

# Great Neighborhoods

*urban design framework*



## Crossroads Neighborhood Area



Community Development

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# Acknowledgments



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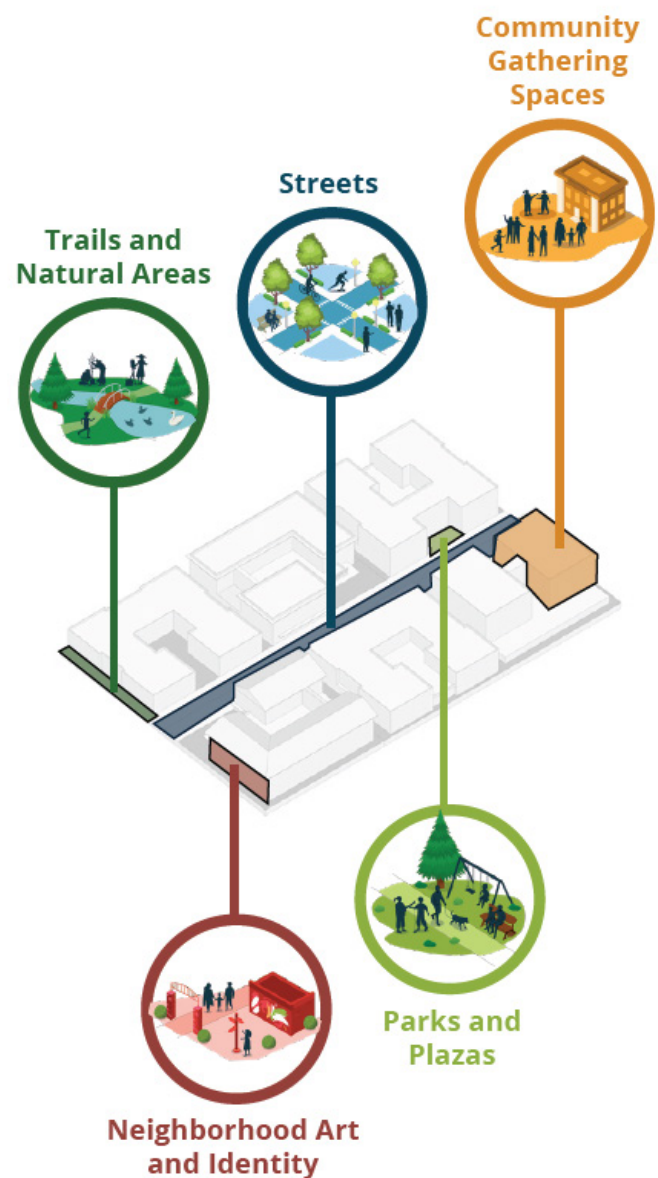
# Introduction

Urban design is the practice of planning and designing the physical environment of a community. Within a neighborhood area plan, urban design can improve the design and function of public spaces, including community gathering spaces, parks, plazas, streets, trails, natural areas, and public art. Rather than focusing on the design of a specific place, urban design considers how experiencing different public spaces throughout a neighborhood provides for enhanced gathering and social interactions, a more attractive public realm, improved neighborhood connectivity, and a clear neighborhood identity.

The purpose of the Crossroads neighborhood area urban design framework is to document strategies responding to community's priorities for accessing and improving public spaces in the neighborhood area. The development of this framework includes:

- 1) Engagement activities to understand and establish urban design priorities; and
- 2) Maps, precedent imagery, and narrative to document and visualize urban design opportunities

During the Discover Phase (Phase 1, October – December 2024) of engagement, the City conducted community engagement activities to learn what values and qualities were important to Crossroads' future. Input from the Discover Phase was used to develop draft urban design guiding principles on how to enhance and develop public spaces throughout the neighborhood area to build upon these values and qualities. Following this, the City



conducted pop-up neighborhood walks and workshops during the Define Phase (Phase 2, January – March 2025) that provided community members opportunities to evaluate public spaces within their neighborhood and document what and where new urban design opportunities may exist.

