail provided in the local street map, local street dimensional requirements, and constraints associated with high water table conditions.

Additional feedback emphasized the impacts of critical areas, particularly streams and slopes, on street connectivity and completion. Several respondents noted that these environmental constraints can significantly limit the ability to construct local streets as currently required. Suggestions included allowing bridge crossings over streams where appropriate to improve connectivity while minimizing environmental impacts.

Topography was also identified as a recurring challenge, especially in locations where man-made steep slopes make local street completion difficult or impractical. Commenters recommended that the code distinguish between natural and human-made slopes and provide greater flexibility in applying requirements to sites affected by constructed topography. Other themes included a need for increased

flexibility to support innovative mitigation strategies and improved provisions for nonconforming sites, particularly when development occurs in multiple phases.

Many of the concerns and potential solutions were received, considered, and reflected in the draft that was released at the beginning of the year. The local street approach was revised to increase site-specific flexibility while still maintaining the City's overall connectivity and alignment goals. Updates to the Critical Areas Ordinance adopted in December are also anticipated to resolve or improve many concerns related to critical areas. The increased flexibility shown in the draft was generally well received as an improvement, and allowed for additional discussion and refinement to further meet the needs of stakeholders while still ensuring an adequate local street grid system.

3. BELRED LUCA COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Broader public input was gathered through an online questionnaire in Phase 1 and through in-person events and additional online engagement activities in Phase 2. This engagement format provided an opportunity to hear from a wider range of community members, including residents, property owners, and other stakeholders who may not participate in Bellevue Development Committee meetings.

The BelRed LUCA Community Questionnaire received 161 responses. Thirty percent of respondents lived in BelRed and 70 percent did not; however, many non-residents reported they either work, own a business, or visit BelRed frequently. Demographically, respondents represented a mix of renters and homeowners, with a greater share of participants in younger adult age ranges (18-44), though all adult age groups were represented; respondents also reflected racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, including individuals with disabilities, underscoring the importance of inclusive and accessible planning considerations in the LUCA process.

The Neighborhood Districts and Priorities Mapping Activity received feedback from over 40 in-person participants during a public open house along with an additional 23 online participants through Engaging Bellevue. This mapping activity was designed the same as the neighborhood priorities activity used in February BDC meeting. Participants were asked to rank their top priorities (e.g. affordable housing, arts and creative spaces, parks and open space, stream restoration) for each neighborhood district in BelRed. The ranking of these priorities informed staff on how best to weigh the amenity incentive system based on the neighborhood district. An additional amenity priority activity was offered during the public open house that asked participants to choose and rank their top three priorities. Majority of participants ranked pedestrian and bike connectivity as the top priority, affordable commercial space as the second priority, and plazas and event space as the third priority. Looking at the total number priorities ranked, parks and open space received the greatest number of votes throughout the whole activity, but participants were across the board ranking it as their first, second, and third priority. Green building practices and stream restoration received the least number of votes for this activity.

SUMMARY – BROAD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Development Priorities

Three areas emerged most consistently as priorities for future development incentives. These priorities reflect both quantitative responses and themes reinforced through open-ended comments:

1. Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility
2. Parks and Open Space
3. Plazas and Event Space
4. Affordable Housing and Affordable Commercial Space

Pedestrian and bicycle mobility was the strongest overall priority when respondents were presented with an expanded list of options. In the questionnaire, a total of 74 percent of respondents selected this category. Feedback from all engagement methods emphasized the need for safe, physically separated infrastructure rather than shared or painted facilities. Participants consistently identified improvements such as protected bike lanes, continuous sidewalks, and safer crossings as essential to making the area more usable and accessible.

In the questionnaire, parks and open space ranked next highest with 60 percent of respondents, which was further reflected in the feedback received during the open house and online through Engaging Bellevue. Comments highlighted a strong desire for greenery, expanded tree canopy, and accessible outdoor spaces that support recreation and everyday use. Community members frequently linked parks and open spaces to quality of life and neighborhood identity.

Affordable housing was selected by 38 percent of respondents in the questionnaire and was a consistent topic of discussion during the open house. While many respondents supported affordability as a goal, some expressed concerns related to building density, traffic impacts, and the capacity of existing infrastructure to accommodate growth.

Arts and creative spaces were identified by 35 percent of respondents in the questionnaire and further expanded to include plazas and event spaces during Phase 2. This demonstrates good alignment with maintaining and strengthening the BelRed Arts District. Relatedly, affordable commercial space was selected by 30 percent of respondents in the questionnaire and was identified as a top priority during phase 2 engagement activities. Affordable commercial space was commonly described as critical for retaining small businesses, artists, and nonprofit organizations.

Additional priorities, including stream daylighting, low-impact development strategies, public art, and Transfer of Development Rights, received lower but still meaningful levels of support, suggesting interest among a smaller but engaged segment of respondents.

CONCLUSION

WHAT PEOPLE VALUE ABOUT BELRED TODAY

Participants most frequently cited the following existing assets:

- Access to transit, particularly light rail
- Proximity to parks and regional trail systems
- Access to local businesses
- Opportunities for walking and biking (often described as limited or unsafe)

WHAT PEOPLE WANT TO GROW IN BELRED

The strongest signals for improvement focused on:

- Walking and biking infrastructure (highest overall demand)
- Expanded and improved transit access
- Parks, open space, and nature
- A wider range of housing options
- Arts, entertainment, and cultural destinations including dedicated spaces for plazas and events
- Neighborhood-serving retail (e.g., grocery stores, cafes, restaurants)

Open-ended responses reinforced a desire for street-level activity, everyday services, and human-scale development, as opposed to auto-oriented or single-use environments.

FEEDBACK THEMES

1. SAFETY AND MOBILITY (DOMINANT THEME)

- Widespread concern that BelRed Road and surrounding arterials feel unsafe, highway-like, and hostile to pedestrians and cyclists.
- Frequent requests for:
 - Protected bicycle lanes
 - Continuous sidewalks
 - Safer crossings
 - Reduced vehicle speeds
- Many reported avoiding walking or biking altogether due to safety concerns.

2. WALKABILITY AND HUMAN-SCALE DESIGN

- Strong preference for:
 - Smaller block sizes
 - Active ground-floor uses
 - Street-facing businesses
 - High-quality architecture and craftsmanship
- Community members expressed fatigue with large-scale, auto-dominated, or “commercial-scale” (rather than “human scale” development patterns.

3. ARTS AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

- Broad support for preserving and expanding the BelRed Arts District.
- Concerns about displacement of artists and creative organizations as property values rise.
- Desire for performance venues, galleries, and cultural gathering spaces integrated into new development.

4. ECONOMIC VITALITY AND LOCAL BUSINESS

- Calls to:
 - Retain existing small and industrial businesses that wish to remain in BelRed
 - Transition auto-oriented uses to neighborhood-serving retail

- Attract major employers to support daytime activity and transit ridership
- Strong opposition to excessive parking supply or large park-and-ride structures near light rail stations.

5. OPTIMISM WITH CONDITIONS

- Many respondents expressed optimism about BelRed's future, particularly in light of the opening of the 2 Line.
- This optimism is conditional on:
 - Meaningful safety improvements
 - Increased walkability
 - Thoughtful land-use decisions that align with the scale and intent of transit investment