



# Bellevue Planning Commission

February 22, 2023

## PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

### SUBJECT

BelRed Arts District Update

### STAFF CONTACTS

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### POLICY ISSUES

In accordance with the BelRed Subarea Plan, the City is working to build a place where arts, culture, and innovation thrive in BelRed - a place where innovation is encouraged, and creativity and vibrancy are celebrated. Development of the BelRed Arts District will advance strategies in the Economic Development Plan, Destination Development Plan, and BelRed Subarea Plan. The BelRed Arts District also furthers the Council Vision of "Great Places You Want to Be."

### DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**ACTION**



**DIRECTION**



**INFORMATION ONLY**



### BACKGROUND

With over 100 arts and culture organizations who call it home, the BelRed Neighborhood has the highest concentration of arts and cultural businesses, organizations and artists in Bellevue by a wide margin. However, this vibrant community remains hidden to many. In the last year, staff have re-focused efforts on the Council's adopted policy (S-BR-45) to encourage the development of an arts/cultural district in BelRed (the "BelRed Arts District" or "District"). More staff time has been allocated in workplans, funds have been dedicated to additional public art, and staff has re-engaged with the community.

Given the current economic and development climate, the arts community in BelRed is at a crossroads with many current creative businesses, artists, and organizations worried about rising costs and loss of existing spaces. Although leadership of the District



should come from the community, it is vital that the City partner in the District’s development.

A new community partner is emerging – a not for profit organization presently known as the *BelRed Arts District Community Alliance*, with the tagline of “Daylighting Creativity.” Together with the City, this association is actively looking for community partners for events, property owners with space for creative pursuits, creative business to fill new storefronts, and ways to promote the creativity that is already in the District.

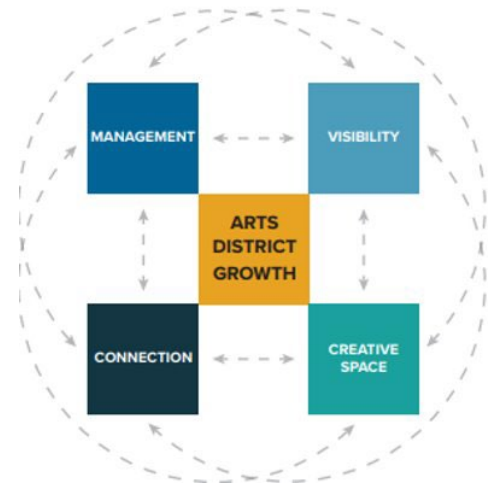


The goal is to make BelRed the epicenter of arts, culture, creativity, and innovation on the Eastside in the next five years; and in the next two years, bring the BelRed Arts District into the community’s common vernacular and front of mind for activities and events. If successful, “I’m going to BelRed” will be synonymous with entertainment and engaging in your creative life.

### **IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

In 2022, a five-year BelRed Arts District Implementation Plan (Attachment A) was created based on the knowledge gained in a multitude of prior studies. This administrative plan recommends a set of goals and actions to turn the vision into reality. The plan highlights the conclusion that in order for the District to be meaningful, it must reach a critical mass of creative growth. To achieve that growth, strategies in this plan harness arts and creative potential, the built environment, programs, and human and institutional capital.

The Implementation Plan identifies and recommends four focus areas to achieve growth of the District: management, visibility, creative space, and connection.



#### **Management**

Recommended Goal: The District has an active and formal managing body.

- Recent Steps: Extensive ongoing work has been taking place around the creation of a nonprofit community partner to make the District a vibrant place for art. In June 2022, BelRed Stakeholders gathered for the first meeting of an eventual management organization. This body of community stakeholders has started the heavy lift of creating a formal non-profit organization that would represent the District and work with the City as a future partner.

#### **Visibility**

Recommended Goal: The District is recognizable.

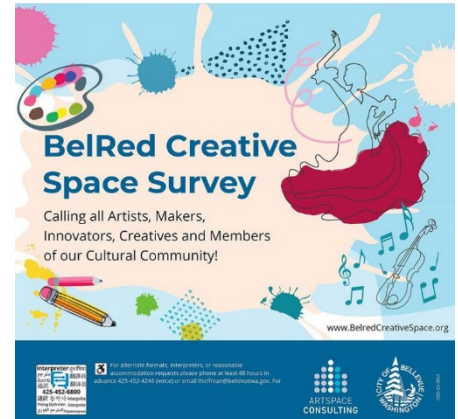
- Recent Steps. Although there are over 100 arts and culture organizations in the BelRed neighborhood, they are often invisible to people passing through. Many

efforts to increase visibility are in progress with an eye toward completion before the light rail opens in 2024 or 2025. Projects include murals which will bring color and vibrancy to walls in BelRed in Spring/Summer 2023 and public art projects slated for install in 2024. Additionally, Council’s recent updates to the Arts Grants Guidelines allowed for the “BelRed Bonus” which will bring five new arts projects to the District in 2023.

### **Creative Space**

Recommended Goal: New creative spaces are being built, and existing ones remain available and affordable.

- Recent Steps. Outreach with stakeholders has identified that affordable space is a consistent area of concern. In 2022, City staff and a core group of community members worked with Artspace Consulting to conduct the Arts Market Study described in more detail below.



### **Connection**

Recommended Goal: The District is seen as a place to come together, innovate and experience art, culture, and creativity.

