

# Aesthetics

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## Methodology

The aesthetic impacts of the alternatives have been evaluated using accepted visual resource management (VRM) techniques. VRM is a systematic approach used to assess visual resources in a study area and use those findings to evaluate project impacts and to help make decisions about future project planning and design. While VRM terminology is not uniform, all of the approaches using these techniques consider the visual experience to be a combination of both the visual resources and the viewer response. A project—such as a building complex or a transit system—is a change in the visual resource that can be measured objectively. Viewer response to this change, although subjective, is usually consistent among the different viewer types found within a study area (e.g. workers, residents, and motorists).

Analyzing visual resources in the Bel-Red Corridor study area uses a VRM technique that is based on FHWA's method summarized in *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* (FHWA, 1981). The visual analysis includes the following five steps:

1. Define the visual environment and visual resources in the study area.
2. Analyze the quality of the existing visual resources.
3. Identify viewer groups and responses.
4. Assess the visual impacts of project alternatives.
5. Propose methods to mitigate adverse visual impacts.

Data used in this analysis included notes from site visits (July and August 2006), topographic and land use maps, and existing conditions photographs. The analysis also considered how the action alternatives would support the policies in the Urban Design Element of Bellevue's *Comprehensive Plan* (City of Bellevue, 2006), which include the following:

- **Policy UD-16.** Exemplify the Pacific Northwest character through the retention of existing vegetation and through the use of native plants in new landscaping. Encourage water conservation in landscape designs.
- **Policy UD-20.** Preserve and encourage open space as a dominant element of the community's character.
- **Policy UD-23.** Preserve and enhance views of water, mountains, skylines, or other unique landmarks from public places as valuable civic assets.
- **Policy UD-42.** Design boulevards to be distinctive from other streets and to reinforce the image of Bellevue as a "city in a park." Both within the right-of-way and on adjacent private development, utilize features such as gateways, street trees, median plantings, special

lighting, separated and wider sidewalks, crosswalks, seating, special signs, street names, landscaping, decorative paving patterns, and public art.

## Existing Conditions

### Visual Resources and Character

Existing visual resources and elements that define visual character include the following:

- Landforms: types and gradients (valleys, ridges, and water bodies)
- Vegetation: types, size, maturity, and continuity
- Land uses: size, scale (e.g. houses are generally small scale, while a skyscraper would be large or very large scale), apparent size in relation to actual size, and character of associated buildings and ancillary site uses
- Transportation facilities: types, size, scale, and directional orientation
- Overhead utility structures and lighting: types, size, and scale
- Open space: types (including parks, reserves, greenbelts, and undeveloped land), extent, and continuity
- Views to visual resources: including water features, hills and mountains, natural areas, farm landscapes, historic structures, and downtown skylines
- Apparent grain or texture – the size and distribution of structures and unbuilt properties or open spaces – of visual resources
- Apparent upkeep and maintenance

### Visual Environment

The starting point for conducting a visual assessment is determining the limits of a project's visual environment. This includes considering the regional landscape, the specific geographic area from which the project might be visible (its viewshed), and the views that the project is likely to change or create. The Bel-Red Corridor is part of a larger physiographic region consisting of rolling plateaus that trend north to south. The Bel-Red Corridor is bound by moderately steep slopes rising to the north, south, and east and less steep slopes to the west. The study area includes the relatively flat-bottomed basins of Valley Creek and an unnamed tributary of Kelsey Creek on the east end of the corridor and the West Tributary of Kelsey Creek on the west end of the corridor. A low rise separates these two basins. In addition to the streams mentioned above, other natural features in the study area include Goff Creek running north to south through the center, Sears Creek at the east end, Lake Bellevue in the southwest portion, and two wetlands associated with the West Tributary of Kelsey Creek.

