

Richards Valley Subarea Plan

GOAL:

To maintain the Subarea as a green and wooded place that provides a complementary mixture of living and working opportunities.

Discussion: The Richards Valley Subarea consists of three distinct districts. West of I-405 is heavily vegetated and is developed with a variety of uses – parkland, light industrial, and multifamily. Woodridge Hill is largely residential with a mixture of single-family and multifamily units. East of Woodridge Hill development includes a wide variety of uses – residential, park, warehousing, and extensive retail. Although the community recognizes the need for maintaining working opportunities in the Subarea, they want to ensure that the quality of the residential community and natural features (especially dense vegetation and wooded vistas) remain at a high level.

OVERVIEW

According to most sources, Richards Valley was once part of the Duwamish Tribal Territory. Evidence shows a village/habitation site located on or near Mercer Slough.

The earliest English speaking inhabitants of this area prior to 1900 occupied themselves with mining, logging, and farming.

During the 1890s loggers cut large stands of timber on land now known as Woodridge Hill and Richards Valley and into the Factoria area. Logging continued to be important into the 1920s. The railroad trestle built in 1904 serves as an important Richards Valley Subarea landmark.

Land use patterns evolved from early timberland, logging, and farming between the 1920s and 1950s to the current settlements of residential and commercial development. Woodridge Hill and Richards Valley were annexed into Bellevue during the 1960s and 1970s.

Richards Valley, an area of 1,153 acres, forms an oval beginning with I-405 and the Lake Hills Connector to the north, 132nd Avenue S.E. on the east, Mercer Slough on the west and Richards Road and I-405 converging at I-90 to the south. Of the 1,754 housing units in the Subarea 1,022 (58 percent) are single-family units and 732 (42 percent) are multifamily units. The residential population of Richards Valley is 4,200.

Richards Valley is known for the views from Woodridge Hill and the wooded areas and wetlands in the valley. This plan focuses on protection of the treasured natural features in the face of continued development of residential, office, and light industrial uses.

For instance, the community wants to maintain and preserve single-family neighborhoods as the primary use especially on Woodridge Hill and Woodmoor. A mix of light industrial and additional residential uses is appropriate in the lower elevations of the valley.

In 1987 the City Council adopted the Sensitive Area Requirements to protect sensitive areas in Bellevue. As a result the open use land use designation became obsolete and during the Subarea plan review process the Citizens Advisory Committee redesignated some 115 acres of open use land for residential or commercial uses.

Of the 1.5 million square feet of non-residential uses in Richards Valley, half is industrial, about a quarter is office, and a fifth is institutional and governmental. Approximately 2,500 people work in Richards Valley. Historically, three of Bellevue's subareas have had land planned for light industrial uses: Bel-Red, North Bellevue, and Richards Valley. However, with the rezoning of the Bel-Red area in 2009, only two subareas now have industrial zoned lands: Richards Valley with about 110 acres, and North Bellevue with about 20 acres.

The Richards Valley industrial area has easy access to the freeway. It is home to a wide range of businesses and other significant uses or features including a solid waste transfer station and electrical substation. Lack of internal street connectivity and the number of drainage corridors, streams, and wetlands pose challenges to redevelopment. However, the abundance of natural features and critical areas also provide opportunities for environmental enhancement over time.

In 2012, the Eastgate/I-90 Land Use & Transportation Project (Eastgate/I-90 project) was completed. The study area boundary for that project, which establishes a long-range vision for the I-90 corridor, includes the industrial portion of the Richards Valley subarea. The Eastgate/I-90 project, in part, identified strategies that not only ensure the continued existence of the Richards Valley industrial area, but also encourage higher intensity flex-tech/research and development uses and stream and vegetation corridor enhancements. The Eastgate/I-90 project is more fully discussed in the Eastgate Subarea plan.

Land uses in the Subarea are indicated on the Land Use Plan Map (Figure S-RV.1).

General Land Use

POLICIES

POLICY S-RV-1. Enhance the natural environment within the industrial area by encouraging redevelopment to consider natural features in site design, including but

not limited to reducing impervious surfaces, improving the functions of wetlands and stream corridors, incorporating natural drainage features, retaining trees, and restoring vegetated corridors.