- Recent Steps: Staff have conducted major outreach to over 60 stakeholders including artists & creatives, BelRed property owners, major regional employers and other corporate stakeholders, community leaders, and people who have had previous involvement. Additionally, as part of ongoing business support and outreach, staff from the Cultural and Economic Development team have done small business door-knocking with creative businesses in the District. This door knocking campaign shared information and resources while getting to know the heart of the creative community.

### **Arts Market Study – Affordable Artist Housing and Creative Commercial Space**

In 2017, building off strategies outlined in the draft Affordable Housing Strategy, and as a means to leverage the economic and placemaking potential of the arts, Bellevue contracted with Artspace to conduct a feasibility study on the potential for affordable artist housing and arts facility development in the District. The results of that Preliminary Feasibility Study are available on the City’s [website](#).

In 2021, staff began conversations with Artspace about next steps needed to deliver affordable artists’ housing and commercial space. In 2022, working with a core group of community members, Artspace launched the Arts Market Study to assess the market needs and community demand for affordable artist housing and affordable commercial space. The study consisted of two main parts, a survey of individual artists and focus groups for arts organizations and creative businesses.

There were 437 total survey respondents of which a substantial number (400 or 92 percent) indicated an interest in at least one type of affordable creative space (artist housing, private or shared studio/workspace) in the District. Surveys were completed by a diverse group of individuals representing more than 30 creative fields. Most lived in the greater Seattle metro region, with 27 percent being current residents and 16 percent being previous residents of Bellevue. Respondents' ages ranged from 20-years old to 70-years old. Respondents were 57 percent White, 16 percent Asian, 9 percent Multi-racial, 7 percent Hispanic/Latino(a), 5 percent Black, 3 percent no answer, 1 percent Indigenous/Native American/Native Alaskan, 1 percent North African/Middle Eastern, and 1 percent Pacific Islander/Hawaiian Native, Samoan.

Full findings can be found in the Arts Market Study (Attachment B) and include specifics on housing unit sizes and price ranges that will be extremely informative as staff look to establish a competitive procurement process to identify a development partner for City owned sites, particularly those located within the BelRed District, with an emphasis on the Kelly Parcel located at 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Spring Boulevard.

### **Public Artworks Coming to BelRed**

Bellevue, with its investments in public art, arts and cultural organizations, events, and strong creative economy will continue to be a place for arts and culture. Below are two examples of that investment in the form of public art projects coming to BelRed.

*Yonder Sky* by Po Shu Wang – 130<sup>th</sup> Streetscape Artwork: Planned for installation near the end of 2023 at the intersection of Spring Boulevard and 130<sup>th</sup>, this artwork by artist Po Shu Wang will be an interactive and technical artwork featuring a “sound bath” where users can trigger a quiet musical collage developed from recordings of BelRed musicians. The contract for the fabrication and installation was approved by Council in May of 2022.

*Rooted* by Jill Anholt – NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street and NE Spring Boulevard: A new location has been identified for this artwork approximately a block to the west due to layout changes at the original scramble location at 121<sup>st</sup>. Artist Jill Anholt has finalized concepts for an artwork to mark the pedestrian route from NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the EastRail Trail. The artist developed her concepts with input from groups with historical connections to BelRed including descendants of Bellevue's Japanese Americans that farmed in the area prior to their incarceration during World War II.

### **POLICY SUPPORT & CHALLENGES**

Policy support for BelRed Arts District initiatives comes primarily from the 2009 BelRed Subarea Plan and the 2020 Economic Development Plan. In the 14 years since the subarea plan was adopted however, much has changed in the neighborhood and development is moving forward at an accelerated pace. A robust BelRed Look Forward process would be welcomed by community stakeholders. Below are current policies supporting Arts District work:

- **S-BR-44:** Encourage artists, arts and cultural organizations, and arts related uses to locate in the Bel-Red area, capitalizing on proximity to existing arts uses and availability

of suitable spaces. Encourage major arts and education institutions to locate in the Bel-Red area.

- **S-BR-45:** Encourage the development of an arts/cultural district near 136<sup>th</sup> Place NE, as shown on the Bel-Red Land Use Plan map, Figure S-BR.1.
- **S-BR-46:** Provide funding for public art in the Bel-Red area.
- **S-BR-47:** Promote public art, cultural activities and urban design that reflect the Bel-Red area's character, heritage, and ecology, with emphasis in the following areas: (a) Integration of public art into publicly accessible spaces, both privately and publicly developed; (b) Inclusion of public art in transportation projects, including transit projects; and (c) incorporation of public art in interpretation and celebration of stream corridor improvements and other environmental enhancements.
- **S-BR-48:** Promote flexible live and work space for artists in the Bel-Red area by encouraging the creation of live/work and work/live units, in adaptive reuse of existing buildings or in new development.
- **CE 2:** Develop the built and institutional infrastructure needed to position the BelRed Arts District as a major destination.
  - **CE 2.1:** Establish a working group to convene, foster and promote the BelRed Arts District.
  - **CE 2.2:** Reduce barriers for arts uses and improve prioritization of the arts incentive for new development in the BelRed Arts District.
- **CE 3:** Promote and expand festivals, events and activities to grow the creative economy sector and promote a strong creative brand for Bellevue. (Growth).
  - **CE 3.1:** Explore options for the City to initiate a public private partnership to construct and manage multi-purpose creative arts spaces.

### **SCHEDULE & NEXT STEPS**

As the Comprehensive Plan and BelRed Look Forward processes move forward, art staff will continue to work with planning staff.

### **OPTIONS**

1. Information only

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. BelRed Arts District Implementation Plan
- B. Arts Market Study by Artspace Inc