



# Bellevue Planning Commission

April 10, 2024

## PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

### SUBJECT

BelRed Look Forward Comprehensive Plan Amendment: Recommended Changes to the Environment, Parks and Open Space, Transportation, and Implementation Policies.

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### POLICY ISSUES

The BelRed Subarea Plan provides policy direction for achieving the vision for the BelRed Subarea. As part of Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, the BelRed Look Forward planning initiative is amending Subarea Plan policies and Comprehensive Plan land use map designations within BelRed. This memo focuses on recommended updates to policies in the following plan sections:

- Environment
- Parks and Open Space
- Transportation
- Implementation

### DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**ACTION**

**DIRECTION**

**INFORMATION ONLY**

At this meeting, the Planning Commission will review recommended updates to environment, parks and open space, transportation, and implementation policies and provide direction for further follow-up if needed.

## **BACKGROUND**

### *The BelRed Subarea Plan*

In 2009, after a multi-year planning process, the City Council adopted the [BelRed Subarea Plan](#), one of 14 subarea plans part of Volume II of the Comprehensive Plan. The BelRed Subarea Plan and subsequent BelRed Land Use Code were based upon a final report prepared by a Council-appointed steering committee comprised of former Council members, Board and Commission members, and community representatives.

Together the BelRed Subarea Plan and Land Use Code provide direction for implementing the BelRed vision of transforming the subarea from a declining light industrial area into an area with “a thriving economy”, “vibrant, diverse and walkable neighborhoods,” “a broad range of housing types,” “environmental improvements,” and “a comprehensive and connected parks and open space system” all linked together through a “multi-modal transportation system.”

### *The BelRed Look Forward Planning Initiative*

The purpose of the BelRed Look Forward initiative is to amend policies and future land use map designations within the BelRed Subarea Plan as part of the overall Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update to reflect changed circumstances, strengthen and clarify policy direction for implementation, and to increase capacity to meet new citywide housing and job targets.

The Planning Commission is directed by city code to review, consider amendments, and make recommendations to the City Council on the Comprehensive Plan (Bellevue City Code 3.64.070).

### *Board and Commission and Community Involvement*

The Planning Commission was introduced to the scope and schedule of the BelRed Look Forward initiative on February 22, 2023. Commissioners supported the overall scope and encouraged staff to emphasize updates that would:

- encourage development of diverse types of housing, including affordable housing and production of family sized units,
- prevent displacement of BelRed’s small and unique businesses,
- review ped/bike connections and consider extending the local street grid through the lens of a multi-modal network, and
- apply the lens of sustainability to everything from building typologies to transportation, to environmental issues.

On September 27, 2023, staff shared draft policy moves related to Open Space and Natural Systems with the Commission. Commissioners asked questions regarding the floor-area-ratio (FAR) amenity incentive system, in-lieu fees, critical area regulations, private investments in parks and open space, and stormwater management strategies and recommended:

- collaborating with developers to land on approaches that will work for everyone,
- identifying targets for open space,
- encouraging development to incorporate environmental features within their site designs, and
- recognizing that tradeoffs will exist and the importance of determining priorities.

Environmental policies identify a variety of approaches to facilitate development and achieve open space and natural system objectives.

Targeted areas are often included within functional plans as part of a citywide strategy where they can be defined clearly and updated more frequently. These targets are often intended to provide additional acres and increase walkable access in underserved areas.

Recognizing that priorities may vary depending on site context, a land use policy was modified to call for incentivizing amenities that respond to unique site characteristics.

Staff shared draft policy moves related to Cultural and Community Connections including Transportation and Land Use and Urban Form with the Commission on December 13, 2023. In terms of transportation policy, Commissioners recommended:

- scrutinizing modifications closely,
- adopting of an all-of-the-above strategy to support new development,
- recognizing the need for flexibility going forward, and
- encouraging the kind of development the city wants that would result in vehicular trips being converted into pedestrian trips.

The transportation policy section contains policies for all travel modes demonstrating the multimodal approach within BelRed. A new policy was added to allow limited flexibility where site constraints exist. The subarea plan as a whole, but policies within the land use, urban design, and transportation sections especially, aim to encourage the type of land use pattern and urban form that would support a large share of trips being made by active transportation and transit modes.

In mid-January, staff released draft policies for public review requesting feedback on which policy moves sounded good to them, if any ideas or considerations were missing, and what they wanted Board and Commission members to know as they discussed and made their recommendations. Summaries of community feedback are provided in each policy section below, and verbatim comments are included in Attachments H, I and J to this memo.

While the Subarea Plan provides policy direction unique to BelRed, it is also broad in scope. Therefore, to ensure close coordination across departments, other boards and commissions have participated in the planning process as directed by the city code. Each body has reviewed and developed policy recommendations according to their area of expertise. The Environmental Services Commission reviewed policies related to surface and stormwater within the Environment section, the Parks and Community Services Board reviewed policies within the

Parks and Open Space section, and the Transportation Commission reviewed policies within the Transportation section.