POLICY S-RV-2. Do not allow auto sales, auto rental, and auto leasing uses in the Light Industrial District.

POLICY S-RV-3. Consider the use of a land use incentive system in the Office Limited Business area that incentivizes provision of infrastructure and amenities that offer public benefits through the potential for additional floor area ratio (FAR) and height.

POLICY S-RV-4. Allow recreation and community uses in and on school sites which may be closed in the future.

Discussion: When determining the appropriate intensity of activity, consider the previous use of the school and the ability of nearby streets to accept additional traffic. When applicable, the community can participate in the conditional use process in deciding appropriate uses on closed school sites.

Natural Determinants

POLICIES

POLICY S-RV-5. Retain the remaining wetlands within the 100-year floodplain along Richards Creek, Kelsey Creek, and Mercer Slough for drainage retention and natural resource park use.

Discussion: It is important to preserve the natural environment and to retain the native habitat for the aesthetic value and character of the community.

POLICY S-RV-6. Protect and enhance the capability of Richards Creek, Kelsey Creek, and Mercer Slough and their tributaries to support fisheries along with other water-related wildlife.

POLICY S-RV-7. Retain and enhance existing vegetation on steep slopes, within wetland areas, and along stream corridors to control erosion and landslide hazard potential and to protect the natural drainage system.

Residential

POLICIES

POLICY S-RV-8. Encourage a variety of different densities and housing types in residential areas to accommodate social and economic lifestyles changes as well as the different stages of life.

Discussion: If moderate or low-income multifamily units are constructed in the Subarea, the sites should be dispersed rather than concentrated in one development.

Parks and Recreation

POLICIES

POLICY S-RV-9. Encourage the City to purchase land for parks and open space when it becomes available.

POLICY S-RV-10. Protect and preserve publicly owned land.

Discussion: This policy refers to land set aside for storm drainage and detention, the right-of-way along the Lake Hills Connector, and potential links in the trail and park system.

An efficient way to accomplish this is for the City to purchase properties or parts of properties protected by the City's Sensitive Area Regulations.

Transportation

POLICIES

POLICY S-RV-11. Develop a safe integrated on and off-street nonmotorized system emphasizing connections to schools, parks, transit, and other parts of Bellevue.

Discussion: Richards Valley needs many nonmotorized improvements. These include better access to the schools, parks, and transit service. Because of its central location to other parts of Bellevue (such as Downtown, and the Kelsey Creek and Mercer Slough Parks), it is important for the off-street trail system to connect safely to the on-street facilities.

POLICY S-RV-12. Provide better pedestrian access and views of Richards Creek, Kelsey Creek, and Mercer Slough.

Discussion: While pedestrian and visual access is important, it should be balanced

with the need to develop sites sensitively and in accordance with Sensitive Area Regulations.

POLICY S-RV-13. Promote development of a nature trail between the Lake Hills Connector and Kamber Road near Richards Creek.

Discussion: The nature trail should provide the public with views and walking opportunities in this unique and fragile area. The trail should be compatible with the environmentally sensitive areas along the creek.

POLICY S-RV-14. Consider interim solutions for nonmotorized improvements until major improvements can be made.

Discussion: Use the City's Overlay Program, Minor Capital Projects Fund, Neighborhood Enhancement monies, or other sources to provide interim solutions when practical. When appropriate, consider constructing sidewalks on only one side of the street.

POLICY S-RV-15. Encourage improved Metro transit service to and from key points in the Richards Valley Subarea.

Discussion: Metro should provide better transit service in the Richards Road corridor to Bellevue Community College, Eastgate, Factoria, the downtowns of Bellevue and Seattle, and the University of Washington.

POLICY S-RV-16. Plan for the long-range traffic related facility needs in the Richards Valley Subarea including designated arterial, feeder (collector), and residential streets.

Discussion: The East Bellevue Transportation Study will include an evaluation of Richards Valley's arterial facility needs on Richards Road including the impacts of new development on the transportation system.

