

Bel-Red Corridor Project **Existing Conditions**

Task 1.2 Technical Memo
November 28, 2005

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Introduction

The City of Bellevue is coordinating a major effort to develop a long-term land use and transportation vision for the Bellevue-Redmond Road Corridor between Highway 405 and 156th Avenue NE.

The project is being led by Bellevue's departments of Planning and Community Development and Transportation. Significant community involvement will include several public meetings and workshops and other public forums, as well as a citizen steering committee appointed by City Council to guide the process.

Project consultants include specialists in urban design, economic analysis, transportation, engineering, and natural resources. Several technical memos will be prepared to record the three-step urban design process (**1- Starting, 2- Designing, 3- Implementing**), documents stage 1.2, "Starting - Evaluate Existing Conditions."

The Bellevue City Council has endorsed planning principles (summarized in the table on the right) which will help frame the project. These principles will be a reference point for the Steering Committee, staff, and consultants as work proceeds on the project.

Bel-Red Planning Principles

- **Powerful, Long-Term Vision.**
- **Economic Vitality.**
- **Differentiated Economic Niche.**
- **Building from Existing Assets.**
- **High Capacity Transit as an Opportunity.**
- **Land Use/Transportation Integration.**
- **Community Amenities & Quality of Life.**
- **Neighborhood Protection, Enhancement & Creation.**
- **Sustainability.**
- **Coordination.**

Project Principles

Study Area and Context

The Bel-Red Corridor study area encompasses some 900 acres, the bulk of it stretching approximately two miles from I-405 east to 148th Avenue, immediately southeast of the intersection of highways SR-520 and I-405, and north of Bellevue-Redmond Road. The somewhat hilly terrain lies in between downtown Bellevue to the west and the Overlake area of Redmond to the northeast.

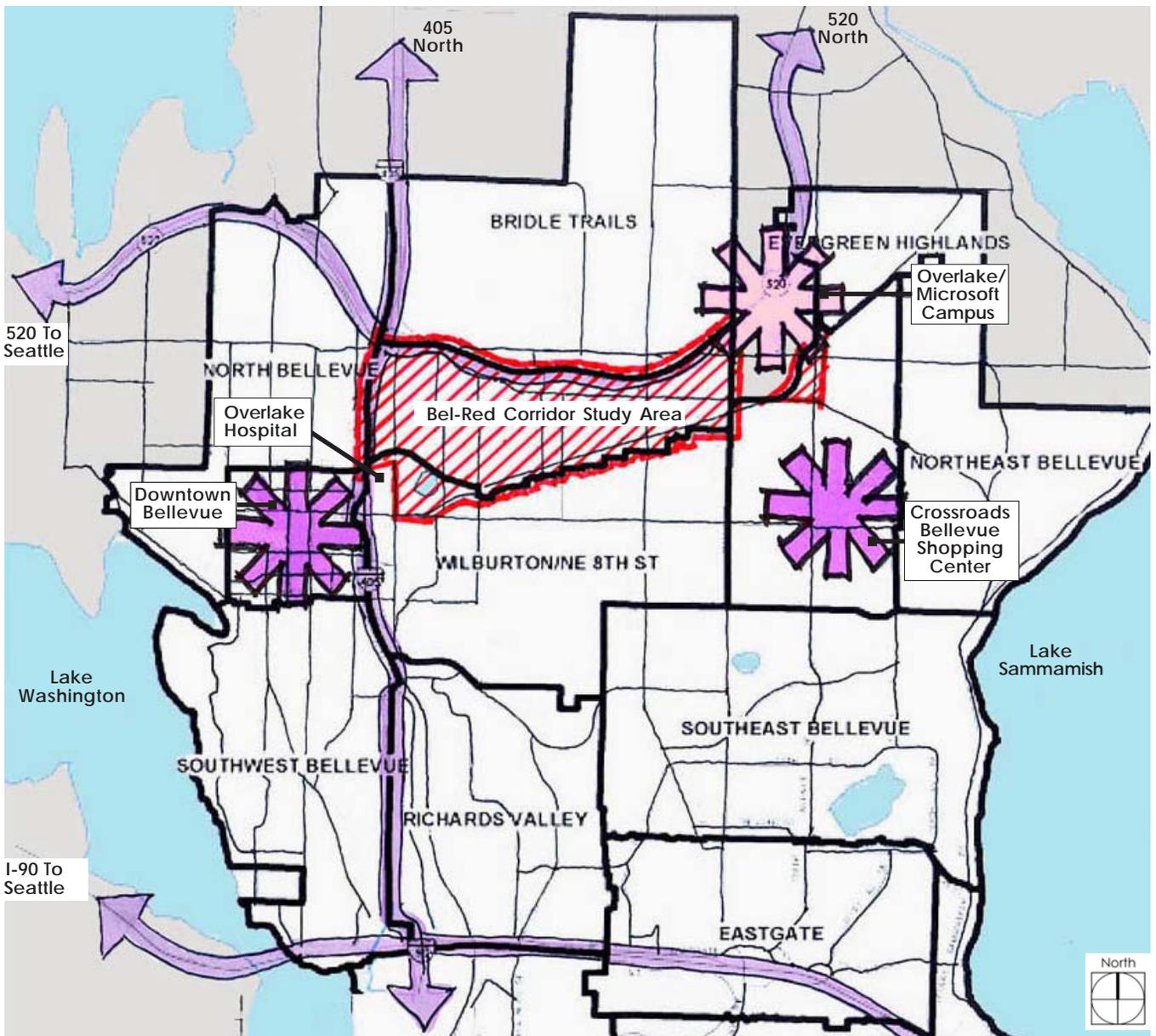
The study area also includes the northeast corner of Bellevue and abuts the southwest corner of Redmond, where Bel-Red Road forms the boundary between the Bellevue and Redmond.

