

# Description of Preliminary Preferred Alternative

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This chapter provides background on the development of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative and describes its components as they relate to those of the alternatives described and evaluated in the Bel-Red Corridor DEIS. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative's impacts relative to those of the DEIS alternatives.

It should be noted that the Preliminary Preferred Alternative does not include any major new components that were not previously described and evaluated in the DEIS. The evaluation in this chapter, therefore, is presented to provide readers an understanding of where the alternative falls within the range of impacts disclosed in the DEIS. Readers should refer to the DEIS for a detailed discussion of existing conditions, impacts, and mitigation measures for each element of the environment.

## Development of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative

The DEIS, which was published in January 2007, analyzed a No-Action Alternative along with three action alternatives:

- Alternative 1, Midrange Employment and Midrange Housing – Nodes at 122nd and 152nd Avenues NE
- Alternative 2, Low Employment and High Housing – Nodes at 116th and 130th Avenues NE and near 148th Avenue NE
- Alternative 3, High Employment and High Housing – Nodes at 122nd, 130th, and 152nd Avenues NE

Consideration of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative began in early March 2007 when the Bel-Red Steering Committee discussed all of the components that should be included in this alternative. These concepts included issues pertaining to land use, transportation, parks, and the natural environment. Separate meetings – Business and Property Owner Panel discussions and an Open House – were held in March to obtain public input on development of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative. These meetings included presentations from City of Bellevue staff on the findings of the DEIS as well as comments received on the DEIS. The Steering Committee discussion of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative continued through April, and several topics were identified that warranted additional consideration in the FEIS as they related to this alternative. These topics included:

- Stream enhancement concepts, including green infrastructure, low-impact development (LID), habitat enhancement, and greenways and trails
- Transit nodes and potential development densities
- Building height analysis, which would involve evaluation of incentive opportunities for developers to have building heights of up to 150 feet at proposed development nodes, as an

allowance to developers for incorporating open space, low-impact development techniques, or other public benefits.

In May 2007, the Bel-Red Steering Committee concluded its deliberations and approved a Preliminary Preferred Alternative that includes components of all alternatives, including the No-Action, but most closely resembles the density proposed under Alternative 3 in the DEIS. Table 2-1 compares the Preliminary Preferred Alternative with the alternatives analyzed in the DEIS.

## Description of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative

### Overview

Like Alternative 3, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative would accommodate the highest levels of both employment and housing that are anticipated in the market forecast. This would result in the greatest amount of new nonresidential space (roughly 4.5 million square feet), along with 5,000 new housing units. Approximately 2.49 million square feet of existing industrial land use would transition to other uses as a result of redevelopment.

TABLE 2-1  
Summary of Bel-Red Corridor Alternatives  
*Bel-Red Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement*

Attribute	No-Action Alternative	Preliminary Preferred Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Net increase/ decrease in nonresidential development (square feet) through 2030					
Office	606,500	4,000,000	3,200,000	2,300,000	4,000,000
Retail	124,000	500,000	300,000	200,000	500,000
Industrial	300,000	-2,490,000	-2,690,000	-1,980,000	-2,490,000
New housing units	None	5,000	3,500	5,000	5,000
Light-rail transit stations and locations	Two stations: OHMC vicinity 152nd Ave NE (Redmond)	Four stations: OHMC vicinity, 122nd Ave NE, 130th Ave NE, 152nd Ave NE (Redmond)	Two stations: 122nd Ave NE, 152nd Ave NE (Redmond)	Three stations: OHMC vicinity 130th Avenue NE 148th Avenue NE	Three stations 122nd Ave NE 130th Ave. NE 152nd Ave NE (Redmond)
Other features		Arts District No non-conforming Light Industrial and Service uses; new Service uses accommodated in the future Heights of up to 150/165 feet and FAR of up to 2.5 in development node	Services Core	Light industrial "sanctuary"	

