

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

DATE: March 12, 2024

TO: Parks & Community Services Board

FROM: Gwen Rousseau, AICP, Senior Planner
Community Development

Ryan Walker, Senior Planner
Parks & Community Services

SUBJECT: BelRed Look Forward Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Parks and Open Space
Policy Updates

Board review and action requested – policy recommendation to Planning Commission

ACTION REQUESTED

Staff will provide a brief review of the BelRed Look Forward initiative and updated recommendation on draft parks and open space policy. Staff request that the Parks and Community Services Board approve a recommendation on the draft parks and open space policy amendments and approve a transmittal letter to the Planning Commission.

Sample Motion: Move that the Parks & Community Services Board recommend to the Planning Commission the proposed amendments to Parks and Open Space policies in the BelRed Subarea Plan, as presented in Attachments A and B to this memo (or as modified by the Board).

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS

In 2009, after a multi-year planning process, the City Council adopted a new [BelRed Subarea Plan](#). Similar to the 2018 Wilburton Study, the City Council appointed a steering committee including former Council members, Board and Commission members, and community representatives to develop a new vision for BelRed. Supported by staff and a consultant team, the committee prepared a final report that formed the basis of the BelRed Subarea Plan and the Land Use Code.

These documents implement the vision to transform the BelRed Subarea from a declining light industrial area into an area with “a thriving economy”, “vibrant, diverse and walkable neighborhoods,” “environmental improvements” and “a comprehensive and connected parks and open space system.”

These ideas are reflected in park and open space system policies that highlight opportunities for locating neighborhood and community parks along stream corridors and linking them together through a series of trails and other open spaces. Policies also call for integrating natural resource management with park system development and operations. Other policies call for integrating

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stream corridors with the park and open space system to enhance fish and wildlife habitat, improve stormwater management, and to connect trails and provide opportunities for passive recreation, and environmental education.

Many changes have taken place in BelRed under these subarea plan policies and land use regulations. Since 2009, over 2,100 housing units and 2.2 million square feet of non-residential space have been developed, and another 3,100 housing units and 1.3 million square feet of office development are in the pipeline, indicating that BelRed is on track to meeting the housing and job growth projected for the subarea by 2030. In addition, Bellevue's Parks & Community Services Department began acquiring properties along the West Tributary of Kelsey Creek starting in September of 2009. The planning process for that facility is expected to launch by early 2025.

Now, after more than a decade of experience implementing BelRed policies and regulations, the City Council has directed that the BelRed policies be refreshed to reflect new information, increase capacity to meet new citywide housing and job targets, and to strengthen and clarify direction for implementation. This planning initiative, known as the BelRed Look Forward, is being done in concert with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

POLICY REVIEW SUMMARY

The focus of this agenda item is on proposed amendments to parks and open space policies in the BelRed Subarea Plan. The amendment process will follow the same process as the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update with the Parks and Community Services Board making a recommendation to the Planning Commission and then the Planning Commission making a recommendation to the City Council. Adoption of the BelRed Subarea Plan Comprehensive Plan Amendment is anticipated in September 2024.

Proposed parks and open space policy amendments can be found in Attachments A and B. In summary, updates include the following:

- Updates to streamline policies, use contemporary language, and clarify objectives to provide for a diverse and functional collection of parks and open space throughout BelRed.
- A new policy to ensure equitable and convenient access to nature, parks, trails, and open space.
- Updates and new policy to emphasize opportunities along the West Tributary of Kelsey Creek and near NE Spring Boulevard for park, trail, and open space development.
- Updates to highlight opportunities for supporting the performing arts and community events within park facilities in the heart of the BelRed Arts District.
- Updates to emphasize natural resource benefits to riparian corridors and upland areas in the acquisition of park and open space lands.
- Updates to remove redundant policies covered in Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan that apply citywide.
- A new policy to incorporate parks, recreation, and natural amenities into streets.

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The proposed policies were released for public review in mid-January online at EngagingBellevue.com. A Policy Open House was held on January 20 giving the public an opportunity to talk with staff about policy updates, ask questions, and to provide feedback on the policy moves. An online questionnaire provided the public an opportunity to submit input on the proposed policy updates.

Responders were generally supportive of the policy direction related to the Open Space and Natural Systems topic area. Themes included the need to acquire new land for parks in BelRed, strong support for the new policy to incorporate parks, recreation, and natural amenities into streets, and emphasis on incorporating natural resource benefits to riparian corridors in the acquisition of park and open space lands.

At the February 13 meeting, the Board provided direction to make several changes. Below is a summary of the direction and how staff propose that it be addressed (prior draft on left, proposed change on right).

1. Stress connectivity in the Parks and Open Space section goal statement.
 - Staff recommend the following change.

Goal: To provide for a diverse and functional collection of parks and open spaces that weave through BelRed offering residents, workers, and visitors convenient access to nature and a wide variety of recreational opportunities.	Goal: To provide for a diverse, functional, <u>and connected</u> collection of parks and open spaces that weave through BelRed offering residents, workers, and visitors convenient access to nature and a wide variety of recreational opportunities.
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2. Revisit S-BR-53 to reduce confusion and emphasize stream corridors as an organizing principle for parks, trails, and open space.
 - Staff recommend highlighting stream corridors at the beginning of the policy statement and recognizing streams as a focus for locating and designing parks and trails.
 - Staff recommend removing the reference to Kelsey and Goff Creeks to reduce confusion. New policy S-BR-54 already adds focus on the West Tributary.

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S-BR-53. Locate new neighborhood and community parks along stream corridors, linked through a series of trails and other open spaces; initial emphasis will focus on the West Tributary and Goff Creek stream systems.

S-BR-53. Use BelRed's extensive network of stream corridors to inform the location and design of new neighborhood and community parks and to develop connectivity in the neighborhood through a series of adjacent, publicly accessible trails and natural corridors.

3. Reference wildlife as a driver of parks and open space management.
 - Staff recommend the following changes to S-BR-60.

S-BR-60. Rehabilitate and manage riparian and upland park areas to protect habitat and restore natural functions.

S-BR-60. Rehabilitate and manage riparian and upland park areas to protect wildlife habitat corridors and to restore natural functions.

NEXT STEPS

The Board is asked to take action to recommend to the Planning Commission the proposed amendments to the Parks and Open Space policies in the BelRed Subarea Plan as presented in Attachments A and B or as modified by the Board and approve a transmittal letter drafted as Attachment C. The Planning Commission will review the Board's recommendation and then make a final recommendation to the City Council on the BelRed Subarea Plan Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Additional information on the BelRed Look Forward initiative can be found at <https://bellevuewa.gov/city-government/departments/community-development/planning-initiatives/belred-look-back>. If you have any questions prior to the meeting, please contact Ryan Walker at (425) 452-4280 or rwalker@bellevuewa.gov.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Proposed Parks and Open Space Policy Amendments to the BelRed Subarea Plan (strike/underline version)
- B. Proposed Parks and Open Space Policy Amendments to the BelRed Subarea Plan (clean version)
- C. Draft Transmittal Letter to the Planning Commission