The study area's topography provides for scenic views, including surrounding hillsides, the Cascade Mountains, Mount Rainier, the Downtown Bellevue skyline, and the Olympic Mountains to the west. In general, water bodies, including Lake Bellevue, are not prominent parts of the visual environment. Large segments of the above-mentioned streams have been

culverted or channelized to improve stormwater conveyance and maximize developable land. As a result, these features are not easily visible and minimal natural habitat occurs in their vicinity. A wetland bordering the south side of a King County Metro bus base (one of the two wetlands associated with the West Tributary of Kelsey Creek) is a notable visual element; however, this wetland is largely inaccessible to potential viewers because there are few access points. Above-ground utilities include streetlights, local electrical transmission lines, and a Seattle City Light electrical transmission line running along the west side of 124th Avenue NE. Public open space in the Bel-Red Corridor is limited to the Highland Park and Community Center.

## Built Environment

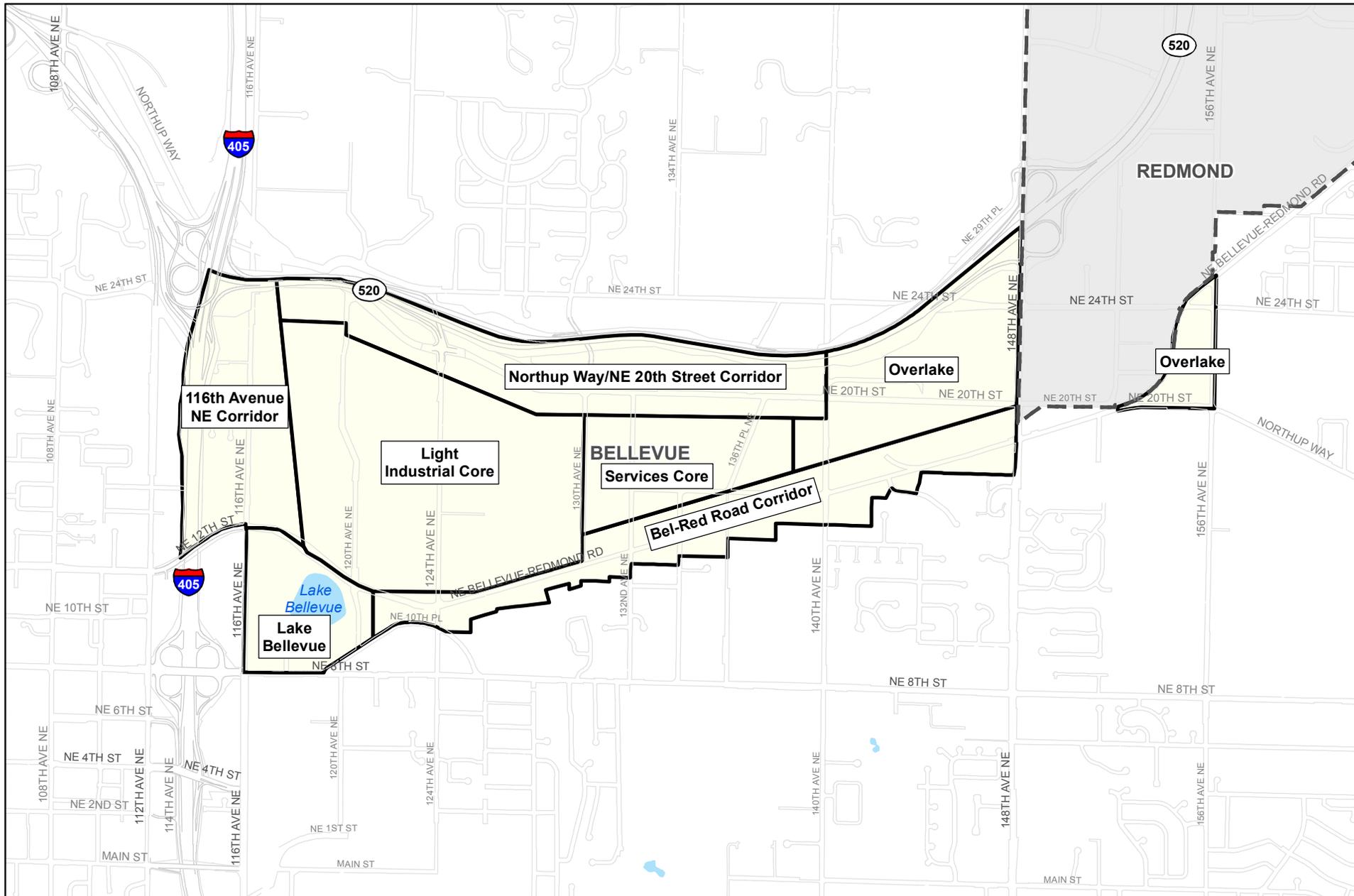
As shown in Figure 9-1, the study area is an eclectic mosaic of land uses, including retail, office, housing, industrial, and recreation. Two areas within the corridor consist of relatively homogenous land use: the industrial area on the west end of the corridor and the retail dominated area east of 140th Avenue NE. To facilitate describing and analyzing the visual environment likely to be impacted by the action alternatives, the study area landscapes are divided into visual analysis units – called landscape units – that comprise similar viewing conditions, visual resources, and viewers. These areas are shown on Figure 9-1, and their characteristics are described in more detail below.

