

DATE: December 28, 2011

TO: Chair Robinson and Members of the Parks & Community Services Board

FROM: Paul Inghram, AICP, Comprehensive Planning Manager, 425-4070  
[pinghram@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:pinghram@bellevuewa.gov)  
Kevin McDonald, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner, 452-4558  
[kmcdonald@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:kmcdonald@bellevuewa.gov)

SUBJECT: 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Station Area Planning

At the January 10 meeting, staff will brief the Parks & Community Services Board on the project to develop a station area plan surrounding the planned 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE light rail station in the Bel-Red Subarea. An overview of the Bel-Red Subarea Plan and plans for parks to serve the area was presented to the Board at its November meeting. Comments and questions from boardmembers on the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE work are welcome, especially as they relate to the conceptual plans for parks, plaza and recreational opportunities. However, no formal action is necessary at this time.

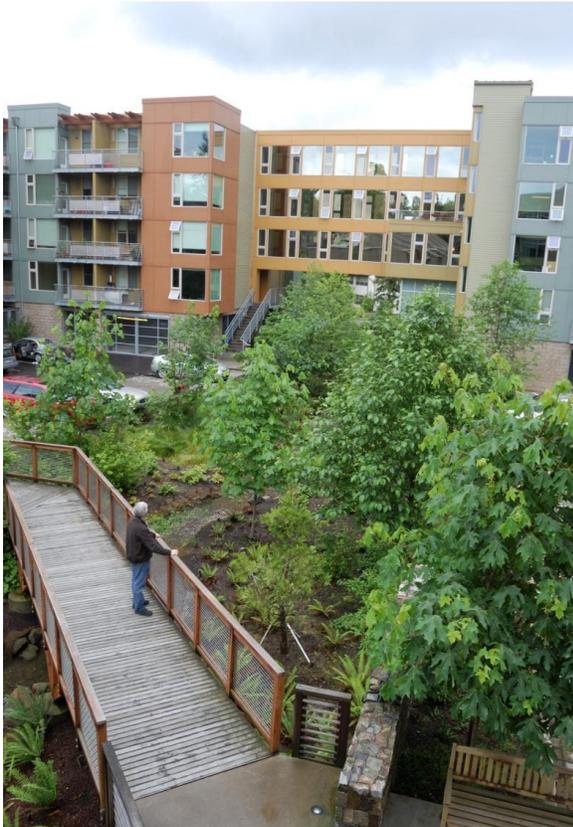
The 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station is one of the light rail stations in the Bel-Red Subarea. This current planning process is focused on the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station and builds on the framework adopted in the Bel-Red Subarea Plan. The intent is to provide guidance for both public and private projects that may occur in the station area and to create an opportunity to organize discussions with Sound Transit and property owners. Station area planning can vary greatly between different stations. For the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station, work is focused on identifying redevelopment phasing and opportunities, the restoration of Goff Creek, concepts for implementing Bel-Red parks and open space objectives, and how to provide sufficient pedestrian and bicycle access to the station as the area redevelops.



Illustration of NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street at the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Light Rail Station

## BACKGROUND

In 2009, the Bellevue City Council adopted the subarea plan and regulations intended to transform the Bel-Red Subarea from a light industrial and auto-oriented commercial corridor to a series of vibrant, mixed-use, livable neighborhoods supported by light rail transit. The Parks & Community Services Board, along with several other City boards and commissions, was very involved in the Bel-Red planning process, reviewing and recommending parks policies and projects in the plan. The resulting Bel-Red plan anticipates new development with a mixture of uses, higher densities and taller building heights centered around the light rail stations. It also plans for a series of local and community parks that are interconnected within Bel-Red as well as to the overall Bellevue and regional parks systems.



Example of creek restoration integrated with development.

The area directly adjacent to the planned 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station area includes some large and many smaller parcels. This presents a challenging setting for coordinated redevelopment in the area around the transit station. On the other hand, there are opportunities here to create a unique mixed-use neighborhood at 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE that embraces walkability and transit, takes advantage of and enhances natural amenities, and has a well connected pedestrian and bicycle system, consistent with the vision for this area in the Bel-Red Subarea Plan.

In Bellevue, the Light Rail Best Practices Report identified various actions taken by other light rail cities around the country. Developing light rail station area plans before design and development of stations was identified as a key “best practice.” The station area planning process can help to identify mitigation and improvements as well as coordination and timing of city capital investments with light rail construction.

### 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Station Area Planning

The 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station area planning process addresses land redevelopment, park and plaza development concepts, environmental enhancements, and new transportation facilities around the station. The station area plan looks at the details, connections and opportunities for redevelopment, and identifies conditions essential to catalyze vibrant transit-oriented development. The station area plan does not replace the Bel-Red Subarea Plan or question the Sound Transit alignment; rather it is a process to look at the area immediately around the station in greater detail than in the Subarea Plan and to identify specific strategies consistent with the Bel-Red Subarea Plan policy direction.