The urban design framework translates months of community input into guiding principles, opportunities, and concept maps to inform policies within the Crossroads neighborhood area plan. The strategies from this framework are intended to be advisory and do not represent proposed projects or designs. Other planning work will be necessary to assess opportunities identified within this framework. The City will continue to coordinate across departments and collaborate with community partners to develop and implement the shared vision for the Crossroads neighborhood area.







# Community Gathering Spaces

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Community gathering spaces are indoor and outdoor public spaces that foster a sense of belonging and serve as the heart of the neighborhood for events and social interactions. Community gathering spaces may include civic facilities such as schools, libraries, community centers, performance venues, and community parks. The Crossroads neighborhood area is already known for its culturally vibrant community gathering spaces, also referred to as third places, such as Crossroads Community Center and Crossroads Park, where people gather and attend events.

Third places are places that people go to when they are neither home nor at work that are seen as spaces to provide connection and build community. They can occur informally in any publicly- or privately-owned place as long as it is known to the community as a safe and welcoming space.

Community workshop participants identified the need for more gathering spaces, such as new and expanded parks and indoor gathering spaces where they can meet with friends and family. An important element of these places is that they feel safe and are also easily accessible.

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**Guiding Principle: Cultivate opportunities for gathering and attending events so they are more widely available across the neighborhood area.**

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## Opportunity 1a: Identify and repurpose existing sites for community use.

- Explore the potential for developing public properties to include ground-floor community-serving uses.
- Coordinate with Bellevue School District to make outdoor recreational school facilities available for community use during non-school hours.
- Encourage shared parking between different uses to dedicate more space toward community-serving uses rather than parking.



**Opportunity 1b: Provide diverse, low-cost or free programs and events in community spaces, ensuring accessibility for all.**

- Identify locations where temporary closures of streets and plazas could occur to host community events.
- Improve connections between areas with higher density housing developments, such as King County Housing Authority (KCHA) properties, and community gathering spaces.



**Opportunity 1c: Organize temporary indoor pop-up markets, exhibitions, or events within existing spaces.**

- Promote the use of indoor community gathering spaces, such as at the Crossroads Mall, through temporary uses and attractions that increase foot traffic.
- Maximize the use of community centers by offering diverse, accessible programs and events, especially for children and seniors.





# Parks and Plazas

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Parks and plazas are outdoor areas for leisure, socializing, and exercise that bring people together. They often have a combination of active and passive recreational facilities, and include neighborhood parks, pocket parks, playgrounds, sports fields, and gardens. Crossroads Park – a well-loved asset for the community – exemplifies many of these features, such as tree-lined walking circuits, dog park, skate park, P-patch, pickleball and tennis courts, golf course, and spray park. However, these types of recreational opportunities are limited west of 156th Avenue NE.

Community members voiced interest in seeing more parks and green areas. They also suggested that improving access to parks and enhancing existing trails would be a benefit to the neighborhood area.

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**Guiding Principle: Cultivate neighborhood parks with active and passive recreation opportunities, especially in areas not well-served by parks today.**

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## Opportunity 2a: Identify vacant or underutilized parcels for the development of future parks and plazas.

- Identify opportunities to create more small-scale parks, play spaces, and exercise areas west of 156th Avenue NE.





## Opportunity 2b: Improve access to parks and open spaces.

- Enhance and expand pedestrian pathways to and through parks and open spaces to improve accessibility and visibility.

## Opportunity 2c: Design multifunctional spaces for relaxation and comfort.

- Increase furnishing and seating options throughout Crossroads Park, along pedestrian routes, and in commercial areas.
- Increase covered picnic and gathering spaces in areas near food and retail options.
- Take advantage of Kelsey Creek as an environmental asset by creating opportunities for passive recreation and wildlife viewing.





# Streets

A street's usability and visual appeal can invite more people to walk, bike, and hang out on the street and interact with their neighbors, contributing to a more vibrant street life. Urban design can impact all components of a street, including sidewalks, roadways, landscaping, street furnishings, and transit stops. Crossroads' most traveled streets are its arterials, which connect to many different destinations inside and outside the neighborhood area, carry significant amounts of vehicular traffic, and runs several bus lines. There is also a network of public and private local streets serving individual sub-neighborhoods and larger commercial and residential sites.