### 116th Avenue NE Corridor

Development in this landscape unit is primarily office related. Existing scale is moderate in areas with offices and small in the former single-family neighborhood in the corridor's north portion. This area is transitioning to offices and is no longer zoned residential. The visual character is defined to a large extent by the roads surrounding and bisecting it; these roads include 116th Avenue NE running north and south, smaller arterials to the south and east, I-405 to the west, and SR 520 and Northup Way to the north. The area is also influenced by OHMC to the west. Surface parking serving office buildings is also a prominent visual feature. Existing plant cover primarily consists of street trees and diverse ornamental plantings around office buildings. The texture of the built environment (defined as the size and distribution of structures and undeveloped properties and/or open spaces) ranges from medium- to large-scale commercial development to medium-scale office development to small-scale former residential neighborhood. There are also many mature trees in the lower-intensity office areas north of NE 12th Street.

### Lake Bellevue

This area comprises automobile-oriented commercial development along 116th Avenue NE and Bel-Red Road and predominantly office and residential development surrounding Lake Bellevue. Existing scale ranges from medium-large, single-story commercial buildings to medium-scale office buildings and multifamily residential development. The built environment's texture ranges from medium-scale offices and multifamily residences to large-scale retail development and associated parking. Lake Bellevue is a visual amenity for viewers in the development around the Lake; however, this development's density almost totally precludes views from surrounding parts of the study area. Roads are a dominant visual feature, including Bel-Red Road, NE 8th Street, 116th Avenue NE, NE 12th Street, and roads accessing surrounding development.



- Landscape Units
- Highway
- City Boundary
- Lake



**Figure 9-1**  
**Landscape Units**  
 Bel-Red Corridor Draft EIS

Surface parking required for automobile-oriented uses, including automobile dealers along NE 8th Street and 120th Avenue NE, is also a prominent visual feature. Narrow planting strips are located along streets in some areas and, in those areas, serve as a visual buffer between the streets and surrounding land uses.

### **Northup Way and NE 20th Street Corridor**

This area is dominated by a four-lane, east-west arterial with a turning lane and sidewalks, as well as SR 520 to the north. Development along this arterial is highly automobile-oriented, dense, and continuous and comprises a broad variety of land uses, including retail, restaurants, automobile dealers, offices, and warehouses. Surface parking fronts the road through much of this area, separating buildings from the road. Street trees have been planted along most of Northup Way and NE 20th Street rights-of-way; however, these trees are immature and are not notable visual elements. Existing scale and texture of the built environment is predominantly medium to medium-large. Adjacent north-south streets act as view corridors to the south, providing views to the wooded hillsides to the south of the study area and partial views of Mount Rainier. Views east include the Cascade Mountains and to the west the Downtown Bellevue skyline with the Olympic Mountains in the distance.

