



DATE: July 18, 2017

TO: Chair deVadoss and Planning Commission Members

FROM: Bradley Calvert AICP, Community Development Program Manager 452-6930
bcalvert@bellevuewa.gov

SUBJECT: Wilburton-Grand Connection Project Update and Draft Framework Plan

Summary

The Wilburton-Grand Connection planning initiative combines two efforts; a re-visioning of the Wilburton Commercial Area as a new urban neighborhood in light of forthcoming infrastructure improvements, and establishing a new urban design and placemaking vision for the Grand Connection route between Meydenbauer Bay and the Eastside Rail Corridor. Tonight, staff will provide an update on the Grand Connection visioning process, including the release of the draft framework plan, as well as emerging concepts as part of the Wilburton Commercial Area Citizen Advisory Committee. The project has been defined as a Bellevue City Council Priority.

Background

The Grand Connection is a Council priority initiative to establish a vision for a unique urban design and placemaking corridor that will connect Meydenbauer Bay, Downtown Bellevue, and the Wilburton Commercial Area. It is envisioned to serve as a signature element to Bellevue's urban landscape and will create opportunities for a new placemaking, art and culture, and connectivity.

The visioning process began in April of 2016 following the selection of Balmori Associates as the lead design consultant. The scope of the visioning process was divided into two sequences. Sequence One addresses the existing infrastructure between Meydenbauer Bay Park and the Civic Center District. This sequence included defining the route, the overall identity of the route, and cohesive design strategies that could be applied to the entire route, in addition to public space improvements and connectivity. Sequence Two addresses the Interstate 405 crossing of the Grand Connection, and its interface with the Wilburton Commercial Area and the Eastside Rail Corridor.

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan* represents the full body of work from Sequence One of the visioning process. The Plan includes design recommendations, programming considerations, and other improvements that fulfill the scope of work and the defining principles of the project. The Plan also includes background information and results from the public engagement process.

The Plan is divided into chapters that address the recommendations in distinct categories. These categories includes:

- Defining the route
- Defining the overall identity of the route
- Cohesive design strategies
- Summary of the art and cultural plan (an independent report is also available)

- Improvements to public spaces
- The Interstate 405 crossing
- Programming strategies
- Implementation and next steps

Each recommendation, is structured to provide background information, a description of the improvement, rationale, its relationship to art and culture recommendations, and design-related drawings and graphics. At the conclusion of each recommendation a series of next steps are detailed. These steps include design refinement, further evaluation and study, parallel recommendations, and opportunities to collaborate with other City initiatives and partners.

The information related to the Interstate 405 crossing provided in the plan is for information only. The Interstate 405 crossing will be evaluated as part of the SEPA process for the companion planning effort of the Wilburton Commercial Area, and will be detailed in a second volume to the framework plan.

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan* was released to the public on June 20th, and the *Grand Connection Art and Cultural Plan* was released on July 17th. The plan will be available for public review and comment until September 29th, 2017. Staff will collect and consider public comments during this period and factor comments, where appropriate, into the refinement of the plan, next steps, and future design refinements. Staff plans to return to Council following this comment period for feedback and ultimately adoption of the Sequence One plan.

Grand Connection I-405 Crossing Alternatives

Sequence Two of the Grand Connection visioning establishes a connection across Interstate 405 between Downtown, the Wilburton Commercial Area, and the Eastside Rail Corridor. The crossing presents a unique opportunity to further improve the City's network of non-motorized connections, while serving as a catalyst for future change in the Wilburton Commercial Area. As part of the scope of work, the consultant was tasked with identifying and developing three alternatives to cross Interstate 405 while achieving the following goals

- A unique and signature design
- Opportunities for public space
- A safe and comfortable crossing for cyclists and pedestrians
- Interface with the Wilburton Commercial Area at 116th Avenue NE
- Interface with the Eastside Rail Corridor

Staff will provide an update on the Interstate 405 crossing alternatives that will be evaluated as part of the Wilburton Commercial Area SEPA analysis.

Recommendation/Action Requested

This item is presented for your information only and it requires no action