



Bellevue Network On Aging

Date: April 9, 2008

To: Jennifer Robertson, Chair
Planning Commission

From: Marjorie Todd, Chair
Network On Aging, Housing Sub-Committee

Subject: Bel-Red Housing Draft Subarea Plan

The Bellevue Network On Aging (BNOA) is dedicated to healthy aging in our community by promoting awareness of needs and resources that support older adults through life's transitions. According to the 2000 Census, Bellevue had the highest increase in the percentage of people over age 65 (13.4%) in King County. The over 75 years of age group is growing at a rate of four times as fast as the general population in Bellevue (2007-2008 Bellevue Human Services Needs Update). The 2000 Census also found that those over the age of 75 were more likely to be paying over 30% of their income for housing costs. In 2000, nearly 40% of all renter households paid over 30% of their monthly income in rent, while approximately 25% of all homeowners did. With rising housing costs and fewer affordable options, many older adults face difficult choices while living on a fixed income. As the Planning and Human Services Commissions have noted, affordable housing options for individuals in the very low income (30% of median) and low income (50% of median) categories are increasingly hard to find in Bellevue and there will be even fewer options available unless steps are taken now to address this need in our community.

Upon review of the Bel-Red Subarea draft plans, the Housing Sub-Committee of the BNOA was initially concerned that the plan did not specifically address the need to include very low and low-income households especially those individuals or families on fixed income. Since reading the Status Report on Bel-Red Housing for the City Council Study Session on April 21, we are pleased to note the inclusion of workforce/affordable housing as an integral part of the planning process. We are also encouraged that there will be specific discussions on mandatory requirements for affordable housing that will provide units less than 50% AMI level and land use incentives during this planning process. We further encourage the Planning Commission to recommend development of an incentives program as a means to encourage developers to incorporate congregate care and/or affordable senior housing units in the development by:

- Offering flexibility in the options of land use
- Tax deductions or credits
- Lifting city code restriction in height and size of dwelling units

To ensure Bellevue neighborhoods are truly a great place to live and grow old, plans for housing should also include universal design components. Given the physical limitations that typically accompany aging and the desire for most older adults to age in place, taking a “Universal” approach to residential design that modifies standard building elements to improve a home's accessibility and usability, older adults will be able to live in their homes longer and safer. Unintentional barriers in building design often include narrow doorways, lack of adequate lighting, fixtures and controls placed too low or too high, lack of handrails, and steps at entrances. Employing designs and features usable by persons with a broad range of needs creates homes that will serve a diverse group, accommodate the needs of residents as they age, and provides the flexibility necessary to add features such as lifts, ramps, and handrails if desired at a later date.

The BNOA is sincerely thankful for the work of the Planning Commission on the Bel-Red Corridor Project. It is a huge undertaking that will make a difference in Bellevue for years to come. The ability to thoughtfully plan for the aging process and create a housing plan that meets the diverse needs of a changing population will truly make Bellevue a great place to live and grow old.

cc: Planning Commission
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