Urban design related community input focused on providing safer walking conditions, including improved crossings at busy intersections. Community workshop participants also suggested adding more seating and amenities for transit riders.

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**Guiding Principle: Support streets as inviting and safe places to connect to different parts of the neighborhood area by walking, biking, and rolling.**

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**Opportunity 3a: Improve existing signalized intersections and add new signals with well-marked crosswalks for pedestrians and bicyclists.**

- Provide safer crossings at major intersections for bicyclists and pedestrians.

**Opportunity 3b: Improve walkability and neighborhood connectivity on long blocks.**

- Explore new pedestrian connections through midblock crossings to reduce the distances traveled to cross at intersections.

**Opportunity 3c: Install and upgrade sidewalk infrastructure.**

- Install and upgrade sidewalks where there are gaps and needs.





- Add seating opportunities and pedestrian-scale lighting on sidewalks and near major gathering areas such as schools and parks.
- Increase the amount of landscaping, including street trees to provide buffers for pedestrians from adjacent traffic.

### **Opportunity 3d: Encourage active uses along the street.**

- Encourage building design and orientation that enhances visual appeal for pedestrians and supports sidewalk activity.



### **Opportunity 3e: Improve bike infrastructure.**

- Identify opportunities to improve and expand bike infrastructure, as identified in existing City plans.

### **Opportunity 3f: Improve speed and reliability of transit service.**

- Coordinate with transit providers to increase and expand transit service, as feasible.
- Enhance transit stop amenities, including benches and weather protection.



### **Opportunity 3g: Use traffic-calming techniques to slow down vehicle traffic.**

- Increase landscaping and add other visual cues in pedestrian areas to slow traffic.

### **Opportunity 3h: Create a cohesive wayfinding system that enhances connectivity.**

- Install consistent wayfinding and signage to maximize visual recognition of active transportation connections for pedestrians and cyclists.





# Trails and Natural Areas

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Trails and natural areas are public spaces that connect people to nature. These can include greenways, nature trails, wildlife corridors, streams, wetlands, and lakes. One of the most defining natural features in the Crossroads neighborhood is Kelsey Creek – most visible from NE 8th Street and 148th Avenue NE.

Community workshop participants felt that trails and natural areas were particularly important and should be improved. Workshop participants wanted to see more trees and enhancements to streams and wetland areas.

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**Guiding Principle: Promote better access, visibility, and ecological awareness of Crossroads' natural features.**

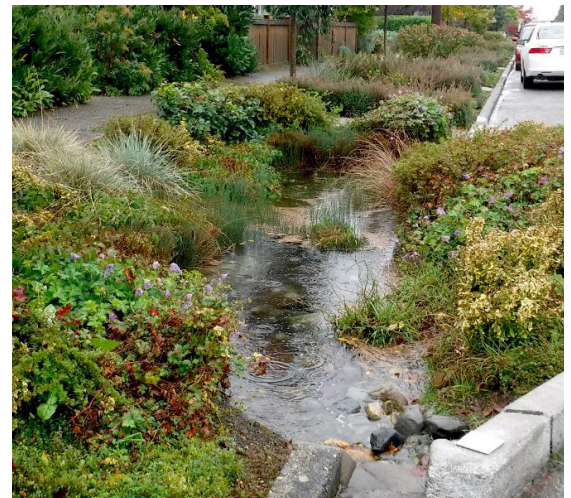
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## **Opportunity 4a: Create a network of multi-use trails connecting parks, nature reserves, urban green spaces, and conservation areas.**

- Use public easements to provide east-west trail connections to Crossroads Mall and Crossroads Park.
- Enhance trail access to Bellevue School District school properties.
- Enhance the overhead utility line trail along 136th Ave NE and connect with other trails.
- Develop an urban trail along Kelsey Creek.



## **Opportunity 4b: Integrate natural elements and innovative design features across both habitat restoration/enhancement work and future development projects.**



- Develop projects that treat stormwater through swales and other green features to support habitat and native planting.
- Increase tree canopy in areas with a high percentage of impervious surface and limited tree cover.
- Develop a trail system along Kelsey Creek that highlights the function of wetlands and other ecosystems.







