City of Bellevue

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TO: Chair Turner and Members of the Planning Commission

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SUBJECT: 130th Avenue NE Station Area Planning

In the study session on December 14 staff will brief the Planning Commission on the project to develop a station area plan surrounding the planned 130th Avenue NE light rail station in the Bel-Red Subarea. No formal action is requested of the Planning Commission at this time.

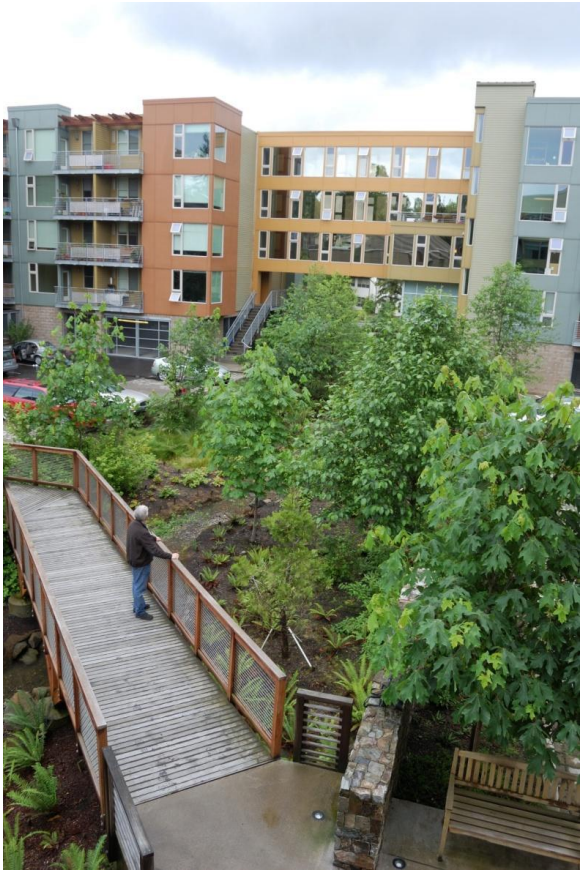
BACKGROUND

The 130th Avenue NE station area planning process builds on the framework adopted in the Bel-Red Subarea Plan. The intent is to provide guidance for both public and private projects 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 130th Avenue NE station, work has 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 16th Street at the 130th Avenue NE Light Rail Station

In 2009, the Bellevue City Council adopted policies 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 Planning Commission, along with several other City boards and commissions, was very involved with the plan update reviewing and recommending to Council the draft policies and projects in the plan. The Bel-Red plan anticipates new development with a mixture of uses, higher densities and taller building heights centered around the light rail stations.

While the area directly adjacent to the planned 120th Avenue NE station is primarily under a single ownership, the 130th Avenue NE station area includes 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 130th 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.



Example of creek restoration integrated with development.

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.

130th Avenue NE Station Area Planning

The 130th Avenue NE station area planning process will address land redevelopment, environmental enhancements, and new transportation facilities around the station. The station area plan will look at the details, connections and opportunities for redevelopment, and will identify 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 is greater detail than in the Subarea Plan and to identify specific redevelopment and improvement 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 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 130th Avenue NE station area.

Best Practices Research

In addition to looking at the issues specific to the 130th 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 130th Avenue NE Station that are redevelopment areas of existing industrial and commercial uses and include degraded natural systems.

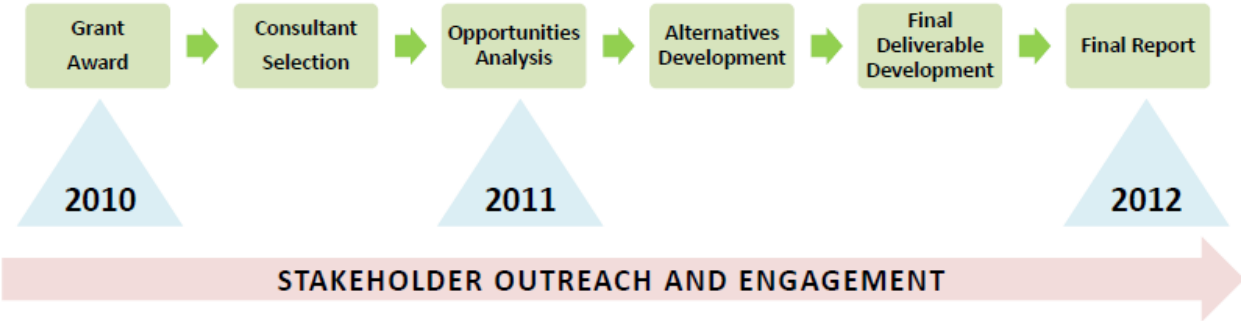
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Staff has met several times with a group of property owners and business owners near the planned 130th Avenue NE light rail station. These meetings will continue and will supplement larger community events and individual neighborhood meetings.

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

130th 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.