The diagram below identifies major nearby areas that frame the study area:

- *Downtown Bellevue* - the heart of the city of Bellevue and the major regional center of the Eastside; directly accessible to the Bel-Red

Corridor via NE 12th Street over I-405.

- *Crossroads Bellevue Shopping Center* - and adjacent Crossroads Center, a “multipurpose community center” which serves this “city within a city” (as described by the city’s Comprehensive Plan)
- *Overlake/Microsoft Campus* - major employment center located just outside of the City and study area boundaries, in Redmond



Study Area Context

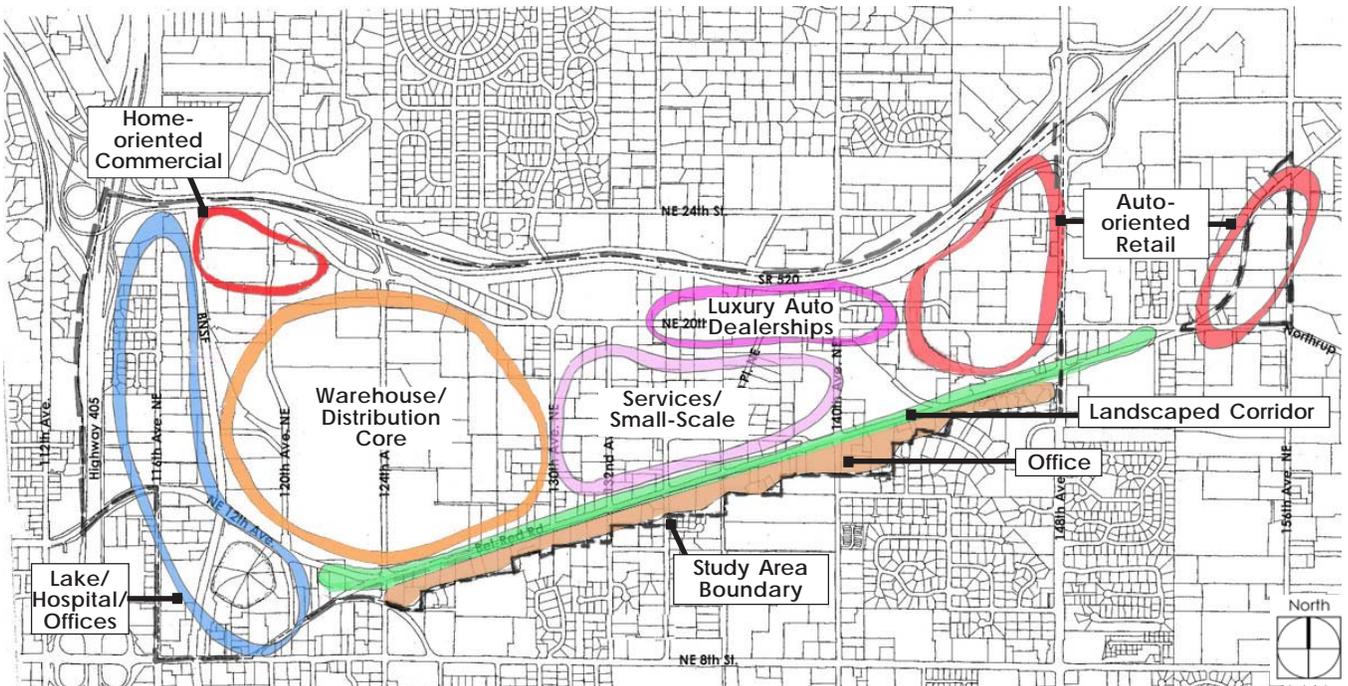
Existing Land Uses

Many of the properties in the Bel-Red Corridor study area are occupied by surface parking lots and low-density buildings providing space for a wide range of services and activities.

This disparate group of uses includes within it some broad sub-areas; these are located in the diagram below and can be generally described as follows:

- **Home-oriented Commercial** - Home improvement chain retail, residential service companies
- **Warehouse/Distribution Core** - range of warehouse and other retail/commercial services
- **Services - Smaller-scale** - range of consumer and retail services, offices, private organizations

- **Lake/Hospital/Offices** - Overlake Hospital-associated professional offices and lakeside residential/restaurant
- **Luxury Auto Dealerships** - Sales and services of high-end autos
- **Auto-oriented Retail** - Grocery chains and restaurant franchises
- **Office** - Smaller-scale private commercial and professional office
- **Landscaped Corridor** - mature trees planted in rows along both sides of Bel-Red Road



Existing Land Use Categories

Comprehensive Plan

Bellevue’s Comprehensive Plan, first developed in the mid-1950s, in the decades since has been strategically amended to maintain its focus on providing, as the plan states, “well-maintained, livable neighborhoods; a healthy environment; a vibrant urban center; and a strong, diverse local economy.”

Boundaries of the Bel-Red Corridor study area generally match those which the Comprehensive Plan defines as the Bel-Red/Northrup Subarea. According to the Comprehensive Plan, the Bel-Red Corridor has been “historically... an area which allows opportunities for entrepreneurs to get started...”[Comp. Plan p.3] The plan states that this area “functions...as a place to provide a multitude of goods and services ...to

provide employment,” and as an “appropriate location for service retail uses as well as bulk retail, wholesale, and light industrial uses.”[Comp. Plan p.3]