# Neighborhood Art and Identity

Neighborhood art and identity are creative elements of the public realm that reflect and allow for expression of the local community, their history and heritage, and what makes it unique. Examples are murals, sculptures, signage, gateways, and other public art that mark the presence of diverse communities, significant people and events within the neighborhood. Crossroads already has these elements reflected in the public realm, including decorative sound walls along NE 8th Street and art at Crossroads Park.

Community workshop participants shared that they would like to see more culturally specific art that is significant for residents of the Crossroads neighborhood. This includes multilingual elements that reflect the cultural diversity of the neighborhood to make people feel at home and part of the community.

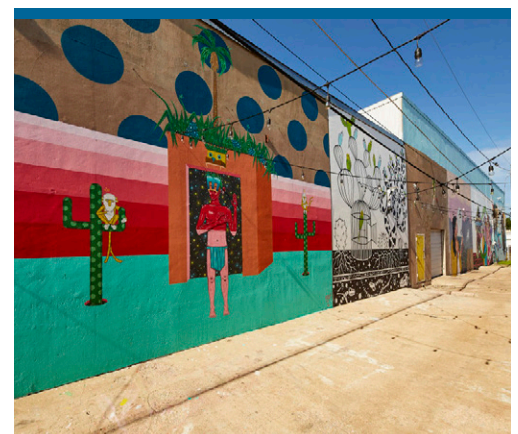
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**Guiding Principle: Highlight Crossroads' cultural diversity as part of its neighborhood identity and expression.**

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**Opportunity 5a: Transform public spaces through art displays, such as murals, sculptures, and other forms of public art, that reflect the neighborhood's identity and history and adds to their vibrancy.**

- Use art and other creative elements to activate and draw attention to important cultural assets within the neighborhood area.
- Provide dedicated arts spaces and culturally specific public art to celebrate heritage, community events, and diversity.
- Support local artists, musicians, and creators to showcase their work by partnering on pop-up art exhibitions, markets, or performances throughout the neighborhood.



## Opportunity 5b: Create defined thresholds into the neighborhood that have a unique look and feel.

- Create a distinct identity for the neighborhood, particularly within business districts such as Neighborhood Centers.
- Highlight, through interpretive elements, historical and culturally significant information, including pictures and stories.





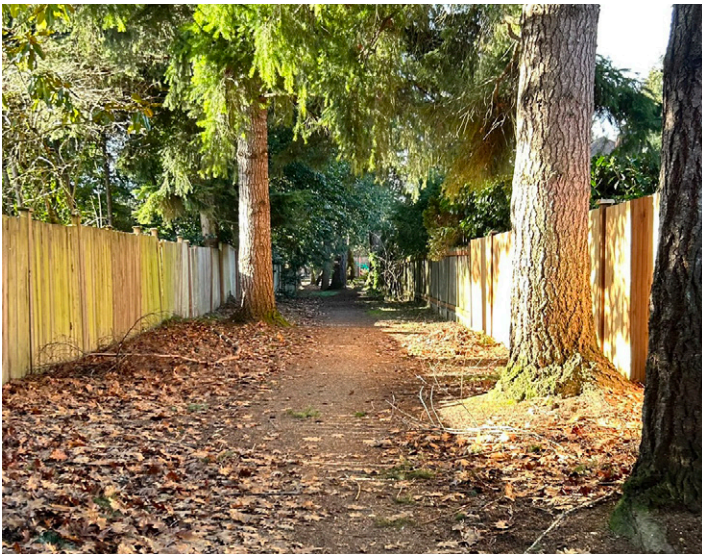
# Framework Concepts

Building from the guiding principles, opportunities and strategies outlined on previous pages, the following concept maps visualize opportunities and provide policy direction for improving public spaces within the Crossroads neighborhood area. They communicate one set of urban design possibilities for achieving the neighborhood area vision.

Rather than a prescriptive set of actions and projects, the guidance from these concept maps should be interpreted flexibly as the City balances different priorities and considers technical and economic feasibility when implementing the policy direction provided in the Crossroads neighborhood area plan. These concept maps are also a tool to support internal collaboration amongst city departments, as well as collaboration with external community partners.

