

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Presentation of *South Bellevue Station Area Plan Report* for Council direction and an informational update on the work to-date of the Citizen Advisory Committee for the East Main station area plan.

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POLICY ISSUES

Several policies in the Transportation Element of Bellevue's *Comprehensive Plan* cite the importance of planning for the areas around light rail stations and for addressing items related to station area planning such as public involvement, land use, access to stations, and integration with the community. One of the key policies for the South Bellevue and East Main station areas is TR-7, which states:

Ensure that land use changes near high capacity transit stations are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, recognizing that:

- 1. Transit may support more intense development around some stations;*
- 2. Transit supportive design and orientation may be implemented without changes to land use intensity; and*
- 3. Land use plan map changes would be precluded in existing single family designations and environmentally sensitive areas.*

Additional relevant policies include:

TR-89. Plan and implement high capacity transit service within Bellevue in a manner that advances the adopted land use vision by:

- 1. Optimizing ridership, system performance, and user convenience;*
- 2. Providing exceptional pedestrian and bicycle access to stations; ...*
- 6. Protecting the character and livability of neighborhoods, including adequate ingress and egress to the neighborhood.*

TR-92. Work with neighborhood groups, business owners, other stakeholders, and transit providers to identify and fund improvements that can be constructed efficiently in conjunction with transit projects.

TR-93. Protect residential neighborhoods adjacent to high capacity transit facilities from spillover impacts, including parking and cut through traffic, resulting from system construction and/or operation, using techniques such as residential parking zone programs and traffic calming measures. Monitor the outcomes of these efforts and make adjustments as needed to ensure continued effectiveness.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

<u>X</u>	Action
<u>X</u>	Discussion
<u>X</u>	Information

South Bellevue Station Area Plan

Direction is requested from City Council on next steps for implementing the strategies in the *South Bellevue Station Area Plan Report* (available in Council Document Library). The report includes 27 strategies for South Bellevue, ranging from installing neighborhood signs to implementing a residential parking zone to evaluating the feasibility and cost of constructing a noise wall along the west side of Bellevue Way. Strategies address existing issues or concerns raised by the stakeholders and they are intended to better integrate the future light rail station with the residential neighborhood. The strategies are not intended to mitigate impacts from construction or operation of the light rail project – those are addressed through the city's permit review process and the light rail overlay requirements of the Land Use Code. Some of the strategies can be carried out through existing programs (e.g. residential parking zones); some require additional evaluation (e.g. traffic study); and others would need to be prioritized along with other capital investment projects in the next budget (e.g. pedestrian and bicycle improvements).

By accepting the *Report* and the list of strategies, Council will provide direction to staff to take the next step in the relevant process for each strategy.

East Main Station Area Plan

No action is being requested of City Council regarding the East Main station area plan at this time. The East Main Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is nearing completion of draft recommendations for public review prior to finalizing its report to City Council. This briefing is being provided to Council for information only as an update on the progress of the CAC.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

What is station area planning?

Station area planning is a *process to establish a collective vision for a transit station area, 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 generally encompasses an area within ¼- to ½-mile radius of a station. Station area plans typically address issues related to integration of the station with the surrounding community, such as pedestrian and bicycle connections to stations, transit service, land use, traffic and character. This briefing covers the planning projects around the future stations at South Bellevue and East Main.

Station area planning does not address design, construction and mitigation of the light rail facilities themselves (e.g. Sound Transit stations and guideways). These are addressed through the City's design and mitigation permitting process, which is separate from the station area planning program and includes review by the City's Light Rail Permitting Citizen Advisory Committee. All items raised during the station area planning process that will be addressed as part of the permitting process are forwarded to that committee for their consideration.

Council previously established the primary objectives of the station area work program to be:

1. Engage the community in a planning process that establishes a clear vision and community goals for each station area;
2. Identify and prioritize City-funded capital investments that enhance the community and help to integrate the station with the surrounding area;
3. Optimize access to the station by pedestrians, bicyclists and transit patrons; and
4. Support the land use vision in Bellevue's *Comprehensive Plan* for each neighborhood adjacent to light rail and encourage appropriate redevelopment where consistent with the City's land use vision.