Source: City of Bellevue, 2006 and 2007  
FAR = floor-area-ratio  
OHMC = Overlake Hospital Medical Center

Several attributes of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative embody constant themes that were provided in each of the DEIS alternatives to varying degrees. These attributes are:

- Nodal development pattern based on potential future light-rail transit (LRT) station locations
- Medical office uses along 116th Avenue NE
- Offices south of Bel-Red Road
- Retail/housing along 156th Avenue NE
- Retail along NE 20th Street/Northup Way
- Stream and open space enhancements
- Parks and recreation opportunities

One of the differences of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative as compared to Alternative 3 is the inclusion of four (rather than three) LRT stations: one each in the vicinity of OHMC, 122nd Avenue NE, and 130th Avenue NE in Bellevue and one at 152nd Avenue NE in Redmond. Figure 2-1 shows key features of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative. The Preliminary Preferred Alternative also focuses on methods to accommodate existing uses, as outlined in the next section.

## Land Use

Compared to the other action alternatives, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative would increase development density in the western half of the Bel-Red Corridor by including three closely spaced development nodes west of 130th Avenue NE. Development intensity in the nodes could have a floor-area-ratio (FAR) of up to 2.5. FAR outside of development nodes would be lower, most likely no greater than 1.0. The FEIS analyzed building heights of up to 150 feet plus a 15 foot allowance for rooftop mechanical equipment (refer to Appendix C).

The OHMC vicinity development node would consist of office uses, with an emphasis on medical offices, similar to the node proposed at this location under Alternative 2. The 122nd Avenue NE node would include both office and housing, but with more of an emphasis on office use, which is consistent with the node proposed at this location under Alternative 3. The 130th Avenue NE node would encompass housing, retail, and service uses, with a pedestrian-focused shopping street extending between the new NE 16th Street and NE 20th Street. Along the south side of Bel-Red Road, a housing component would be added to the existing low-intensity office uses, similar to Alternative 3. This would preserve the area's built

