



Bellevue Planning Commission

May 14, 2025

PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Study Session on the BelRed Look Forward Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA).

STAFF CONTACT(S)

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POLICY ISSUES

In October 2024, the City Council adopted [Ordinance 6811](#) amending the Comprehensive Plan's Volume 2 BelRed Subarea Plan with updated policies and future land use map designations. The BelRed Look Forward LUCA initiative will amend the City's Land Use Code (LUC) to reflect policy and map changes adopted in the Subarea Plan. Tonight, staff will present an overview of the adopted vision for BelRed, policy and map changes driving the BelRed Look Forward LUCA, and initial feedback gathered from early engagement.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



As the BelRed Look Forward LUCA work plan progresses in 2025, staff will return to the Planning Commission to share proposed amendments. We expect to bring a first draft of the LUCA to Planning Commission in Q3 2025, with targeted Council adoption in Q4 2025.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Legislative History

In 2009, in anticipation of East Link light rail, the City Council adopted a new subarea plan and LUC part for BelRed. The plan anticipated the transformation of the former industrial area into a series of vibrant nodes with abundant new green space, businesses and homes. Ten years later, with East Link largely complete, including BelRed and Spring District Stations, the city began the process of updating the 2009 plan via the BelRed Look Forward.

On October 22, 2024, the City Council adopted the revised BelRed Subarea Plan and future land use map through Ordinance No. 6811. The BelRed Subarea Plan was updated to:

- Reflect new information and changed circumstances;
- Strengthen implementation strategies such as improvements to the local street network, stream daylighting opportunities, and reinforcing the BelRed Arts District;
- Increase development capacity within BelRed and plan for approximately 7,900 housing units and 14,200 jobs by 2044, comprising 23 percent and 20 percent of the City's overall housing and job comprehensive plan growth targets respectively;
- Provide clear guidance to facilitate implementation including a Land Use Code Amendment,

- capital investments, partnerships, and development review; and
- Lay the foundation for a portion of BelRed being designated as a Countywide Center.

The BelRed Subarea Plan establishes 98 policies to implement the area’s goal to *build upon BelRed’s existing economic, cultural, and natural assets, while integrating new places to live, work, recreate, and connect.*

On February 25, 2025, the City Council directed staff to initiate work on the LUCA. City Council indicated support for enhanced stream daylighting incentives, studying incentives for affordable commercial space for small businesses, additional performance spaces, review of affordable housing requirements, and a multimodal transportation network.

Proposed Scope of Code Amendments

The current BelRed LUC contains development regulations in multiple sections that were adopted to implement the previous comprehensive plan in 2009. Comprehensive plan land use map changes were adopted throughout BelRed in 2024 to enable greater height and density, especially near light rail stations, which will be implemented through the LUCA and associated rezones. These changes also include more context-driven amendments such as the expansion of medical-related uses along the 116th Ave NE corridor with the designation of high-rise mixed-use and mid-rise medical mixed-use. The future land use map was adopted as Map LU-1 of the Comprehensive [Plan](#).

As such, major code adjustments are necessary to implement future land uses and newly adopted comprehensive plan policies, and to bring the code up to date with other recently adopted code amendments and city initiatives. The BelRed Look Forward LUCA will incorporate relevant portions of the recommended Wilburton LUCA that have been developed through substantial stakeholder and Planning Commission involvement to create consistency between the neighboring transit-oriented development districts and utilize vetted land use, transportation, and development strategies. However, BelRed is envisioned as a unique district with its own opportunities, challenges, and user experiences. Staff will address the changes needed to the code as follows:

- Review existing code, and confirm areas needing amendments;
- Revise existing code and ensure consistency with the comprehensive plan and other city initiatives;
- Coordinate review of draft code changes with internal and external stakeholders;
- Present draft code to planning commission at series of study sessions and a public hearing;
- Prepare implementation strategies and execute code amendments after council adoption.

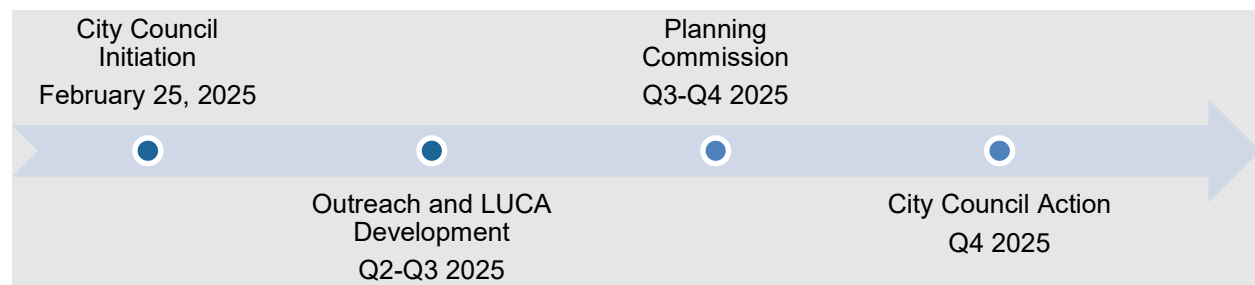
Central to this LUCA is considering amendments to specific topic areas of the code that have been adopted in the comprehensive plan or have been identified as needing a refresh by staff and stakeholders. These areas include:

- Open Space and Natural Systems
 - Exploring options for regional stormwater facilities
 - Supporting stream restoration and/or daylighting
- Land Use, Housing and Urban Design
 - Cultivating distinct economic centers and mixed-use Neighborhood Districts
 - Providing a diverse range of housing options

- Enhancements to existing affordable housing framework to increase performance and consideration of a mandatory approach
- Renewal of Transfer of Development Rights program with King County
- Cultural and Community Connections
 - BelRed Arts District and Intensive Area implementation
 - Affordable arts and cultural spaces
 - Greater flexibility for arts and cultural space development
- Transportation and Utilities
 - Multimodal transportation network with focus on bicycle and pedestrian mobility
 - Local streets implementation

The code amendment process is expected to include various departments and divisions within the city to ensure the LUCA incorporates ongoing city initiatives, best practices, and recently adopted legislation.

Project Timeline



Public and Staff Engagement Framework

Public engagement for BelRed Look Forward was conducted in parallel and collaboratively with the overall comprehensive plan periodic update process, which helped to inform adopted policies. Since the charge for the BelRed Look Forward LUCA is to primarily implement adopted policies, staff will utilize feedback received from that process and supplement with additional engagement to residents, developers, and property owners.

This project will benefit from the stakeholder engagement framework developed under the Wilburton LUCA project since developers and property owners are also active in BelRed, so many of the key Wilburton LUCA stakeholders will continue to be engaged in this effort.

Staff has developed a public engagement framework with three modes of outreach to ensure the public, stakeholders, and interested parties have the opportunity to be informed and to provide comments.

- Direct Engagement and Feedback. Direct engagement with property owners, development community and residents, including through Bellevue Development Committee (BDC) and PLUSH meetings.
- Online Presence. City webpage to provide the public information about the project, who to direct questions to, and how to submit comments

- Process IV Requirements. Consistent with Chapter 20.35 LUC procedural requirements, public input will be solicited by a notice of application, notice of public hearing and the required public hearing.

Engagement is identified in two phases:

- **Phase One** – Development of discussion draft. The intent of this phase is to gather feedback from select stakeholders and city staff to assist in drafting the first public version of the LUCA for continued Planning Commission and community review.
- **Phase Two** – Technical review and enhanced coordination. In this phase, the first LUCA draft is used as a basis for comment from the community. Outreach will include workshops and information sessions across a broad range of stakeholders, resulting in revised LUCA drafts.

Initial Feedback from Early Phase One Engagement

Through March and April 2025, staff have conducted a series of “Listening Sessions” with city staff to better understand areas of the code that should be amended to address common issues when implementing the code, clarify existing language and/or intent, as well as receive feedback other opportunities to implement adopted policies. These sessions included staff representing a variety of subject areas including land use; transportation and utilities; parks; community development; and housing. Feedback was received through hour long meetings across a variety of departments, divisions, and subject areas including land use, housing, transportation, utilities, parks, and community development. A general summary of feedback topics received include:

- Local streets grid review and implementation of pedestrian corridors for certain segments
- Ensuring BelRed provides ample and connected walking and biking opportunities
- Review and reinforcement of green streets and retail streets
- Right-sizing Amenity Incentive System to ensure bonuses achieve intended outcomes and re-prioritization of items within tiered system
- Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) in BelRed
- Opportunities to reinforce arts intensive area and Neighborhood Districts
- Providing options for affordable housing and commercial space for the creative community
- Alignment of future planning and projects with on-going utilities planning

Early engagement has also begun with individual BelRed property owners and with the Bellevue Chamber PLUSH committee. Feedback to date has included:

- Concerns with local streets implementation and desire for greater flexibility for street alignment and types
- 116th St NE medical district intent and whether residential is appropriate

Feedback will help inform a full public draft LUCA to be published in advance of the next Planning Commission Study Session. The draft will be refined further in response to continued Planning Commission and stakeholder input throughout Phase Two.

ATTACHMENT(S)

None