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TO: Mayor Balducci and Councilmembers

FROM: Dan Stroh, Planning Director, 452-5255  
Michael Kattermann, AICP, Senior Planner, 452-2042  
*Department of Planning & Community Development*

SUBJECT: Station Area Planning Update-East Main and South Bellevue

The purpose of this Management Brief is to update the City Council on the station area planning work program (i.e. planning of the areas around future light rail stations), specifically the first two planning projects for East Main and South Bellevue. City Council established the project objectives and approved the overall work program for station area planning in May 2013. The South Bellevue project began in September 2013 and is expected to be completed this spring. Staff provided updates on progress to City Council in November 2013 and April 2014. In August 2014 Council appointed the Citizen Advisory Committee for East Main and in February 2015 approved the consultant contract for East Main.

The *Light Rail Best Practices Report* recommends the development of station area plans as a way to address specific issues related to development of the station, preserve existing residential areas south of Downtown, and encourage transit-oriented development where consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan. Station area planning is a process to establish a collective vision, ensure a compatible fit with the neighborhood, capture the value of transit, optimize neighborhood and community connectivity to the station, and provide meaningful community involvement. **Station area planning is distinct from issues that pertain to design, construction and mitigation of the light rail facilities themselves. These are addressed through the City's design and mitigation permitting process, which is separate from this program.**

### **EAST MAIN**

Staff is working with the East Main Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) in planning for the area around that future light rail station. The CAC, appointed by Council in 2014, held their first meeting in September. They are scheduled to complete their work by September 2015. This Management Brief provides a summary of the CAC charge and their work to date, issues they are addressing through this plan, and key tasks that remain. This is being provided for information only, no action is required of the City Council at this time.

### CAC Charge and Progress

The City Council directed the CAC to work with staff and consultants on achieving the following objectives:

- Engage the community in a process to establish a clear vision and goals for the station area
- Identify and prioritize strategies that enhance the community and help integrate the station
- Optimize access to and from the station by pedestrians, bicyclists and transit patrons
- Address neighborhood vehicular access, traffic and parking concerns
- Support the land use vision for the neighborhood, including appropriate redevelopment (e.g. transit-oriented development) east of 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE.

The CAC charge explicitly excludes any issues that are related to the light rail project which come under the purview of the Light Rail Permitting CAC.

As of the date of this Management Brief, the East Main CAC has held five meetings, including a public open house in October that kicked-off the project and solicited feedback from the public about the issues identified to that point as well as any additional issues that the CAC should explore. In November, the CAC took a driving/walking tour of the study area to gain a better understanding of the area and the issues they are to address through this plan.

The CAC has received briefings on traffic calming projects to date, the Downtown Livability Initiative and the Downtown Transportation Plan, and examples of transit-oriented development (TOD) in Bellevue and other parts of the region. The CAC provided input on a draft scope of work for the consultants and established development parameters. The parameters, or “bookends,” will be depicted in site plans prepared by the consultants to help inform the CAC visioning on the redevelopment area. The range established by the CAC sets the existing Office/Limited Business (OLB) zoning, which is predominantly suburban office development with large setbacks and large surface parking areas as the lowest level. The upper level of redevelopment potential is the proposed Downtown OLB described in the Downtown Livability Initiative for the area immediately north of Main Street and the Red Lion site. These “bookends” will provide a wide range of redevelopment scenarios for the CAC to consider as they develop a vision for public comment.

City Council approved the contract for the consultant team on February 9, 2015. The team is led by VIA Architecture, a well-known and experienced firm in station area planning and private development, including TOD projects. Other expertise on their team includes Transpo Group (pedestrian/bicycle access, traffic), Heartland (land economics and market analysis), EnviroIssues (public outreach) and ESA (environmental analysis, including noise). The consultants began work on February 10 in preparation for the initial visioning work with the CAC at their February 24, 2015 meeting.

### Issues

The public open house hosted by the CAC in October 2014 was designed to inform the public about the issues that had already been identified and to solicit comments and concerns about additional issues that should be considered by the CAC. The public comments affirmed the issues that had been identified, clarified or amplified some related to traffic, parking and pedestrian access and suggested some attention to the future character of Main Street. The CAC integrated these comments into their work program and, where appropriate, the consultant scope of work.