### **Bel-Red Road Corridor**

Similar to the Northup Way and NE 20th Street Corridor, the Bel-Red Road Corridor is dominated by a four-lane, arterial with a turning lane and sidewalks. Existing development on the south side of Bel-Red Road is office-oriented and mixed with limited single- and multifamily residential housing. The north side of Bel-Red Road is primarily mixed retail and service-oriented along with warehouse and light industrial. Mature street trees line the road, and development on the road's south side includes relatively dense ornamental plantings and small undeveloped spaces with native plants. Existing scale and texture of the built environment is predominantly medium to medium-large.

### **Light Industrial Core**

The Light Industrial Core consists of large-scale warehouses and light industrial land uses, such as production and distribution centers for Coca-Cola and Safeway, the King County Metro bus facility, a concrete facility, and Rabanco facilities. Large expanses of pavement accommodate parking and outdoor storage. The existing road system consists primarily of two- to three-lane, north-south roads sporadically connecting among Bel-Red Road, Northup Way, and NE 20th Street, along with a few east-west streets. The sidewalk system is discontinuous and limited. Two wetlands – which are associated with the West Tributary of Kelsey Creek – are located in this landscape unit but not easily accessible to the public. A Seattle City Light electrical transmission line runs north-south along the west side of 124th Avenue NE. Existing scale and texture of the built environment is medium to large. North-south streets in this landscape unit act as view corridors, providing views to the wooded hillsides to the south and north of the study area and partial views of Mount Rainier.

### **Services Core**

This area is bound by 130th and 140th Avenues NE and by the Bel-Red Road and Northup Way and NE 20th Street corridors. Development includes a dense concentration of small warehouses and service buildings, many of which house automobile-oriented services. The sidewalk system

is discontinuous, and vegetation is limited to relatively sparse ornamental plantings. North-south streets act as view corridors, providing views of the mature trees associated with the Goff Creek riparian corridor and wooded hillsides to the north and south. Existing scale and texture is medium to medium-large.

### **Overlake**

The easternmost portion of the study comprises two sections: one west of 148th Avenue NE and a smaller area extending along Bel-Red Road to 156th Avenue NE north of NE 20th Street; this area is an automobile-oriented, densely developed, commercial landscape. This unit includes the Overlake Shopping Center, Fred Meyer, Safeway, and Uwajamaya. Office buildings and small warehouses are located behind retail development on the side streets. This unit includes several noncommercial uses, including the Highland Park and Community Center, the YMCA, and a church. Existing scale and texture of the built environment is medium to large.

### **Existing Visual Quality**

Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity in the viewshed. Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns. Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements; this can exist in well-kept urban and rural landscapes and in natural settings. Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the landscape. Table 9-1 assesses the visual quality of the seven landscape units.

### **Viewer Characteristics and Sensitivity**

Identifying the viewers who would see a completed project in conjunction with the aspects of the visual environment to which they are most likely to respond is essential to understanding and predicting viewer response to project impacts on visual resources. The number of people impacted by the project and the environment from which they are viewing are grouped under the heading “viewer exposure.” For example, many viewers exposed to a particular resource--such as a prominent hill or a landmark building along a major travel route--would notice and remember the resource. Stationary or slow-moving viewers generally enjoy the greatest sharpness of vision. As a viewer’s travel speed increases, viewer exposure to objects decreases. The psychological receptivity of the viewer, which varies among viewer groups, is termed “viewer sensitivity;” this strongly impacts visual perception and the subjective evaluation of that perception.

Two kinds of viewers—stationary and mobile—view the study area. Stationary viewers—mainly residents, employees, or visitors—see a particular viewshed for a continuous period of time. Mobile viewers—passing by or through the study area (motorists, pedestrians, or bicyclists)—are momentary viewers of the study area traveling at speeds ranging from walking speed to 60 mph on I-405. Table 9-2 summarizes viewer response (low, medium, or high) based on an assessment of the viewer characteristics and sensitivity from each landscape unit. Low-level viewer response would indicate low-level effects to the visual environment to which the viewer would respond. Conversely, high-level viewer response would indicate high-level effects to the visual environment to which the viewer would respond.

