

# MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks & Community Services

DATE: February 13, 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 review of the BelRed Look Forward initiative and will present a preliminary recommendation on draft Parks and Open Space policy amendments (Attachments A & B) to the BelRed Subarea Plan.

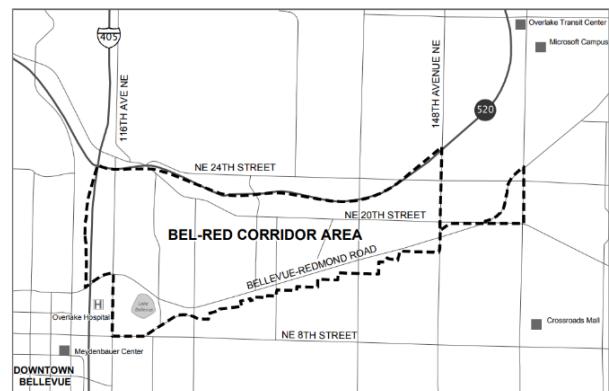
Staff request that the Parks and Community Services Board discuss and provide direction on these draft policy amendments, and if feasible, approve a recommendation for submittal to the Planning Commission.

*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

### HISTORY

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.



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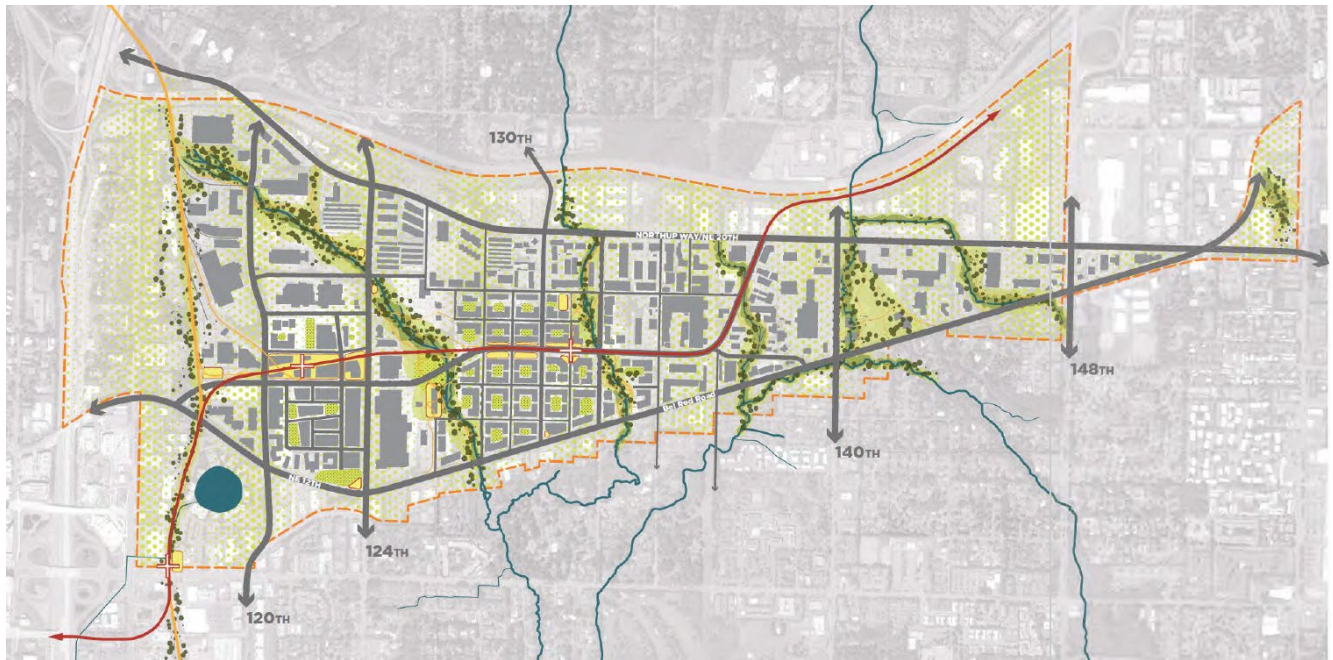


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These documents implement the vision to transform the BelRed Subarea from a declining light industrial area into an area with “a thriving economy”, “vibrant, diverse and walkable neighborhoods,” “environmental improvements” and “a comprehensive and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



A key feature of BelRed is its extensive stream network consisting of five stream systems including the West Tributary to Kelsey Creek, Goff Creek, an unnamed tributary, Valley Creek and Sears Creek. During the BelRed planning process, strategies were explored to transform BelRed’s streams into community and environmental amenities.



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. One example includes using natural drainage practices to provide community amenities and watershed benefits. Another policy calls for integrating 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.

A significant amount of additional development capacity was envisioned for BelRed, which was implemented through provisions in the BelRed [Land Use Code Chapter LUC 20.25D](#). A key provision