An Area in Transition

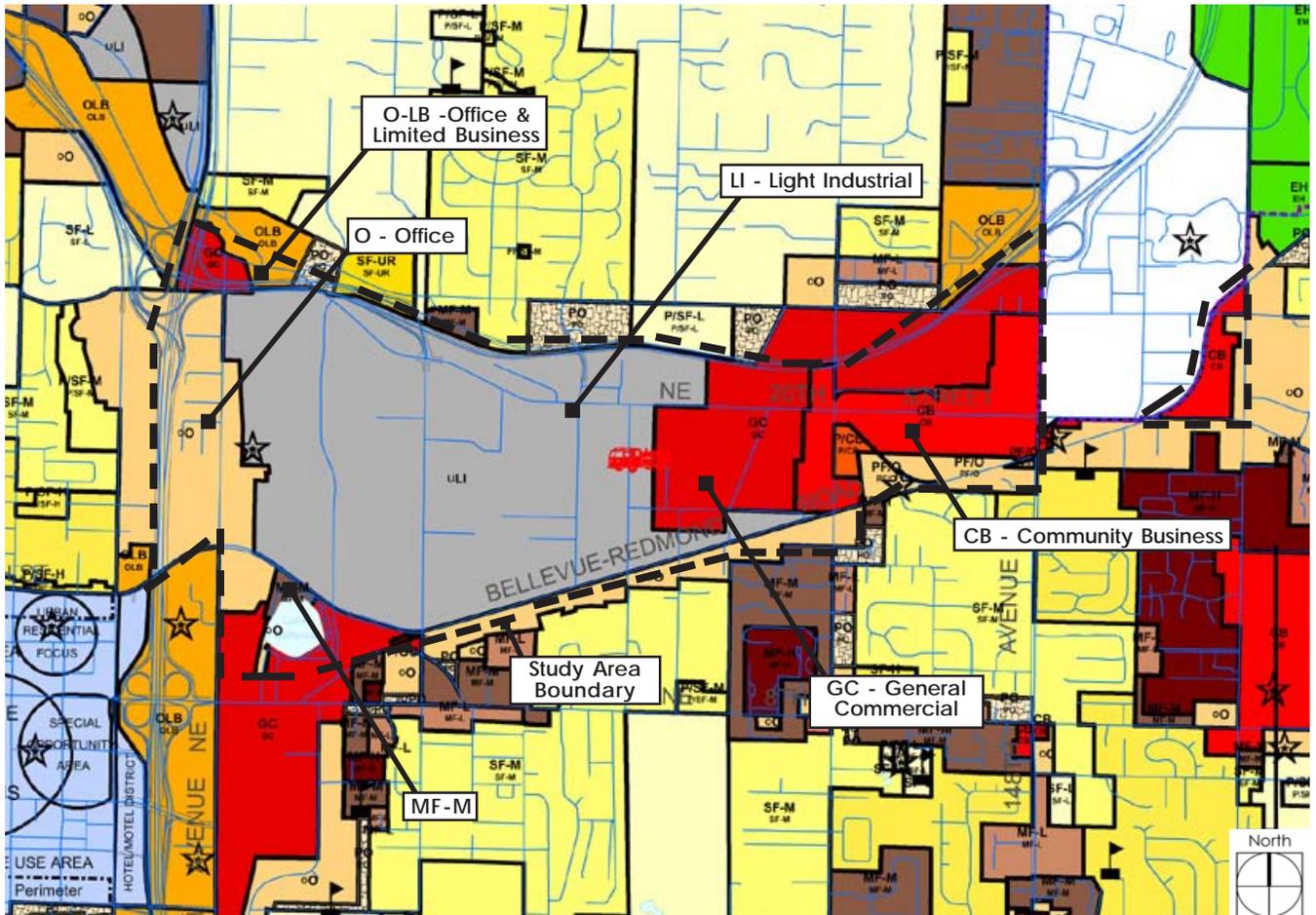
The Comprehensive Plan also states that “Historically the Bel-Red area has been the city’s warehouse and manufacturing district, but has become an area in transition with the departure of many of these traditional uses and the introduction of more retail shops, auto dealerships, and office developments.”[Comp. Plan p.34] That is, the “industrial, manufacturing, and distribution uses” which “were once a major part of Bellevue’s economy...are now in decline...” and “It may be appropriate to consider the long-term

future of these uses in parts of Bellevue.” [Comp. Plan p.36]

Within the subarea are five land use districts, noted on the map below and listed as follows:

- O-LB - Office and Limited Business
- GC - General Commercial
- CB - Community Business
- O - Office
- LI - Light Industrial
- MF-M - Multi-family Medium Density

The Comprehensive Plan also notes that “there is potential for redevelopment in the Bel-Red area, driven by businesses’ desire to develop mid-rise office complexes and meet the increasing demand for health care in the area near Overlake Hospital.” [Comp. Plan p.34]



Existing Comprehensive Plan Designations

Comprehensive Plan Policies

Particular policies within the Comprehensive Plan address issues which are highly relevant to the Bel-Red corridor study area. For instance, **Policy LU-33** requires that Bellevue “Monitor trends” in its “job centers and consider land use changes... to maintain the vitality of these centers.”[Comp. Plan p.45]