Key issues the plan seeks to address:

- Details for implementing Bel-Red Subarea Plan policies and zoning strategies.
- Redevelopment opportunities and timing in relationship to station construction and area-wide development.
- Opportunities of station area redevelopment to coordinate with public actions to enhance the Goff Creek corridor including restoration of a piped-segment of the stream and identification of a replacement culvert for the light rail crossing.
- Concepts to implement the future parks and plaza identified in the Bel-Red plan.
- Strategies to implement natural drainage practices, and integrate these features into streets, stream corridors, parks and open space, and private development sites.
- Improvements to non-motorized access to the planned station from adjacent neighborhoods and regional trails (planned BNSF Trail, SR 520 Trail), and within the area surrounding the station.
- Plans for integrating bus transit to the light rail station area and the future park and ride facility.
- Ongoing opportunities to coordinate with the Sound Transit – including the planned light rail station and the park and ride lot design and location.



Illustration of the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station area.

A number of these key issues are parks related. Parks and open space are seen as specific opportunities to both enhance the natural environment in Bel-Red and to create

amenities that attract new development. For residential development to be successful it needs to include access to local parks, open space and recreational offerings.

The Bel-Red Subarea Plan includes a plan for new parks and open space areas around the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station. However, the parks are illustrated simply with green dots on a map and are described with brief project descriptions. The station area planning process allowed us to add definition to the parks concepts and to consider how parks can be successfully integrated in a dense, urban location immediately adjacent to light rail transit and high-rise development. These are not anticipated to be large parks with ball fields. Rather they might have green space, areas to interact with Goff Creek, environmental educational opportunities and small community gardens. One of the future parks identified in the Bel-Red Subarea Plan is a public plaza that would be located near the heart of the retail “main street” of 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. It is envisioned

that the plaza would provide needed public open space at the center of this dense neighborhood and that it could connect to green spaces to the east and to a “green street” that stretches east and west. The 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station area plan won’t reach a detailed level of park design or master planning, which may occur later. It does provide, however, greater definition of these parks spaces and helps illustrate how they will be integrated with future development projects. This will give both private development projects and the city greater understanding of how to coordinate adjacent work as redevelopment occurs.

In addition to planning for parks and plazas, the station area plan looks at how to restore and daylight Goff Creek. As with park space, a restored Goff Creek is seen as an amenity that will attract and benefit adjacent residential development. The planning process has allowed us to identify the future alignment of the creek with sufficient certainty to design a new culvert under NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street east of 132<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE as part of Sound Transit’s East Link engineering work. The culvert will be installed as part of the East Link project.

### **Best Practices Research**

In addition to looking at the issues specific to the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station area, the City and consultant team are identifying station area planning efforts from other North American cities to identify the best practices related to both the process for developing station area plans, and the content of such plans including implementation strategies. Research focuses on station areas similar to the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Station that are redevelopment areas of existing industrial and commercial uses and include degraded natural systems.

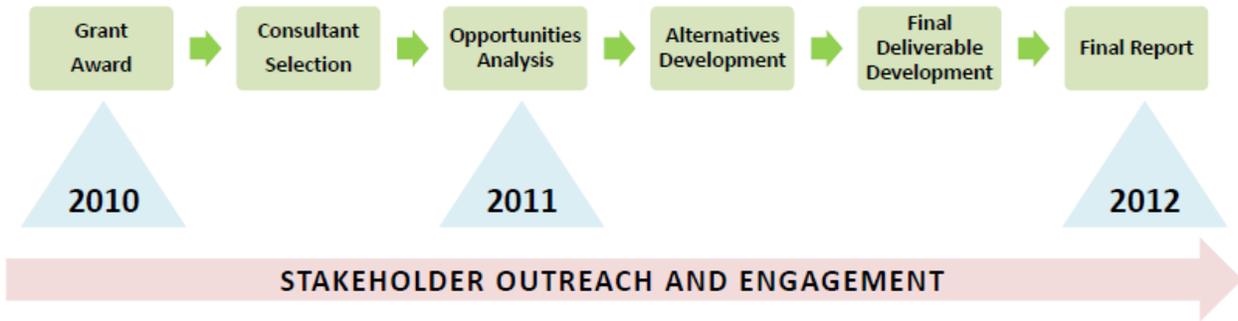
## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Staff has met several times with a group of property owners and business owners near the planned 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE light rail station. These meetings will continue and will supplement other community events and outreach activities.

An interactive project web site: <http://www.bellevuewa.gov/130th-station.htm> allows those interested to learn details about the project and to provide comments on-line. Staff is also providing briefings to other boards and commissions.

## **TIMELINE**

Under the terms of the grant contract, the work on station area planning is scheduled to be complete in February 2012. Depending on Council direction, an additional phase of station area planning may occur to address additional issues or issues in greater detail.



**FUNDING**

130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE station area planning is substantially funded with a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Council accepted this grant funding in June of 2010. Grant funding is matched with City funds, and in-kind contributions of staff time from the Transportation Department and the Planning and Community Development Department.

