

## Effort to shape Bel-Red Corridor future underway

Faced with changes in land use patterns and declining employment in the Bel-Red Corridor, the city has launched a major effort to shape the area's future.

The City Council in August gave planners approval to develop a new direction and identity for the area that builds on its existing strengths, increases business activity, protects and enhances adjacent residential neighborhoods, and capitalizes on potential new transit modes.

The effort will be led by the departments of Planning and Community Development and Transportation, with major involvement by businesses and residents. A citizen steering committee will be appointed by the Council, and numerous community meetings and other opportunities for public participation will occur.

The planning effort is expected to take place through early 2007, with frequent progress reports made available to the public.

"We need the community's help to plan for the future of the Bel-Red Corridor now while we have a chance to shape its outcome," said Matt Terry, director of the city's Planning and Community development Department. "If we wait, we will see piecemeal change that is unlikely to result in attractive places to live and work."

With about 20 percent of the city's total employment, the Bel-Red area has long been one of the city's major business areas, dominated by stores and offices, warehouses and distribution facilities including the Coca Cola bottling plant. About half of the area, which has about 1,100 business locations, is zoned for light industrial use.

But in recent years, as the city's downtown and other commercial areas have thrived, the Bel-Red area has faltered, with big employers either moving out or greatly reducing operations. Safeway has shifted most of its distribution operations out of the area and announced plans to sell about half of the 75 acres it owns, while the King County Journal moved the bulk of its operations from the Bel-Red Corridor to Kent.

As land uses in the area have shifted, employment also has declined. Recent data indicates that between 1995 and 2003, employment in Bellevue as a whole increased by 18 percent, but dropped six percent in the Bel-Red Corridor. Over 20,000 people are presently employed in the Bel-Red Corridor.

City officials said given these trends, it is important the city begin working now with businesses and residents to determine future land uses in the corridor, as well as the area's role in the city's overall growth and economic development.

Moreover, Sound Transit is in the early stages of evaluating High Capacity Transit (HCT) modes such as light rail or bus rapid transit that would cross Lake Washington into downtown Bellevue and then eventually run east through Overlake and the Bel-Red Corridor and into Redmond.

Such a transit line could carry more than 15,000 passengers per day between Downtown Bellevue and Redmond Overlake, offering a fast, reliable travel option in a very congested corridor and opening up new options for different types of development, city officials said.

"It's a prime time to embark on the Bel-Red effort," said Goran Sparrman, director of the city's Transportation Department. "We know the Bel-Red area needs transportation improvements, and not just to carry



An aerial photo of the Bel-Red Corridor, with the Safeway distribution center in the foreground. The company has moved some of its operations from the site, and currently plans to sell about half of the 75 acres it owns in the corridor. Photo by Ron Parker, Associated Earth Sciences.

more cars. Along with HCT, we need to look at improving bike routes, bus routes and sidewalks, too."

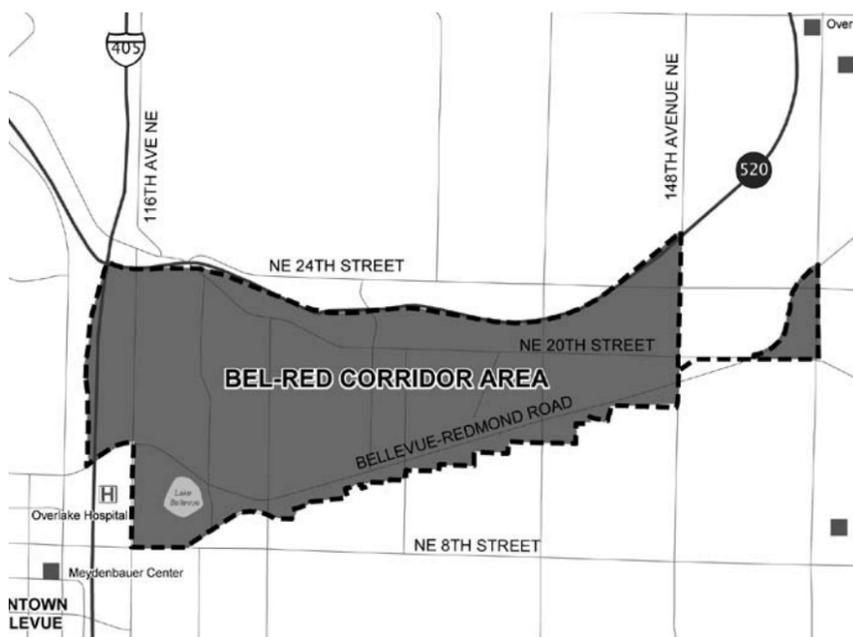
When complete, the plan will include recommendations for land use changes and related infrastructure (such as utilities, streets and parks), a preferred route for HCT with station locations, identification of needed amenities, and financial strategies to put the plan into action.

The city expects to work closely with Sound Transit and the City of Redmond, and develop an extensive plan to keep the public involved and informed. In addition to the citizens steering committee and planned community meetings, the city will develop a Bel-Red Corridor website, newsletters and other communications tools.

"The city can either stand by, or help guide what happens," said Dan Stroh, the city's Planning Director. "Bellevue has a history of working with the community to plan and manage change, and that is what we hope occurs here."

For a complete list of the Bel-Red Corridor planning principles adopted by the City Council, see page eight of the PDF document on the Web: [http://www.cityofbellevue.org/citygov/CityCouncil/pdf/PA\\_08012005\\_2a\\_SS.pdf](http://www.cityofbellevue.org/citygov/CityCouncil/pdf/PA_08012005_2a_SS.pdf).

For additional information, e-mail [BelRed@ci.bellevue.wa.us](mailto:BelRed@ci.bellevue.wa.us) or contact Kevin O'Neill at 425-452-4064.



The Bel-Red Corridor stretches between State Route 520 and Bel-Red Road, extending from Interstate 405 to the city's border with Redmond at 148th Avenue Northeast.



More than 1,000 residents joined Bellevue City Councilmembers for the grand opening of Lewis Creek Park in South Bellevue. Bellevue City Councilmembers uncover the Park Dedication Plaque: From l to r: Conrad Lee, Mayor Connie Marshall, Don Davidson, John Chelminiak, Grant Degginger. The park offers a visitor center, extensive trail system, play areas, and sportsfields. Eighty per cent of the 56-acre park remains in its natural condition.