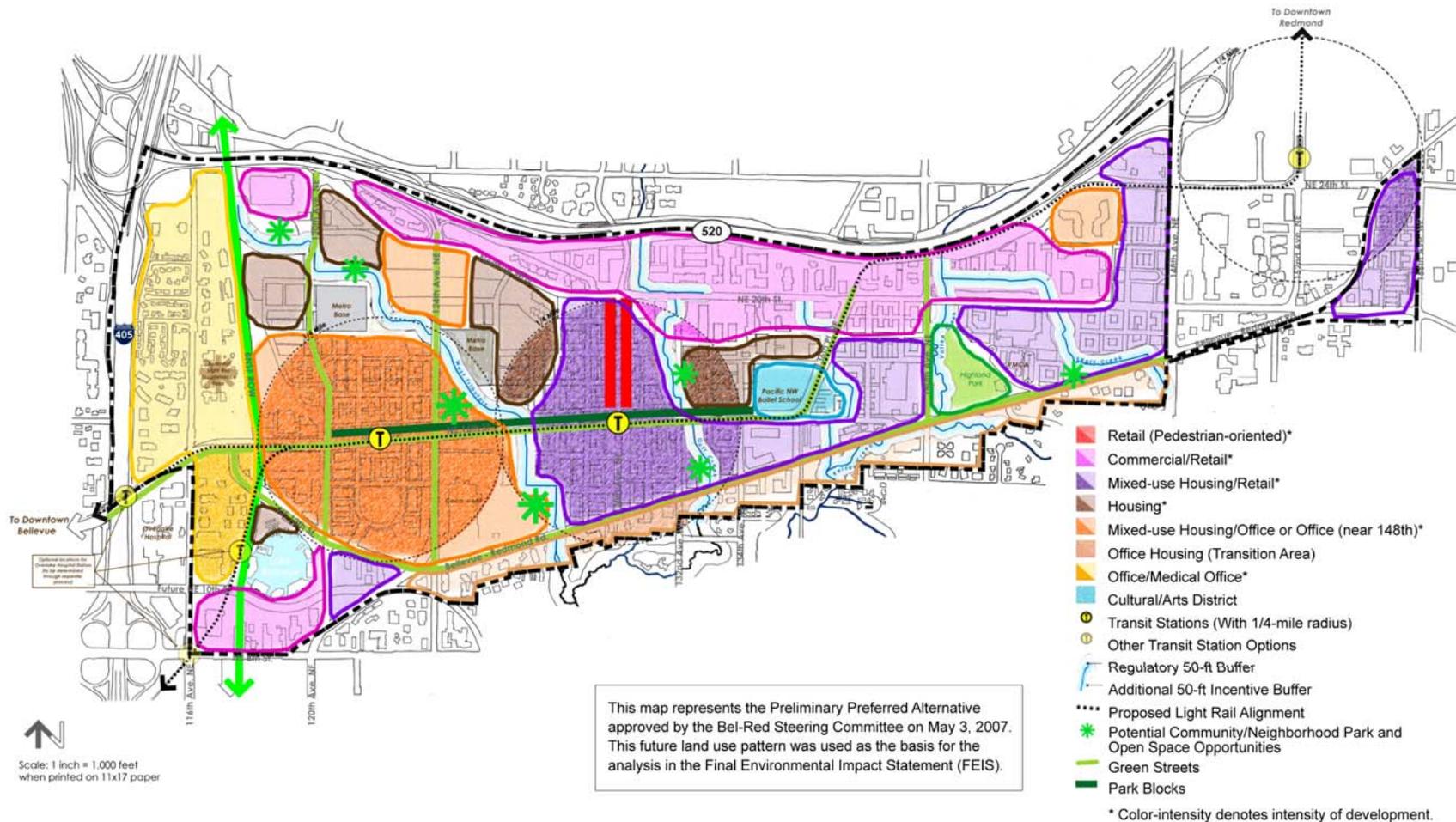


Figure 1-2  
**Preliminary Preferred Alternative (Nodes at OHMC vicinity and 122nd, 130th, and 152nd Avenues NE)**

Bel-Red Corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement

character while continuing to provide a smooth transition to the existing residential area to the south.

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative incorporates aspects of several features that were included in Alternatives 1 and 2. One such feature is an arts district north of NE 16th Street in the vicinity of the Pacific Northwest Ballet School on 136th Place NE. In this area, the City would encourage adaptive reuse of existing buildings as studio, rehearsal, and/or performance spaces to be used by artists and/or nonprofit organizations. Uses could also include the creation of space for crafts such as pottery, sculpture, or glass-blowing.

Additionally, although the Preliminary Preferred Alternative would not include either a Services Core or a light industrial “sanctuary” (which were evaluated in Alternatives 1 and 2, respectively), it would provide further guidance on the location and extent to which these types of businesses could be allowed to occur in the future. With regard to traditional light industrial uses, existing uses would be allowed and could be continued by future owners. Expansions of existing light industrial structures would be permitted, and light industrial structures that were damaged or destroyed could be reconstructed. However, new light industrial uses would not be allowed in any area of the corridor, and discontinued uses of this type could not be re-established.

Accommodating service uses in the future is one of the objectives adopted by the Bel-Red Steering Committee. Service uses have been distinguished as two separate categories: (1) general service uses, which include health care, business and professional offices, and household repair, and (2) those uses that possess light industrial characteristics (such as noise or odor) and include such service uses as auto repair, paint, and body work; automotive parts and accessories; auto dealers; boat dealers; and car rentals. The Preliminary Preferred Alternative would allow the first type of use described above throughout the corridor; the latter category of service uses would also be permitted in many areas of the corridor, both existing and new, but would prohibit new service uses in areas of the corridor that would have concentrations of standalone housing or within mixed-use station nodes. However, existing service uses could continue and expand in those areas.