POLICY S-RV-17. Minimize access to the Lake Hills Connector when considering new development near the Connector.

POLICY S-RV-18. Enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment along Eastgate Way by constructing sidewalks, bike lanes, and other features to improve safety.

Utilities

POLICIES

POLICY S-RV-19. Encourage the combination of utility and transportation rights-of-way in common corridors and coordinate utility construction with planned street and bike lane improvements which could result in a more efficient allocation of funds.

POLICY S-RV-20. Use common corridors for new utilities if needed.

Discussion: If new power lines are needed in the Subarea, they should be developed in areas that already contain power lines, rather than causing visual impacts in new areas.

POLICY S-RV-21. Improve the appearance of public streets and power line rights-of-way.

POLICY S-RV-22. Encourage the undergrounding of utility distribution lines.

Community Design

POLICIES

POLICY S-RV-23. Apply design review in the Office Limited Business area that promotes pedestrian-friendly design, ensure quality and a sense of permanence, promote environmental sustainability, and create a distinct sense of place.

POLICY S- RV-24. Reinforce a sense of place that reflects the area's location on the Mountains to Sound Greenway and emphasizes the emerging urban character of the Eastgate I-90 corridor by encouraging building and site design that includes visibly recognizable natural features such as green walls, façade treatments, green roofs, and abundant natural landscaping.

POLICY S- RV-25. Promote the feeling of a city in a park through development regulations that retain wooded greenbelts to provide a green backdrop for office and industrial uses and naturally buffer less intense development.

POLICY S-RV-26. Disturb as little of the natural character as possible when improving streets and arterials.

Discussion: The Lake Hills Connector is an example of using natural vegetation along the street frontage and in the median.

POLICY S-RV-27. Encourage the retention and enhancement of special features such as unique open spaces, landmarks, and viewpoints.

Discussion: In Richards Valley the stream and wetlands qualify as unique open space, the railroad trestle as a landmark and the view from Woodridge School grounds as a designated viewpoint.

POLICY S-RV-28. Encourage the retention of vegetation during the clearing, grading, and construction processes to screen development from nearby residential neighborhoods.

POLICY S-RV-29. Require design review for areas along Richards Road in order to ensure that site and building design of commercial and multifamily uses in the valley are in character with the nearby single-family neighborhoods.

Discussion: Commercial and multifamily development should be screened to provide a visual separation from the road. If development cannot be screened, building height, bulk, color, and roofline design should be compatible with the development allowed in the nearby single-family community. Use design review to accomplish this.

In addition, use the Richards Creek Sensitive Area as an amenity when designing sites.

POLICY S-RV-30. Development along Richards Road should preserve and maintain the green and wooded character of the Richards Road corridor.