The key issues the CAC will be addressing through this plan have been identified as:

- Changes to vehicular access to the neighborhood due to the closure of SE 4<sup>th</sup> Street and SE 1<sup>st</sup> Place – what this will mean in terms of additional traffic on some neighborhood streets, providing traffic calming, and ensuring convenient access for residents
- Hide-and-ride parking in the neighborhood near the future station
- Providing good, safe pedestrian and bicycle routes to the station from within the study area
- Creating a vision for redevelopment on the OLB-zoned properties that can be an enhancement for the area, optimize use of the light rail station, and be compatible with the existing residential neighborhood
- Creating a vision for Main Street and 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE that will better connect the area and enhance the visual experience of people traveling those corridors.

In recent weeks, the Red Lion site was purchased by Wig Properties, LLC, a privately-owned real estate development company that has been in the Puget Sound region for over 30 years. Mon Wig and his daughter Leshya Wig, both principals in the company, have been very engaged in the planning process. They have attended most of the CAC meetings and been in regular communication with staff over the past few months. They will be presenting their initial ideas for redevelopment of the site to the CAC at the March meeting.

### **SOUTH BELLEVUE**

The project kicked-off with a public brainstorming workshop in October 2013. There was no citizen advisory committee established for this station area plan because there were no identified land use issues, many other issues had already been identified through previous public processes, and stakeholders were well known and have been engaged for most of the planning of the light rail project. In lieu of a committee, staff have been working with an ad hoc group of stakeholders for the South Bellevue area, including representatives of the Enatai Neighborhood Association, Eastside Heritage Center, Bill Pace, Cascade Bicycle Club and the Audubon Society. In summary, the issues identified through this process are:

- Preserving/reinforcing the existing character of the residential neighborhood and the Mercer Slough
- Potential for increased crime in the neighborhood from the nearby light rail station
- Additional traffic on Bellevue Way resulting in more cut-through traffic and concerns about pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Increasing peak-hour traffic on Bellevue Way making it more difficult for residents to get into and out of the neighborhood
- Additional noise from increased traffic on Bellevue Way
- Overflow parking into the neighborhood
- Loss of 550 bus service north of the “Y” with the opening of light rail
- Providing safe, convenient routes for pedestrians and bicyclists to access the station and Mercer Slough Nature Park
- Maintaining the identity and visibility of Mercer Slough Nature Park.

Staff have been working with consultants to analyze issues related to noise, pedestrian and bicycle access and reviewing work and coordinating with several City departments on other issues to develop a series of strategies. Many of the strategies are based on suggestions from stakeholders. For example, one suggestion from the workshop was to install signs at key entrances to discourage cut-through traffic by emphasizing that the area is a residential neighborhood. This suggestion was forwarded to the Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services group in Transportation and they worked with the Enatai Neighborhood Association to determine appropriate locations to install the signs.

Examples of other strategies include:

- designating and enhancing pedestrian routes to the station with signage and pedestrian-level lighting
- coordinating with the Enatai Neighborhood Association and the Police Department on additional patrols and increasing neighborhood participation in Block Watch
- developing a landscaping plan for the west side of Bellevue Way to reinforce the natural character of the area
- instituting a residential parking zone prior to opening of the light rail station
- working with the Transportation Department to explore additional traffic-calming techniques and difficulties getting into and out of the neighborhood during peak traffic periods on Bellevue Way.

The full range of proposed strategies was reviewed by two focus groups in November 2014. Since that time, staff have been refining the proposed strategies for public review and comment.

## **NEXT STEPS**

### **East Main**

Over the next five months the members of the East Main CAC will be working through all of the issues outlined above. Their work will involve refinement of the vision for the redevelopment area and the two major street corridors. They will also be engaged in reviewing the analysis and concepts for enhancing pedestrian/bicycle access, addressing parking and traffic issues, and reviewing draft strategies. All of this work will be presented as concepts for public review and comment at a live and online public open house, currently scheduled for late April. Based on that feedback and additional analysis requested by the CAC, the consultant and staff team will work with the CAC to refine the concepts and develop a draft plan, including recommended strategies to address the issues. The draft plan will be presented to the public, again live and online, anticipated for June. The CAC will then finalize the plan based on the public comment and present their recommendations to the Council in September 2015. The Council will be notified of all public open houses and staff will provide additional updates to the City Council during the course of the project.

### **South Bellevue**

A public open house on the proposed strategies is being held at City Hall on Tuesday, March 3, 2015 from 5 to 7 pm. Based on the feedback from that open house, staff will prepare a complete draft plan for the South Bellevue station area, including strategies and next steps. The draft plan will be presented to Council for consideration and possible action in late spring of this year.