The framework concepts are organized into two themes: enhancing neighborhood connectivity and enhancing community gathering spaces. Each concept map includes existing public space assets, such as parks and streets, and illustrates different high-level urban design opportunities to improve upon those assets.





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## Concept: Enhancing Neighborhood Connectivity

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The following concept map and descriptions provide high-level guidance on how to better connect community members to destinations inside and near the Crossroads neighborhood area. Identified connectivity challenges in Crossroads are having few access points in and out of different residential sub-neighborhoods, large block sizes with few opportunities to cross arterials, and lacking safe and convenient access to nearby light rail stations in BelRed and neighboring Redmond. The concept map illustrates where the following improvements may be desirable based on existing conditions, community feedback, and technical analysis of potential opportunity areas.

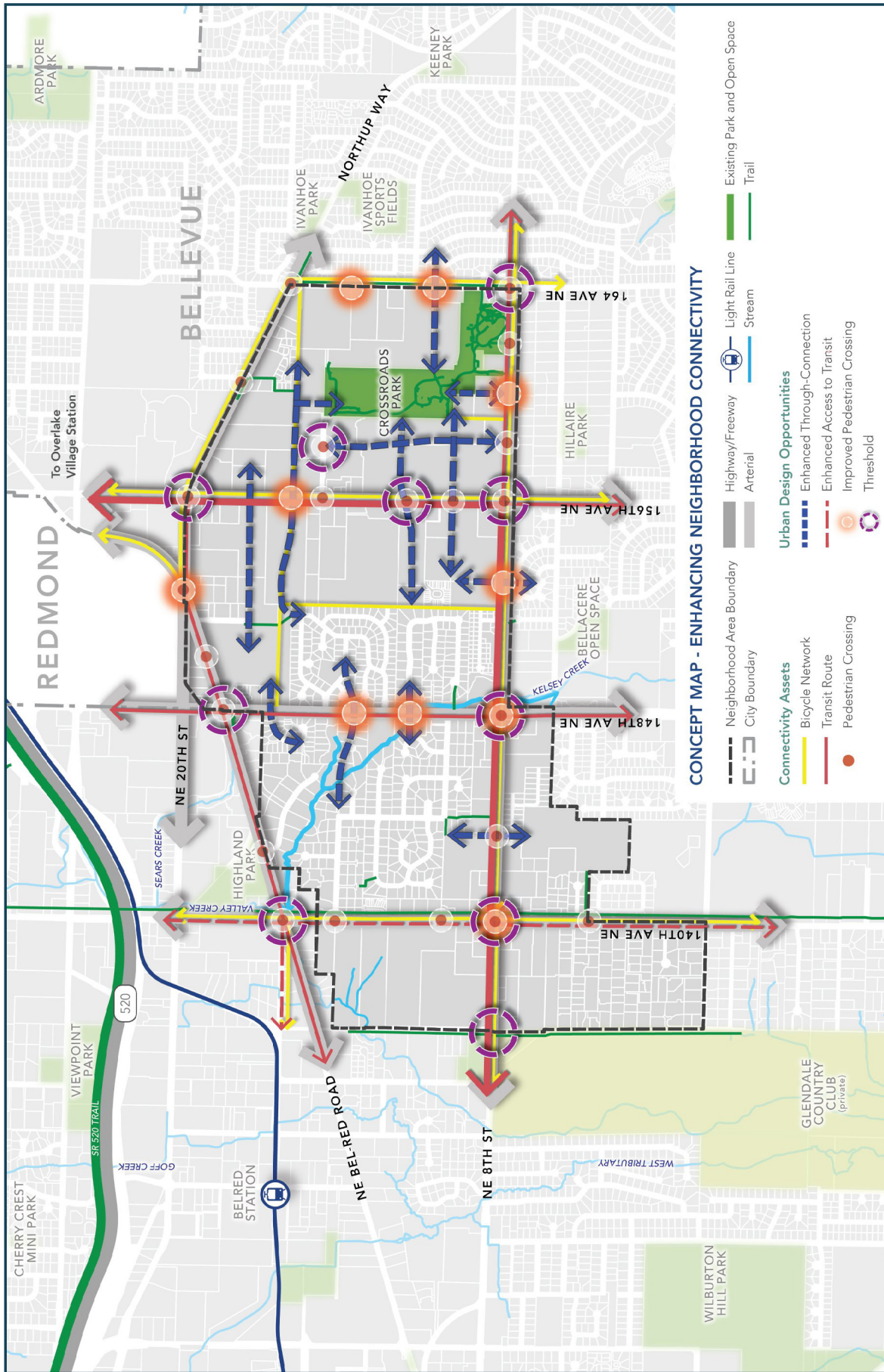
**Enhanced Through-Connection:** Enhanced through-connections improve pedestrian circulation by breaking down larger blocks, development sites, and long stretches of arterials with opportunities for people to pass through safely. Depending on context, they may be designed to include elements such as seating, landscaping, and areas for eating, playing, and organized events. Through-connections could be developed as part of future public and private development.