At this meeting, the Commission will review recommended policy amendments to the Environment, Parks and Open Space, and Transportation sections of the Subarea Plan plus one new policy in the Implementation section. These can be found in Attachments A, B, and C to this memo. Recommended updates were informed by community input, environmental analyses, and Board and Commission direction.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY UPDATES**

Environmental sustainability is one of the overarching principles of the BelRed Subarea Plan and is reflected in multiple policies falling within the Land Use, Urban Design, Environment, and Transportation sections. At this meeting, Commissioners will review environmental policies within the Environment section and one new policy in the Implementation section. These policies focus primarily on strategies related to repairing, protecting, and improving BelRed's surface and stormwater systems.

BelRed's extensive network of streams and riparian corridors are an identifying feature that provide a framework for improving ecological functions in the subarea and enhancing livability through access to open space and nature within densifying urban neighborhoods. Policies call for a range of strategies spanning from restorative investments to protective regulations to removal of barriers and incentives for use of best practices and improvements. Collaboration and coordination both internally across departments and externally with outside agencies and private partners are recognized as essential strategies for achieving the vision of environmental sustainability within BelRed.

Throughout the engagement process, the community has communicated consistently how they value streams, lakes, and wetlands for the role they play in a healthy ecosystem. They have also expressed a desire for reducing impervious surfaces and increasing natural drainage practices to protect water quality and reduce flooding. Community feedback related to Open Space and Natural Systems during Phase 3 included support for exploring regional surface and stormwater system opportunities and for removing redundant policies covered in Volume 1.

Working cross departmentally to develop restoration plans for stream corridors, and clarifying objectives for improving ecological function and resilience also had a lot of support from respondents.

Related to what is missing, a respondent suggested wildlife habitat be the overarching goal of enhancing and maintaining stream corridors. Others suggested including policies related to protecting and expanding tree canopy, expedited permitting for low carbon buildings, monitoring and treatment of stormwater, developing restoration plans, and setting measurable benchmarks. All responses to the Open Space and Natural Systems questionnaire are included in Attachment H. Many of these missing topics are addressed in Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan, in functional plans such as Bellevue's [Environmental Stewardship Plan](#) and [Watershed Management Plan](#), and/or in the City's [Storm and Surface Water Engineering Standards](#).

The Environmental Services Commission reviewed policies related to surface and stormwater at their meeting on February 1, 2024 and provided direction to make changes to a couple of policies. At their March 7, 2024 meeting, the Environmental Services Commission unanimously approved recommended environmental policy amendments for the BelRed Subarea Plan as part of the BelRed Look Forward Comprehensive Plan Amendment. A copy of their transmittal letter detailing their deliberation process and recommendation is included in Attachment E. Staff are not recommending any additional changes to environmental policies at this time.

Below, the updates to environmental policies are listed by section. Changes that are a clarification or a grammatical change are not included below. The largest changes in this section were removal of policies that were redundant with policies in Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan and streamlining of policies to help clarify policy intent. Attachment A contains the strike/underline of all environmental policy changes, including minor edits that are not highlighted in this memo.

### *Environment*

Goal: To be a model of environmental sustainability by minimizing the impact of population and employment growth and realizing opportunities provided by new development to rejuvenate BelRed's natural environment improving ecological functions and resiliency.

- S-BR-45 and S-BR-46. Updated to clarify intent of improving the natural environment; language streamlined to focus on one topic per policy and broadened to reduce specificity, which can be limiting.
- Old S-BR-27, S-BR-31, and S-BR-32. Removed due to redundancy with policy in Volume I.
- S-BR-28. Updated to reflect current challenge of regulatory barriers to natural drainage.
- Old S-BR-29. Removed due to study having been completed.
- S-BR-48. Updated to call for exploring cross-departmental opportunities for regional surface and stormwater facilities that achieve multiple benefits.
- S-BR-50. Updated to call for renewing BelRed as a receiving site for regional Transfer of Development Rights.

### *Implementation*

Goal: To ensure an ongoing and effective process, with the right tools available, to result in effective implementation of the BelRed subarea vision.

- S-BR-98. Added to call for coordination in the development of rehabilitation and restoration plans for BelRed's stream corridors.

### **PARKS AND OPEN SPACE POLICY UPDATES**

Parks, trails, and open spaces will serve many roles in BelRed and provide multiple benefits to the area. Serving as natural boundaries, they will help define neighborhood districts and serve as key connectors providing trails and wildlife corridors throughout the subarea. They will also

help protect and improve natural features, build resilience to climate change, and enhance livability by creating access to nature, open space, and recreation.