## **Streams, Park Enhancements, and Open Space**

Beyond the proposed land uses, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative incorporates, with more specificity, many of the strategies described generally in the DEIS to promote sustainable development, and protect or enhance watershed processes in the corridor and provide park and open space amenities. Many of these strategies would involve incentives, as opposed to regulatory mandates, for developers to receive a development bonus in the form of increased building heights and development densities in exchange for wider stream buffers, low-impact development approaches, provision of open space, and/or enhancement of the pedestrian environment. For example, while the existing City of Bellevue Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) dictates a regulatory stream setback of 50 feet, wider “incentive” setbacks of 100 feet could be achieved through incentives for redevelopment within development nodes.

Some stream segments in the corridor afford more opportunities for enhancement and amenities under the Preliminary Preferred Alternative than those generally described in the DEIS, primarily due to increased development intensity adjacent to streams as well as proposed

developer incentives described above. Specifically, the West Tributary and Goff Creek have greater opportunities for enhancements and amenities, including:

- Parks and open space development directly adjacent to the riparian corridors of both streams; along the west side of the West Tributary mainly outside of the 122nd Avenue NE node, and along the east side of Goff Creek within the 130th Avenue NE node
- Trail connections between the proposed Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Trail Corridor and the West Tributary
- Pedestrian boardwalks along specific segments of the West Tributary

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative also expands the general concept of “green streets” that was discussed in the DEIS with the inclusion of a “parks blocks” feature. These parks blocks would make the new NE 16th Street a fundamental organizing element for both parks/open space and new development in the corridor. The parks blocks would extend from roughly 120th Avenue NE to 134th Avenue NE. and could include a right-of-way about 200 feet wide (measured from building face to building face on either side of the street) to accommodate the transportation and parks/open space components that would be part of the corridor. This concept would also integrate with the improvements proposed for the West Tributary and Goff Creek, as NE 16th Street intersects these stream corridors.

## Transportation

The list of transportation improvements for the Preliminary Preferred Alternative is similar to Alternative 3, as documented in the DEIS, with the exception of the specific improvements proposed at the Bel-Red Road/124th Avenue NE intersection. Appendix A further describes the proposed improvements and includes a discussion of the potential transportation impacts of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

## Analysis of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative

As described above, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative is similar in many respects to Alternative 3 analyzed in the DEIS, except for those components that have been further refined. The following discussion compares the impacts of the Preliminary Preferred Alternative to those of Alternative 3 in the DEIS. Mitigation measures and significant unavoidable adverse impacts are discussed as applicable.

## Air Quality

No exceedances of air quality standards were predicted for the Preliminary Preferred Alternative. The predicted p.m. peak-hour vehicle miles traveled (VMT), on which the emissions burden analysis is based, are less than predicted under Alternative 3. Because all of the action alternatives considered in the DEIS would be significantly below the regulatory standards for both carbon monoxide (CO) and fine particulates less than 2.5 microns in diameter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), it is assumed that the Preliminary Preferred Alternative would be significantly below the standards as well. Therefore, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative is not expected to result in significant air quality impacts. No mitigation would be required.

## Watershed Processes

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative is similar to all of the action alternatives analyzed in the DEIS in that it includes methods to promote the City's vision of implementing sustainable principles through protection of natural systems and the creation of parks and open spaces. However, through identification of specific target areas along the West Tributary and Goff Creek that could include increased buffers and parks and open spaces, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative provides better opportunities for stream restoration and enhancement, as compared to Alternative 3.

## Noise

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative would have similar traffic volumes to all of the action alternatives analyzed in the DEIS; based on these similarities, the noise modeling predicted few differences among the alternatives. The similarity in future noise levels is because traffic volumes must double for the differences in noise levels to be detectable to the human ear. Overall, noise levels throughout the study area in 2030 would be within 2 A-weighted decibels measured (dBA) of each other from location to location and alternative to alternative. This difference would not be detectable to listeners. Based on the specific design of transportation projects and locations of future sensitive noise receivers, project-specific noise analysis might be required as redevelopment occurs.