**Enhanced Access to Transit:** Enhanced transit access improves the quality of the pedestrian and cyclist access to transit services provided by King County Metro and Sound Transit.

**Improved Pedestrian Crossings:** Intersection crosswalks and midblock crossings provide designated areas for pedestrians to cross high-volume arterials to get to their destination. Improvements at these crossings can help increase pedestrian visibility and safety from oncoming traffic and serve as a traffic calming measure.

**Thresholds:** Thresholds are markers to indicate when people are crossing into the neighborhood area or special destination within the area, such as a Neighborhood Center, business district, park, or other civic and cultural assets. These markers can reflect the unique identity of those who live, work, and play there and can take many different forms: a distinct landmark, a natural feature, signage, or public art.





*This map shows the key opportunities for enhancing neighborhood connectivity within Crossroads. Each opportunity resulted from a combination of community input and analysis of current gaps.*



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## Concept: Enhancing Community Gathering Spaces

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The following concept map and descriptions provide high-level guidance on enhancing different places that can serve as community gathering spaces today or in the future – making it easier for people to connect with their neighbors in their own neighborhood. Crossroads has some recognizable gathering spaces today, including Crossroads Mall, Crossroads Park, Crossroads Community Center, the Aquatic Center, and several different schools. One challenge is getting to these places by travel modes other than by driving. The map illustrates where the following improvements may be desirable based on existing conditions and community feedback on potential opportunity areas.

**Third Places with Community Partners:** Neighborhoods comprise of publicly- and privately-owned Third Places – schools, shopping centers, community centers, and other shared communal areas – where people gather and socialize. For these spaces to better meet the needs of the community, the City can look toward community partnerships with organizations, business owners, property owners, and faith-based communities to create new programming and activation opportunities.

**Potential Park Opportunities:** Opportunities for new neighborhood-scale parks, plazas, and recreation facilities increase community access to open space and recreation, especially in areas that are not well-served today. There are different tools that the City can pursue to expand access, including development opportunities, land acquisitions, public easements, and public-private partnerships.

**Environmental Enhancements:** Improvements to natural features, such as wetlands, lakes, and streams, can enhance their aesthetic and functional qualities, provide urban wildlife habitat connectivity, and boost ecological awareness.