The Parks and Open Space section of the plan focuses primarily on policy guidance related to the planning, acquisition, and development of BelRed's park, trail, and open space systems. BelRed's extensive network of streams and riparian corridors will help inform the location and design of new neighborhood and community parks, trails and natural corridors. Policies call for creating a diverse and dense network of greenspace to provide equitable access to nature and recreation. Specific projects are highlighted along with direction to integrate natural resource management with development and operations. Incorporating park, recreation, and green infrastructure into streets is also highlighted as an important strategy for achieving park and open space goals within BelRed.

Throughout the engagement process, the community has consistently communicated how they value parks and open spaces and want to ensure future generations can enjoy Bellevue's park-like setting. BelRed residents have also expressed a preference for having a small park or trail within a five-minute walk of home. Community feedback related to Open Space and Natural Systems during Phase 3 included support for incorporating park, recreation, and natural amenities into streets. In addition, emphasizing natural resource benefits to riparian corridors and upland areas also had a lot of support from respondents. Related to what is missing, a few respondents highlighted the need for more parks and natural open spaces near the Spring District. Others supported including space for performing arts and community events around 130<sup>th</sup> in the heart of the BelRed Arts District. Both of these are addressed in policy.

The Parks and Community Services Board reviewed policies at their February 13, 2024 meeting and provided direction. Changes were then made in response to community and board feedback, and at their March 12, 2024 meeting, the Parks and Community Services Board unanimously approved recommended Parks and Open Space policy amendments for the BelRed Subarea Plan as part of the BelRed Look Forward Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Their transmittal letter is Attachment F. Staff are not recommending any additional changes to Parks and Open Space policies at this time.

Below are the updates to the Parks and Open Space policies, in brief. Clarifications or grammatical changes are not included below. Most recommended changes in this section stem from restructuring policies to focus on one topic per policy. Other modifications seek to clarify policy intent and update terminology. None of the original Parks and Open Space policies are recommended to be repealed. One policy is proposed to move to the Transportation section. Three new policies are recommended to frame the intent of providing equitable access to parks, trails and open space in BelRed, to highlight the current opportunity for park development along the West Tributary, and to call for greater integration of park and transportation facilities.

Attachment B contains the strike/underline of all Parks and Open Space policy recommendations, including minor edits that are not highlighted in this memo.

### *Parks and Open Space*

Goal: To provide for a diverse, functional, and connected 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.

- Old S-BR-35. Split into separate policies.
- S-BR-51. Updated to clarify policy intent of developing diverse facilities and activities.
- S-BR-52. Added to support equitable access to park facilities.
- S-BR-53. Updated to reflect the centrality of BelRed’s stream corridors to the city’s park and trail acquisition and improvement strategies.
- S-BR-54. Added to highlight intent for park development along the West Tributary to Kelsey Creek.
- S-BR-55. Updated to streamline policy.
- S-BR-56. Updated terminology and clarified intent for connectivity and integrated green infrastructure adjacent or near Spring Blvd.
- S-BR-57. Updated to broaden language and highlight need for performance and event space in the Arts District.
- S-BR-59 and S-BR-60. Separated into two policies and updated to streamline and to clarify intent to consider natural resource benefits in the acquisition of park and open space lands, and to integrate natural resource management with development and operations.
- S-BR-61. Updated terminology and removed sections redundant with S-BR-53 and S-BR-56.
- Old S-BR-39. Moved to the Transportation section.
- S-BR-62. Added to support integration of park and transportation facilities.

### **TRANSPORTATION POLICY UPDATES**

Multimodal transportation facilities in BelRed will support projected growth and development by providing complete and connected network enabling people to travel conveniently and safely within BelRed and to other parts of the city and region. Networks will incorporate transportation facilities for all modes, improve the public realm through provision of supportive infrastructure for cultural and art expressions, build resilience to climate change through an expanded street-tree canopy, and enhance water quality and flow control by incorporating green infrastructure and other environmentally sensitive street design features.

The Transportation section of the plan provides high level policy guidance for the provision of streets, active transportation, and transit, as well as supportive programs . Policies call for a diversity of facility types and sizes at different scales to provide multimodal access throughout the subarea. Specific projects are highlighted in policy along with direction to integrate amenities and mitigation with facility development. Design standards and guidelines within

several sections of the [BelRed Land Use Code](#)<sup>1</sup> [BelRed Streetscape Plan](#), Appendix B of the Transportation Design Manual provide greater detail and specific direction for implementation.

Throughout the engagement process, the community has consistently communicated that they are interested in increasing the frequency and availability of public transit and want to ensure the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. BelRed residents overwhelmingly support pedestrian and bike-oriented street design that prioritizes safety and slower speeds. Community feedback related to Transportation during Phase 3 included support for having green streets, and a fully connected and protected pedestrian and bicycling network. In addition, moving people quickly and efficiently was also valued. Related to what is missing, a respondent voiced support for a complete streets policy. Other feedback received included a recommendation to amend S-BR-81 by removing the word “limited.” All responses to the Cultural and Community Connections questionnaire related to transportation policies are included in Attachment J.