Mitigation measures identified for Alternative 3 in the DEIS should be implemented for the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

## Environmental Health

Under the Preliminary Preferred Alternative, the locations of the proposed LRT stations would be similar to those included in Alternative 2 (OHMC vicinity station only) and Alternative 3 (one each at 122nd Avenue NE and 130th Avenue NE in Bellevue and 152nd Avenue NE in Redmond). The potential hazardous sites located in the development nodes near the LRT stations are identified in the DEIS; the number of sites associated with the Preliminary Preferred Alternative would be fewer than under Alternative 2 and more than under Alternative 3. Therefore, it is expected that the Preliminary Preferred Alternative would result in a greater possibility of encountering potentially contaminated soils than Alternative 3.

Mitigation measures identified in the DEIS should be implemented for the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

## Land Use

The Preliminary Preferred Alternative would include somewhat less long-term opportunity for new services and light industrial uses than some of the DEIS alternatives. Compared to Alternative 3, this alternative provides greater protection of those uses; however, because no "Services Core" or "light industrial sanctuary" is proposed (as under Alternatives 1 and 2, respectively), the Preliminary Preferred Alternative would provide somewhat less protection for existing valued uses. It is important to note that under this alternative the same amount (measured in millions of square feet) of industrial uses would be displaced as in Alternative 3.

Right-of-way requirements for roadway improvements, as well as mitigation for displacements, would be the same as under Alternative 3. The effects of increased activity in the Bel-Red Corri-

dor on adjacent neighborhoods would also be the same as those described for Alternative 3 in the DEIS.

## Population, Housing, and Economics

Impacts to population, housing, and economics from the Preliminary Preferred Alternative would be the same as described for Alternative 3 in the DEIS. Mitigation measures identified for Alternative 3 in the DEIS should be implemented for the Preliminary Preferred Alternative.

## Aesthetics

The FEIS includes an analysis of buildings of up to 150 feet in height – plus 15 feet for rooftop mechanical equipment – in the development nodes and at one non-node location east of Lake Bellevue. Building heights in this area were also analyzed in the Overlake Hospital Master Plan/NE 10th Extension EIS, published in 2005. Factors considered in this analysis included urban form/community character; locations of taller buildings; differentiated economic niche/downtown competition; and relationship to the overall implementation strategy. Appendix C contains an analysis of building height and photo-simulations of hypothetical buildings that might be built within the building height analysis areas. Building height limits are expected to be part of the Steering Committee's final recommendation and will be considered by the Planning Commission and the City Council.

## Transportation

A discussion of transportation impacts under the Preliminary Preferred Alternative, as compared with the No-Action Alternative, is included in Appendix A. In summary, the Preliminary Preferred Alternative is expected to have a 10 percent increase in traffic volume over the No Action Alternative, compared to a 12 percent increase in traffic volume forecast for Alternative 3. Under the Preliminary Preferred Alternative, it is expected that (compared to Alternative 3) there would be no difference in mode share, but there would be a small increase in daily LRT ridership. In terms of intersection performance, one more intersection would operate at level of service (LOS) E or F as compared to the number of intersections performing at this level than under Alternative 3. From a systems perspective, compared to Alternative 3, there is no change in the average speed traveled in the network and virtually no change in vehicle hours traveled; under the Preliminary Preferred Alternative, people would be driving shorter distances than under Alternative 3. There is, however, a slightly higher potential to affect arterials in neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor. Therefore, additional traffic-calming measures may be implemented to mitigate this effect.

## Public Services and Utilities

Because population and employment would be the same for the Preliminary Preferred Alternative as for Alternative 3, impacts to public services and utilities would be the same as described for Alternative 3 in the DEIS. Mitigation measures also would be the same as for Alternative 3.

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