TABLE 9-1  
Existing Visual Quality of the Bel-Red Area Corridor Study  
*Bel-Red Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement*

Landscape Unit	Visual Quality
116th Avenue NE Corridor	<b>Medium</b> due to relative homogeneity of land use, residential plantings and street trees, and scale, style, and age of structures.
Lake Bellevue	<b>Low</b> due to cluttered visual environment and confusing visual character. There is a lack of intactness and unity (i.e., presence of automobile dealers, automobile-oriented offices, surface parking, visual prominence of streets, and residential uses) throughout the unit.
Northup Way and NE 20th Street Corridor	<b>Low.</b> Automobile-, retail-, and service-oriented development is somewhat unified, but this unit is characterized by a five-lane arterial, SR 520 to the north, broad areas of surface parking, utilitarian commercial architecture, and general visual clutter. Visual character benefits from views to wooded hillsides in adjacent areas, the Cascade and Olympic Mountains, Mount Rainier, and the Downtown Bellevue skyline.
Bel-Red Road Corridor	<b>Medium-low</b> due to cluttered visual environment and confusing visual character. There is a lack of intactness and unity (i.e., automobile-oriented retailers and offices, surface parking, and visual prominence of streets) throughout the unit. The visual character benefits from mature street trees and views south of mature plantings in adjacent residential neighborhoods.
Light Industrial Core	<b>Low</b> due to large-scale industrial structures, an outdoor storage and processing facility for gravel and soil amendments, and large expanses of pavement. Buildings present large expanses of blank walls and continuous rooftops.
Services Core	<b>Low</b> due to cluttered visual environment and confusing visual character. There is a lack of intactness and unity (i.e., automobile-oriented services and offices, surface parking, and visual prominence of streets) and utilitarian commercial architecture throughout the unit.
Overlake	<b>Low</b> due to cluttered visual environment and confusing visual character. There is a lack of intactness and unity (i.e., prominence of automobile-oriented retailers and offices, surface parking, and arterial streets) throughout the unit.

Source: CH2M HILL, 2006.

## Impacts

### Construction Impacts

Construction related to the Bel-Red Corridor action alternatives would cause visual impacts by removing or altering existing visual elements that contribute to the quality of the visual environment; examples include clearing vegetation, grading the landscape, and demolishing structures. Temporary visual impacts would include the presence of construction equipment, materials, signs, and staging areas in a specific construction zone which would reduce the visual quality of the immediate area during the construction period.

Temporary lighting might be needed for night-time construction. Temporary lighting could impose impacts on the surrounding residential areas by exposing residents to glare from unshielded light sources or by increasing ambient night-time light levels. Any other temporary visual impacts imposed during the construction period are expected to be minor.

TABLE 9-2  
Viewer Characteristics  
*Bel-Red Corridor Draft Environmental Impact Statement*

Landscape Unit	Stationary Viewers	Mobile Viewers	Viewer Response
116th Avenue NE Corridor	Workers and visitors at businesses and residences	Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians along 116th Avenue NE, SR 520, I-405, and adjacent roads	<b>Medium</b> due to the residential nature of this portion of existing development; viewer exposure would be <b>medium</b> during transition from residential to other planned land uses
Lake Bellevue	Workers and visitors at businesses and residences	Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians along arterials and access roads	<b>Low</b> due to a relatively low-quality visual environment coupled with a probable improvement of visual environment under all action alternatives
Northup Way and NE 20th Street Corridor	Workers and visitors at businesses	Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians along arterials, SR 520, and access roads	<b>Low</b> due to a relatively low-quality visual environment coupled with a probable improvement of visual environment under all action alternatives
Bel-Red Road Corridor	Workers and visitors at businesses	Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians along arterials and access roads	<b>Low to Medium</b> due to a relatively low-quality visual environment coupled with a probable improvement of visual environment under all action alternatives (however, note that existing street trees elicit a positive response from viewers)
Light Industrial Core	Workers and visitors at businesses	Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians along arterials and access roads	<b>Low</b> due to a relatively low-quality visual environment coupled with a probable improvement of visual environment under all action alternatives
Services Core	Workers and visitors at businesses	Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians along arterials and access roads	<b>Low</b> due to a relatively low-quality visual environment coupled with a probable improvement of visual environment under all action alternatives
Overlake	Workers and visitors at businesses	Drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians along arterials and access roads	<b>Low</b> due to a relatively low-quality visual environment coupled with a similar or improved visual environment under all action alternatives

Source: CH2M HILL, 2006.