Bellevue’s Transportation Commission reviewed policies at their November 9, 2023 meeting and provided direction. Changes were then made in response to community and commission feedback, and at their March 14, 2024 meeting, the Transportation Commission unanimously approved recommended Transportation policy amendments for the BelRed Subarea Plan as part of the BelRed Look Forward Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Their transmittal letter is Attachment G.

Below are the updates to the Transportation policies. Changes that are a clarification or a grammatical change are not included below. Fourteen of the original 25 transportation policies are recommended for repeal due to redundancies with policies in Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan and due to projects having been implemented. Other modifications seek to clarify policy intent, update terminology, and streamline policy language.

One policy was moved from the Parks and Open Space section into the Transportation section. One new policy is recommended to recognize the need for limited flexibility when implementing the local street grid where site constraints exist. Attachment C contains the strike/underline of all Transportation policy recommendations, including minor edits that are not highlighted in this memo.

Goal: To create a complete and connected multimodal transportation network that is connected to city and regional facilities, while protecting neighborhoods from spillover traffic

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://bellevue.municipal.codes/LUC/20.25D.110> for Street Frontage Landscape Development Requirements including sidewalk and planting widths; see <https://bellevue.municipal.codes/LUC/20.25D.140> for BelRed Street Development Standards; see <https://bellevue.municipal.codes/LUC/20.25D.150> for Design Guidelines including Pedestrian Emphasis Guidelines.



impacts and while ensuring that transportation investments contribute to the area’s sense of place and sustainability.

#### *Overall*

- S-BR-78. Updated to remove reference to Subarea Plan project concepts that are now listed in the Transportation Improvement Program and Transportation Facilities Plan.

#### *Streets*

- S-BR-79. Updated terminology.
- S-BR-80 and S-BR-82. Separated into two policies and updated to streamline and to clarify that local streets would be provided through development review.
- S-BR-81. Added to recognize the need for limited flexibility when implementing the local street grid.
- S-BR-85. Moved from Parks and Open Space section and modified to clarify policy intent for green streets.

#### *Active Transportation Networks*

- S-BR-86. Updated terminology and streamlined policy by removing list of pedestrian amenities.
- S-BR-87, S-BR-88, S-BR-91. Updated terminology – replaced “non-motorized” with “active transportation,” which is more inclusive.

#### *Transit*

- S-BR-89. Updated to include specific emphasis for bus connections to light rail and to streamline by removing items redundant with Transit policies in Volume 1.

#### *Transportation Demand Management*

- S-BR-91. Updated terminology

#### *Repealed Policies*

- Old S-BR-52, S-BR-53, S-BR-54, S-BR-57, S-BR-59, S-BR-61, S-BR-62, S-BR-69, S-BR-71, S-BR-74, S-BR-75. Removed due to redundancy with policy in Volume I.
- Old S-BR-66, S-BR-68, S-BR-70. Removed due to projects being either in design or implemented.

### **IMPLEMENTATION POLICY UPDATES**

Multiple types of implementation strategies will be needed to achieve the vision for BelRed. The implementation section articulates high level strategies necessary for achieving the Plan’s goals for the subarea.

Below are recommended updates to the Implementation policies. Modifications seek to clarify policy intent, streamline policy language, and to remove outdated references. One policy is redundant with policies in Volume 1 and is recommended for repeal. Another policy is more appropriate for inclusion in a function plan or strategy and is recommended for repeal. As described under the environment section above, one new policy is recommended to be added to support coordinated planning for stream corridor improvements.

### *Implementation*

Goal: To ensure an ongoing and effective process, with the right tools available, to result in effective implementation of the BelRed subarea vision.

- S-BR-93 and S-BR-97. Updated to clarify policy intent.
- S-BR-94 and S-BR-95. Updated to remove outdated references and clarify intent.
- Old S-BR-80. Removed due to redundancy with policies in Volume 1.
- Old S-BR-84. Removed due to policy being more appropriate for a functional plan versus a policy document.
- S-BR-98. Added to call for coordination in the development of rehabilitation and restoration plans for BelRed's stream corridors.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Recommended BelRed Subarea Plan Policy Amendments
- B. Environmental Services Commission Transmittal Letter
- C. Parks and Community Services Board Transmittal Letter
- D. Transportation Commission Transmittal Letter
- E. Open Space and Natural Systems Questionnaire Responses related to Environment Policy Moves
- F. Open Space and Natural Systems Questionnaire Responses related to Parks and Open Space Policy Moves
- G. Cultural and Community Connections Questionnaire Responses related to Transportation Policies
- H. Comprehensive Plan Glossary