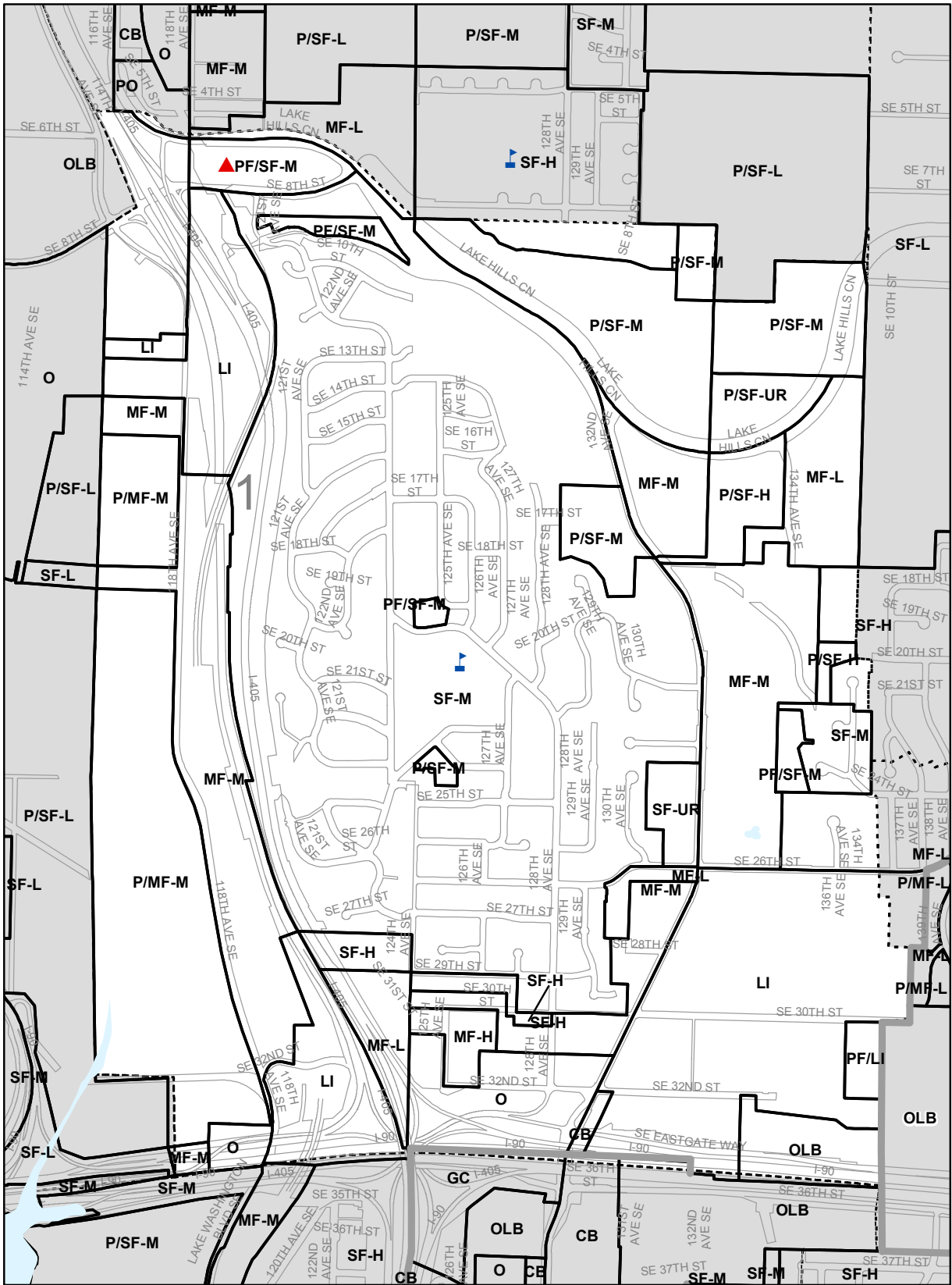
POLICY S-RV-31. New development, including single-family development, should install landscaping which provides a dense visual vegetative screen along Richards Road. The planting should be an amenity to those who travel, live, and work along Richards Road.

POLICY S-RV-32. Encourage the site and building design of commercial and multifamily use on Woodridge Hill to be in character with the nearby single-family neighborhood.

Discussion: Building height, bulk, color, and roofline design should be compatible with the development allowed in the nearby single-family community. Use design review to accomplish this.

POLICY S-RV-33. Develop areas designated for light industrial uses with sensitivity to the natural constraints of the sites.

POLICY S-RV-34. Encourage screening of rooftop machinery from view at ground level.



Richards Valley Land Use Plan

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| <p>SF Single Family
 MF Multi Family
 -L Low Density
 -M Medium Density
 -H High Density
 -UR Urban Residential</p> | <p>PO Professional Office
 O Office
 OLB Office, Limited Business
 OLB-OS Office, Open Space
 NB Neighborhood Business
 CB Community Business</p> | <p>GC General Commercial
 LI Light Industrial
 PF Public Facility
 P Park
 NMU Neighborhood Mixed Use
 EG-TOD Eastgate-Transit Oriented Development
 OLB/EG-TOD OLB and Eastgate-Transit Oriented Development</p> | <p>▲ Fire Stations
 ■ Public Schools
 — Planning Districts
 - - - Bellevue City Limits (2015)
 Lakes
 ▨ Outside of Bellevue</p> |
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