## Operational Impacts

Each action alternative proposes development that consists of varying combinations of residential and employment. Development types in each alternative include retail, office,

commercial, multifamily residential, light industrial, LRT facilities, new or rerouted roads, nonmotorized facilities, public open space, civic and/or arts facilities, and wetland and riparian habitat.

### Impacts Common to All Action Alternatives

The three action alternatives might impact existing visual resources at several levels. First, they might add to, alter, or remove some of the features that make up the landscape's basic visual resources; these features include landforms, water bodies, vegetation, and urban structures (including existing transportation facilities). Second, the alternatives might change the visual character of existing resources; this can be assessed by comparing how the project's visual character would contrast or be compatible with the existing landscape. Some areas might be able to absorb alteration while maintaining their visual integrity, which is a factor in identifying a project's compatibility. Additionally, changes to existing visual resources might enhance the overall visual environment.

Common to all action alternatives is redeveloping the 116th Avenue NE Corridor, west of 116th Avenue NE, with medical-oriented offices adjacent to the OHMC. The scale of this redevelopment would likely be greater in the area directly adjacent to OHMC, decreasing somewhat near the north edge of the Bel-Red Corridor study area. In the part of the 116th Avenue NE Corridor landscape unit currently developed with offices, change to visual character would be minimal; however, the north part of this landscape unit is currently developed with single-family housing, and displacement of houses, associated ornamental landscapes, and small existing scale would likely lead to moderate-level impacts to the visual environment.

Also common to all action alternatives is preserving Highland Park and Community Center, which includes ball fields, tennis courts, a picnic area, and a play area. No changes to the visual environment are expected in the park or community center, nor are views from inside the park expected to change given the area topography. In addition, native habitats along streams and in wetlands in the corridor would be restored or enhanced as specific development projects were implemented, providing a notable visual amenity. Additionally, proposed development could be situated to incorporate restored habitat into the surrounding visual environment, which would also add to the visual quality of the corridor.

All action alternatives could result in increased lighting in the Bel-Red Corridor because of the greater intensity of land development. This increase in overall brightness would be visible in neighboring areas, particularly those located uphill (including the Bridle Trails neighborhood to the north).

Common to all three action alternatives, the mixed-use housing and retail area near 156th Avenue NE – currently in the easternmost part of the Overlake landscape unit – would be redeveloped with a mix of commercial, retail, and residential land uses in the same building or site, with housing located above ground-floor retail. Also common to all action alternatives is adding an LRT line along existing and proposed street rights-of-way. Adding an LRT line along the proposed NE 16th Street would likely lead to low-level impacts to the visual environment because the area is characterized by low existing visual quality coupled with low viewer sensitivity. Low- to moderate-level impacts would also be expected where proposed LRT lines use portions of Bel-Red Road and NE 148th Street rights-of-way, which would require adding

overhead electrical lines and utility poles and, in some cases, widening the streets. These added visual elements would most likely impact the visual quality of Bel-Red Road, where mature street trees could be impacted by widening the street or adding utilities.

### **Alternative 1: Midrange Employment and Midrange Housing (Nodes at 122nd and 152nd Avenues NE)**

Under Alternative 1, the 122nd Avenue NE Station would serve as the center for mixed-use housing and commercial development centered at 122nd Avenue NE and NE 16th Street in the Industrial Core and 116th Avenue NE Corridor landscape units. Based on the description of what development could look like at this station in terms of building heights, densities, and streetscapes, (refer to Chapter 2), development impacts to this area's aesthetic environment would be largely beneficial. The existing visual clutter and lack of visual unity would be replaced with planned development characterized by high visual quality. Multiple-story buildings would provide residents and tenants with opportunities for scenic views in all directions. Emphasis on a pedestrian-friendly environment would create a relatively vivid landscape in an area currently dominated by broad paved areas and utilitarian commercial structures.