South Bellevue Station Area Plan

Planning for the South Bellevue station area was different from the other stations in Bellevue in that it did not involve land use changes or a citizen advisory committee. Some of the concerns raised by stakeholders were not typical of a station area plan so the planning process and the resulting report were tailored to fit the situation. It is important to note that the primary objectives established by the Council above are not focused on project mitigation, because project mitigation is addressed in the Land Use Code, other codes, and the MOU between the City and Sound Transit. Instead, this process focused on ways to better allow the surrounding South Bellevue neighborhoods to respond to the future light rail in terms of access and integration, without looking at changing land uses. The study area encompasses much of the Enatai neighborhood and Mercer Slough Nature Park and extends from Enatai Beach Park north to SE 16th Street (Attachment A). Issues and opportunities identified by the stakeholders are discussed and addressed in the *Report* and organized into three categories:

1. ***Character, parks and public facilities*** – preserving existing character of residential neighborhoods and Mercer Slough Nature Park;
2. ***Traffic and safety*** – enhancing neighborhood safety, bike and pedestrian safety, addressing cut-through traffic and the impacts of increased traffic and noise on Bellevue Way; and
3. ***Transportation, parking and station access*** – providing safe, convenient bus, pedestrian and bike connections to the station and preventing park-and-ride overflow parking in the neighborhood.

Many of these issues were raised during the planning and environmental phases of the East Link light rail extension project. Because there are no land use changes or redevelopment areas, consistent with *Comprehensive Plan* policies, there was no citizen advisory committee for this station area. Instead, the approach for South Bellevue built on the previous work with known issues and stakeholders and provided additional opportunities for broader public engagement. An important aspect of the outreach approach was to focus on opportunities as well as concerns in order to encourage the public to identify ways to better integrate the station with the community. A public workshop was held at Enatai Elementary School early in the

planning process to affirm the previously identified issues, add other concerns, and identify ideas and opportunities to explore in the station area plan.

Outreach was ongoing throughout the planning process using a variety of techniques and means for communication. Regular check-ins were conducted with stakeholders on progress and to refine issues and analyses being conducted. Draft strategies were tested with stakeholders and focus groups and refined before presenting them for public review and comment in spring 2015. The resulting *South Bellevue Station Area Plan Report (Report)* is being presented for acceptance and further direction from the City Council. The *Report* contains issues, opportunities and strategies developed and refined through the public process.

A total of 27 potential strategies are presented in Chapter 5: Implementation Strategies (Attachment B) at the end of the *Report*. Strategies are organized into the three categories described above and listed under the specific “issues/opportunities” identified by the stakeholders. These potential strategies are not presented in order of priority and there is no specific funding identified. They are grouped according to the proposed direction for implementation (i.e. capital improvements, code and policy amendments, or other plans and programs). Strategies that are italicized are completed or underway because they could be implemented quickly within existing work programs or projects.

The vision and issues for the South Bellevue station area can be summarized as follows:

- maintain the wooded, single-family neighborhoods and the expansive nature park that define the unique character of this area;
- reinforce the existing physical and social character of the area by enhancing the physical elements and addressing issues of cut-through traffic, noise from Bellevue Way and safety and security in the neighborhood;
- address the difficulty residents have entering and exiting the neighborhood during peak traffic hours;
- improve pedestrian and bicycle safety within the study area; and
- improve access to the light rail station without encouraging non-residents to park or drive in the neighborhood.

Following are some of the strategies developed to address the above issues. These were reviewed with the stakeholders through a series of meetings and are included in the *Report*:

- develop a design scheme (e.g. landscaping, signage, art) for Bellevue Way to enhance the character of the corridor;
- develop a tree planting program that can also help screen light rail and freeways;
- implement restoration and enhancement projects in Mercer Slough Nature Park;
- continue to strengthen community ties and coordination with police on safety and security in the neighborhood (*ongoing*);
- install “residential neighborhood” signage (*completed*);
- assess benefits and implications and evaluate sound attenuation of HOV lane project on Bellevue Way south of “Y” (*part of HOV design project underway*);
- conduct traffic study to identify ways to improve neighborhood access during peak commute times;
- institute a residential parking zone (RPZ) prior to light rail operation; and

- design and install a wayfinding system (e.g. signage, lighting, walkways) within the neighborhood and evaluate a pedestrian overpass on Bellevue Way to facilitate access to the light rail station.

Staff is recommending that Council accept the *Report* and provide direction to staff on next steps for implementation. Council acceptance of the *Report* as proposed does not commit to funding any of the strategies at this time. Council acceptance merely directs staff to take the next required steps to advance the strategies for consideration and/or prioritization.

Implementation will vary with the strategy; however, typically this will involve adding capital projects to future transportation facility plans or capital investment plans, amending existing policies, or incorporating items into department work programs. Any strategies with fiscal implications will go through appropriate budget and/or work program approval processes before final implementation, including Council approval where necessary.