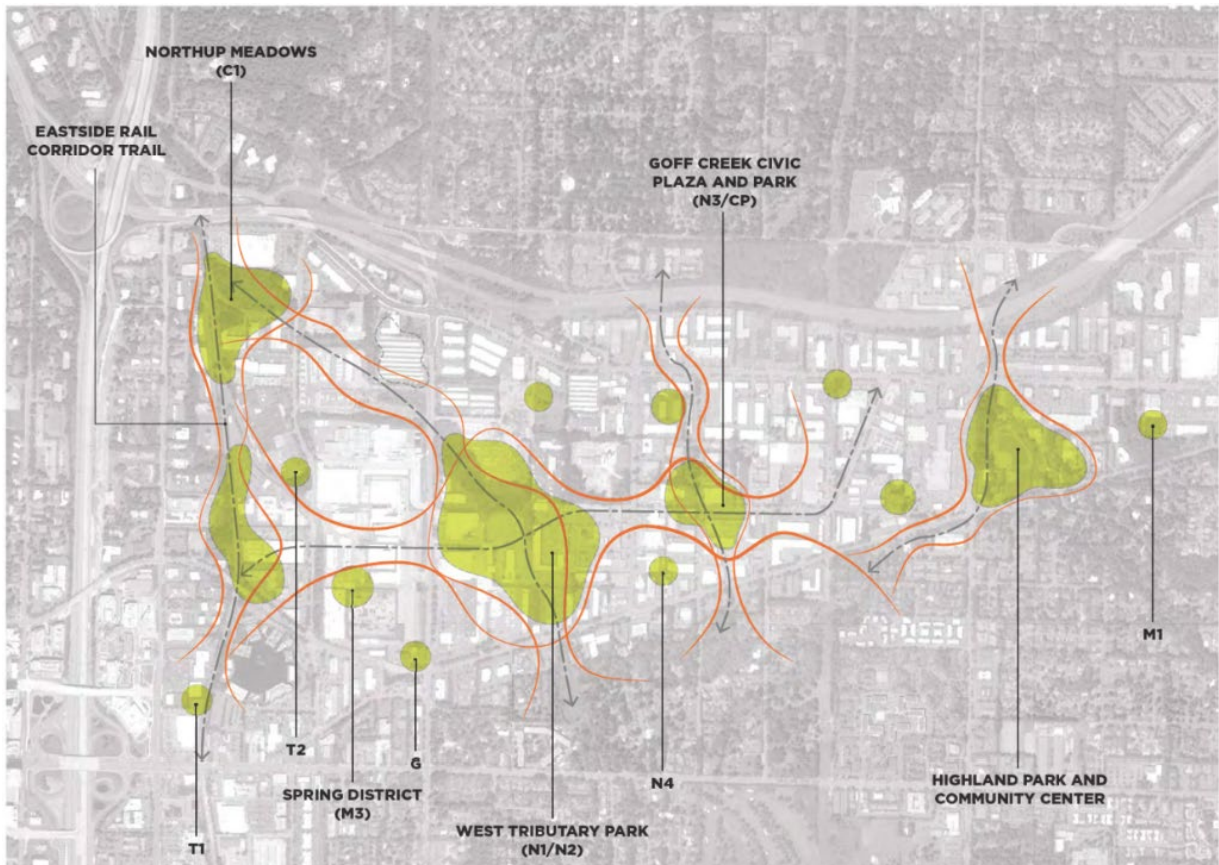


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in the Land Use Code is an incentive system, which provides additional development capacity in exchange for provision of public amenities including park dedication and improvements, trail dedication and easements, public access to outdoor plazas, and publicly accessible active recreation areas.



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 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.

Over the past 15 years, staff have shared the story of the BelRed transformation at various local, state and national conferences, and the BelRed plan itself has won awards, including the Governor’s Smart Communities Award in 2010, and the Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2040 Award in 2010.

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## PROJECT PURPOSE

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 Park 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, Goff 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.

## COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The proposed policies were released for public review in mid-January online at [EngagingBellevue.com](https://engagingbellevue.com). The public can provide feedback by responding to three [online questionnaires](#) through February 16. 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. The public is also invited to Board and Commission meetings to provide input through oral testimony. A list of upcoming and past meetings is published on the [project webpage](#).

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The online questionnaires seek input on policy updates within the following three topic areas: Open Space and Natural Systems, Cultural and Community Connections, and Land Use and Urban Form. The public is asked to respond to the following three questions:

1. Which of these policy moves sound good to you, and what makes you say that?
2. Are there any ideas or considerations unique to BelRed you think are missing?
3. What do you want Board and Commission members to know as they discuss these policy moves and make their recommendations?

As of February 7, responders to the questionnaire on Open Space and Natural Systems expressed generally the need to acquire new land for parks in BelRed. There was strong support for the new policy to incorporate parks, recreation, and natural amenities into streets. They supported updates to emphasize natural resource benefits to riparian corridors in the acquisition of park and open space lands. Also receiving support were updates to emphasize opportunities along the creeks and NE Spring Boulevard for park, trail, and open space development, and updates to ensure equitable and convenient access to nature, parks, trails and open space. Several people also highlighted their support for performing arts and community events within park facilities in the heart of the BelRed Arts District. Some respondents expressed support for streamlining policies as well as removing redundant policies covered in Volume 1.

Regarding ideas people thought were missing, a few responders noted that a need exists for parks and natural open spaces near the Spring District and the north side of BelRed. One responder called for preserving large warehouses with their tall ceilings for arts and sports. Another emphasized the benefits to riparian corridors of unpaved walking trails, and another suggested involving students more in the care for parks and open space. Lastly, a responder noted the healing and life-enhancing benefits of nature and the need for that to be available across all income levels including in small ways.

Responders wanted Board members to know that they would be interested in quicker planning for parks, that keeping space accessible to the public is important, that we should keep the “City in a Park” mantra alive, and that when we make BelRed an extraordinary place to live, businesses will follow.

## NEXT STEPS

The Board is asked to take action to recommend to the Planning Commission the proposed amendments to the Park and Open Space policies in the BelRed Subarea Plan as presented in Attachments A and B or as modified by the Board. 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->

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[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](mailto:rwalker@bellevuewa.gov).

## ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Proposed Park and Open Space Policy Amendments to the BelRed Subarea Plan (legislative mark-up version)
- B. Proposed Park and Open Space Policy Amendments to the BelRed Subarea Plan (clean version)
- C. BelRed Park and Open Space Plan Map and Project Lists