At the center of the study area overlapping the Light Industrial Core and Services Core landscape units, development would consist of office campuses; a maximum building height of six stories is envisioned. Land use would be predominantly office with limited services and retail for office workers. The resulting visual quality would be marked by a higher level of unity than currently exists, and new open space associated with campus development would provide a visual amenity not currently found in this part of the corridor. The development scale would likely be much larger than existing development as well as the visual grain and texture. Some viewers might see this shift as being an adverse impact, although for most viewers the impact level would likely be low. Multiple-story buildings in this area would provide opportunities for scenic views in all directions.

Also at the center of the study area, a remnant of the existing land uses in the Services Core landscape unit would be preserved. This area would continue to be characterized by automobile-related services in small- to medium-scale buildings. No notable change in visual quality would be expected in this area.

Along the south side of Bel-Red Road, development would continue to consist of low-intensity office, serving as a transition zone between the corridor and the residential areas to the south. The overall visual quality of this part of the corridor would remain largely unchanged.

Along the Northrup Way and NE 20th Street Corridor and the westernmost portion of the Overlake landscape unit, development would continue to be dominated by a mix of retail and services. Density would remain approximately the same as it is today, and structures would continue to be medium-scale, with heights ranging from one to three stories. Visual character would improve over current conditions, with redevelopment incorporating design elements consistent with City of Bellevue guidelines and codes.

Unique to this alternative is the proposed LRT station in Redmond at 152nd Avenue NE, which would allow more varied housing densities and building heights as compared with the other alternatives that do not have this station location. Change to existing visual quality would be notable and largely beneficial, with the existing automobile-oriented, parking-dominated

landscape being replaced by a pedestrian-oriented landscape with amenities such as broad sidewalks, street trees, and fewer large expanses of paved area currently used for parking.

### **Alternative 2: Low Employment and High Housing (Nodes at 116th and 130th Avenues NE and near 148th Avenue NE)**

Similar to Alternative 1, for the most part, mixed-use housing and commercial development impacts under Alternative 2 would benefit the aesthetic environment. Additional units of mixed-use housing across the study area would create a pattern of scale, visual texture, and design element types that could enhance visual unity. Visual quality would be enhanced by replacing existing land uses like light industrial, automobile-oriented retailers, and automobile-oriented services with amenities such as pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, small-scale commercial and retail development, and development based on City of Bellevue urban design guidelines and codes. Multiple-story buildings would provide opportunities for scenic views in all directions.

On the west end of the Bel-Red Corridor, a mix of office campuses and retail and commercial development mostly would be in and around the Lake Bellevue and the 116th Avenue NE Corridor landscape units. These land uses would result in structures that would be medium to medium-large in scale, creating a visual unity in both landscape units. This development would not likely cause adverse impacts.

Also on the west end of the study area, the medical office development would be largely the same as described for Alternative 1, with medical-oriented offices in the area north of OHMC. One notable difference in Alternative 2 would be an LRT station at 116th Avenue NE and NE 12th Street, supporting higher office densities than in other alternatives. Development intensity in the area directly surrounding the station would be at a FAR of up to 2.0, while outside the area adjacent to the station building heights would be up to four stories. This development scale would be consistent with existing hospital-related buildings and could serve as a visual transition between the study area and the large-scale development west of I-405.

In the Light Industrial Core landscape unit, a north-south-oriented band of light industrial land use would continue to exist. This area would likely continue to be characterized by medium- to large-scale buildings and broad, paved areas to accommodate employee parking and trucks delivering and shipping materials and goods. No notable change in visual quality would be expected in this area.