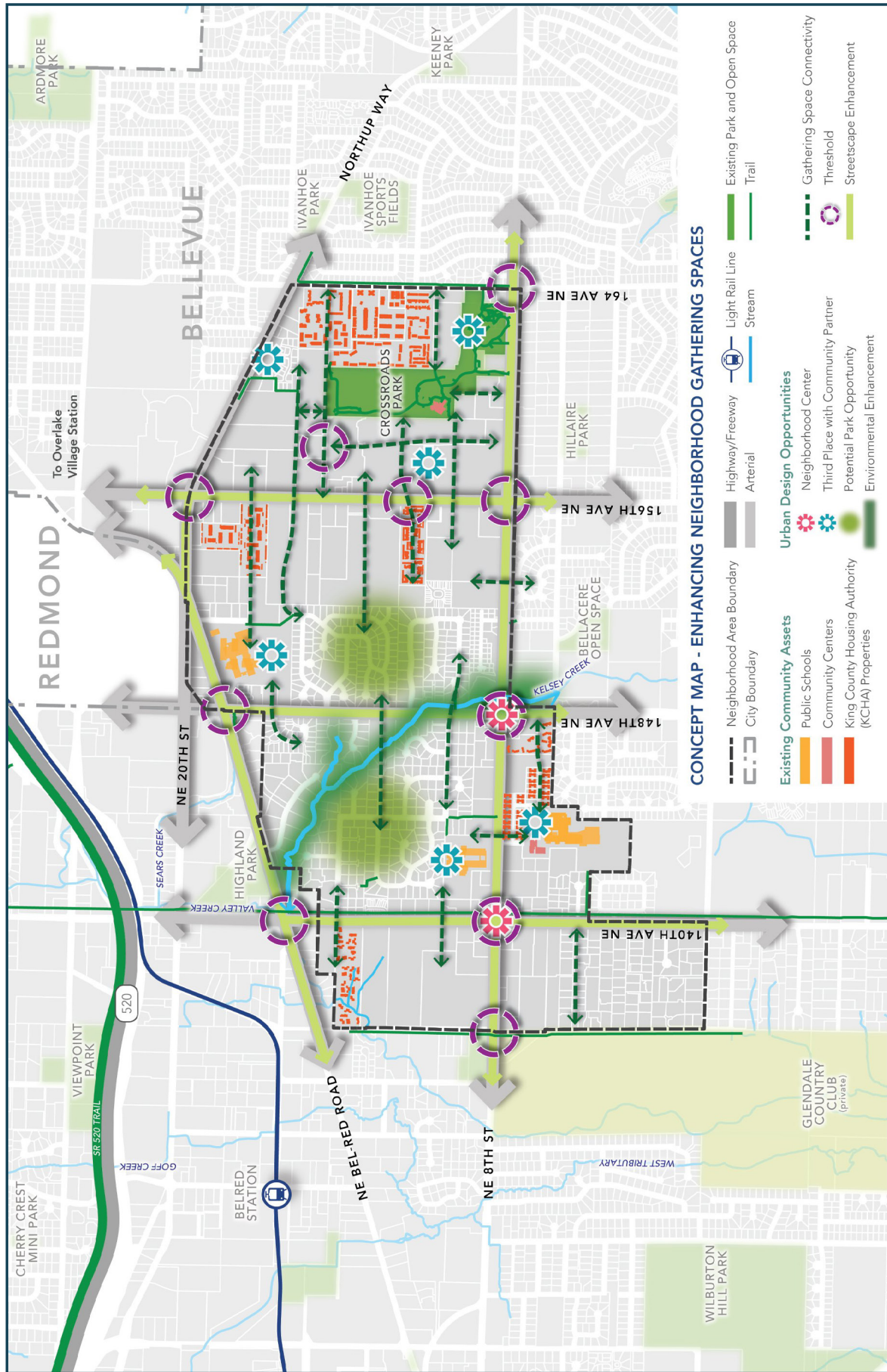


**Gathering Space Connectivity:** Street, trails, and corridors through public and private development sites help to connect pedestrians safely, comfortably, and directly to gathering spaces within the neighborhood, helping to create a connected and complete network. These connections can be further enhanced with landscaping and amenities to serve as linear open spaces and gathering spaces as well.

**Thresholds:** Thresholds are markers to indicate when people are crossing into the neighborhood area or special destination within the area, such as a Neighborhood Center, business district, park, or other civic/cultural assets. These markers can reflect the unique identity of those who live, work, and play there and can take many different forms: a distinct landmark, a natural feature, signage, or public art.

**Streetscape Enhancement:** While arterials function primarily to carry high volumes of vehicular traffic, they are also valuable public spaces for the community. Enhancing arterials with landscaping, lighting, furnishings, and other pedestrian-oriented features make more attractive, safe, and comfortable corridors for people to walk and bike to gathering spaces throughout the neighborhood area.





*This map shows the key opportunities for enhancing neighborhood gathering spaces within Crossroads. Each opportunity resulted from a combination of community input and analysis of current gaps.*