East Main Station Area Plan

There is no action or direction requested from Council at this time for the East Main station area plan. The East Main Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) appointed by Council in August 2014 is continuing to develop their report and recommendations. The CAC is comprised of 9 members who live or work in the study area (Attachment C). This update is a summary of the CAC work-to-date and an overview of the issues for the station area.

The CAC was charged by the Council with developing a plan that:

- engages the community to establish a vision and goals for the station area;
- identifies and prioritizes strategies to enhance the community and help integrate the station with the surrounding area;
- optimizes access to the station for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit patrons;
- addresses neighborhood vehicular access, traffic and parking concerns; and
- supports the land use vision, including redevelopment only for properties east of 112th Avenue SE.

The CAC has met once or twice a month, with a few exceptions, beginning in September 2014. Meetings have included tours, regular and special meetings and open houses. All of their meetings are open to the public. In keeping with their charge, they have been exploring the issues identified through their local knowledge and the public process. The CAC developed a set of principles for successful redevelopment (Attachment D) to frame the discussion as they review concepts and analyses and provide direction in formulating a draft vision and recommendations. There will be additional public review and comment on the CAC vision and recommendations in early 2016. Subsequent to public comment, the CAC will prepare and present its final report to the City Council. Major issues that have been discussed by the CAC to-date are summarized below and described in more detail in Attachment E.

Neighborhood access is being altered by the closure of SE 4th Street and SE 1st Place along 112th Avenue SE. The CAC is exploring the trade-offs of improving vehicular access to the neighborhoods which could also result in additional traffic traveling through the neighborhood to bypass Bellevue Way or 112th Avenue SE. Existing traffic on 108th Avenue SE is already a concern for the Bellecrest neighborhood and the potential for additional traffic on that street increases their concerns. Related issues are the potential for commuters to park in the

neighborhood, create an informal pick-up and drop-off area, and providing safe, convenient and attractive routes to the station from the entire study area.

The CAC has been working to develop a vision and basic parameters to guide future zoning and redevelopment of the existing Office/Limited Business (OLB) district located between 112th Avenue SE, I-405, Main Street and SE 8th Street. Most of the redevelopment potential, including transit-oriented development (TOD) for this area lies in the parcels north of SE 6th Street (i.e. Red Lion Hotel, Hilton Hotel, Bellevue Club and Hotel) which have been the main focus of the discussion. The key aspects of redevelopment being considered by the CAC are the types and mix of uses, amount of square footage and scale of buildings, view corridor from downtown public space, major transportation corridors, walkability, livability, urban design, and community benefits. As the CAC has noted in their discussions, if done well, the TOD will be a new neighborhood that complements the surrounding community. By the same token, redevelopment raises questions and concerns about additional traffic, noise, privacy and neighborhood encroachment. The CAC is considering all of these factors and concerns.

Next steps

For the *South Bellevue Station Area Plan Report*, staff is requesting direction from Council about whether to proceed with implementation of the strategies proposed in the *Report*. Council may wish to accept all of the strategies as proposed or to eliminate, prioritize, modify or add strategies. Council may also wish to direct staff to provide additional information on specific strategies. Any strategies with fiscal implications will go through appropriate budget and/or work program approval processes before final implementation.

No action is required at this time for the East Main station area plan. There will be a period of public review and comment on the CAC draft vision and recommendations in the first quarter of 2016. The CAC is expected to complete their report and recommendations in early second quarter 2016. There will be a briefing and a request for Council direction on the CAC final report and recommendations in late second quarter 2016.

RECOMMENDATION

South Bellevue Station Area Plan Report:

Option 1: Direct staff to pursue implementation of the strategies in the *Report* through the appropriate methods – e.g., capital projects, plan and policy amendments, prioritizing and incorporating into department work programs.

Option 2: Provide alternative direction for staff follow-up.

Recommendation: Option 1

East Main station area: No action required.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Map of South Bellevue study area
- B. Chapter 5, Implementation Strategies from *South Bellevue Station Area Plan Report*
- C. Map of East Main study area
- D. East Main CAC Redevelopment Guiding Principles
- E. East Main CAC – Discussion Issues

- F. Photograph view of Mount Rainier from public concourse balcony at City Hall
- G. Mount Rainier view corridor from City Hall public space

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY

- A. *South Bellevue Station Area Plan Report, City Council Draft, January 2016*
- B. *South Bellevue Station Area Plan Appendix, January 2016*