The area of mixed retail and services in the Northup Way and NE 20th Street Corridor landscape unit would be reduced under this alternative as compared with existing conditions. Land use intensity in this area would remain approximately the same as it is today, and structures would continue to be medium-scale, with heights ranging from one to three stories. Visual character would improve over current conditions, with redevelopment incorporating aesthetic elements as part of City of Bellevue design guidelines and codes.

As with Alternative 1, development on the south side of Bel-Red Road would continue to consist of low-intensity office, serving as a transition zone between the corridor and the residential areas to the south. The overall visual quality of this part of the Bel-Red Corridor would remain largely unchanged.

Alternative 2 would set aside a small area at the intersection of 136th Avenue NE and the proposed new NE 16th Street for public civic- and arts-oriented activities. Other public open space in this alternative would be similar to Alternative 1.

### **Alternative 3: High Employment and High Housing (Nodes at 122nd, 130th, and 152nd Avenues NE)**

Alternative 3 is defined by the large amount of office and office campus proposed for the west end of the Bel-Red Corridor. Located in most of the Light Industrial Core landscape unit and much of the 116th Avenue NE Corridor landscape unit, this office-oriented development would vary in intensity, with up to 2.0 FAR envisioned around the 122nd Avenue NE LRT station, and lower intensities allowed in the office campus development along the corridor's north edge. The overall visual character in this development area would experience a notable increase in scale, height, and visual texture. No adverse impacts, however, are expected to result from this development because existing land uses are dense with relatively low visual quality, and because viewers in the landscape units who would experience development have relatively low sensitivity to visual change. Additionally, visual quality could increase through visually unified development and high-quality architecture. Requirements for future development would adhere to City of Bellevue design guidelines and codes.

Alternative 3 housing, mixed-use housing, and commercial development would have similar densities and locations as those in Alternative 2, and they would impact the visual environment in similar ways. Alternative 3 would differ in the area south of Bel-Red Road – largely unchanged under Alternatives 1 and 2 – and would consist of a mix of offices and additional residential development. Visual character would be improved by creating a greater sense of unity between the additional proposed residential development and the existing residential land uses south of the corridor.

The mix of retail and services in the Northup Way and NE 20th Street Corridor landscape units would be similar to that in Alternative 2. Land use and intensity, development scale, and structure height would remain approximately the same as it is today. Because future development design would be influenced by City of Bellevue design guidelines and codes, visual quality would improve over existing conditions.

Public open space would be enhanced in Alternative 3 by adding a park within a proposed residential area north of NE 16th Street between 135th and 136th Avenues NE; visual quality would be improved as a result. As with the other alternatives, current public open space and natural areas would be preserved and/or enhanced.

## **Mitigation Measures**

Several mitigation measures would be available to partially or fully mitigate adverse visual impacts, including the following actions:

- Develop specific design guidance for higher-density and intensity development nodes near LRT stations.
- Develop specific design guidelines to provide appropriate transition between strongly different and adjacent land uses.

- Develop standards for varied roof lines and rooftop treatments to address the taller structures' visibility from within the corridor and from nearby neighborhoods.
- Integrate new LRT stations with area redevelopment plans to provide visual compatibility within the corridor and provide wayfinding to stations from surrounding development.
- Minimize removal of mature trees for proposed development.
- Plant appropriate vegetation as part of development projects to replace or enhance existing street trees, plantings, and greenbelts and to provide screening for sensitive visual resources and viewers.
- Use source-shielding in exterior lighting at transportation stations and ancillary facilities, such as maintenance bases, to ensure that light sources are not directly visible from residential areas, streets, and highways.
- Adopt standards for lighting, such as fixtures designed to cast light downward.
- Reduce temporary lighting impacts by shielding light sources to block direct views from residential areas and by aiming and shielding to reduce spillover lighting in those areas.
- To avoid unnecessary construction impacts, consolidate, where appropriate, future work on underground utilities, electrical transmission and distribution systems, other overhead utilities, and street lighting.

## Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

Construction could create the proposed action would be the potential for removing mature vegetation throughout the corridor – especially mature trees – which would take several decades to effectively replace.