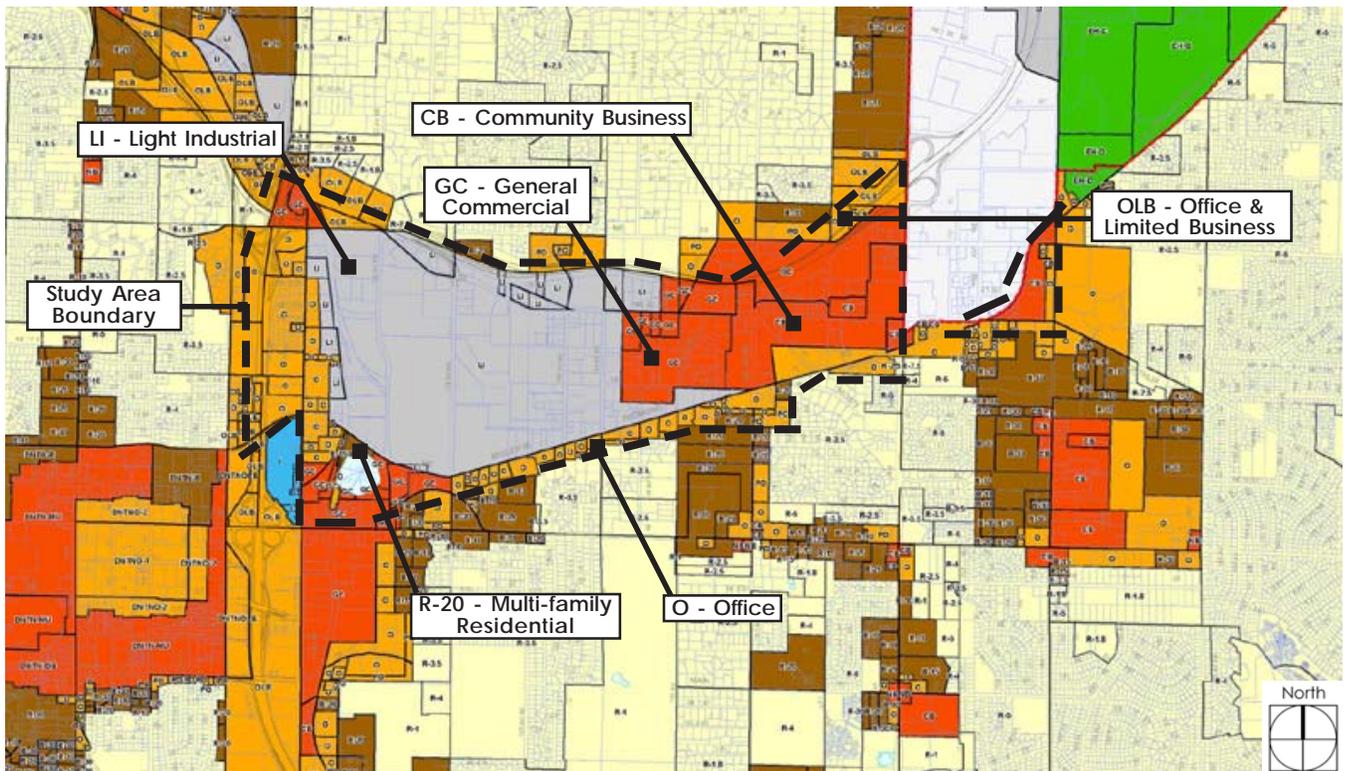
Policy TR-70 addresses transit as a way to “Promote transit use and achieve land use objectives through transit system planning that includes consideration of: 1. Land uses that support transit, including mixed use and night-time activities; 2. Transit-oriented development opportunities with the private and public sectors...”[Comp. Plan p.138]

These and other specific aspects of the Comprehensive Plan point toward the need for the Bel-Red Corridor Project to define a clear vision for the area as it continues to evolve.

Zoning

As the map below illustrates, almost all the land in the Bel-Red Corridor Study Area is zoned commercial or industrial; the area contains approximately 27% of the City of Bellevue’s commercial- and industrial-zoned land in . Existing zoning categories included in the Bel-Red corridor study area are described as follows and noted on the map:

- *LI - Light Industrial* - Manufacturing, wholesale trade and distribution activities.
- *GC - General Commercial* - Mixed retail and commercial.
- *CB - Community Business* - Serves community market, providing location for services and retail outlets other than downtown.
- *O - Office* - Areas for business, financial and professional service offices located on arterial or commercial access streets.
- *OLB - Office/Limited Business* - Integrated complexes of office, hotel, retail, restaurants, etc. located abutting and/or easily accessible to freeways and major highways.
- *R-20 - Multi-family Residential* - Providing multi-family dwellings of moderate density (up to 20 units per acre), located convenient to employment centers, with primary access to arterial streets.



Existing Zoning

Transportation and Traffic

Transportation within the Bel-Red Corridor study area consists of many highly-travelled and relatively congested auto routes, including two major highways. SR 520 marks the edge of the study area to the north, while I-405 marks the western edge between the corridor and downtown Bellevue.

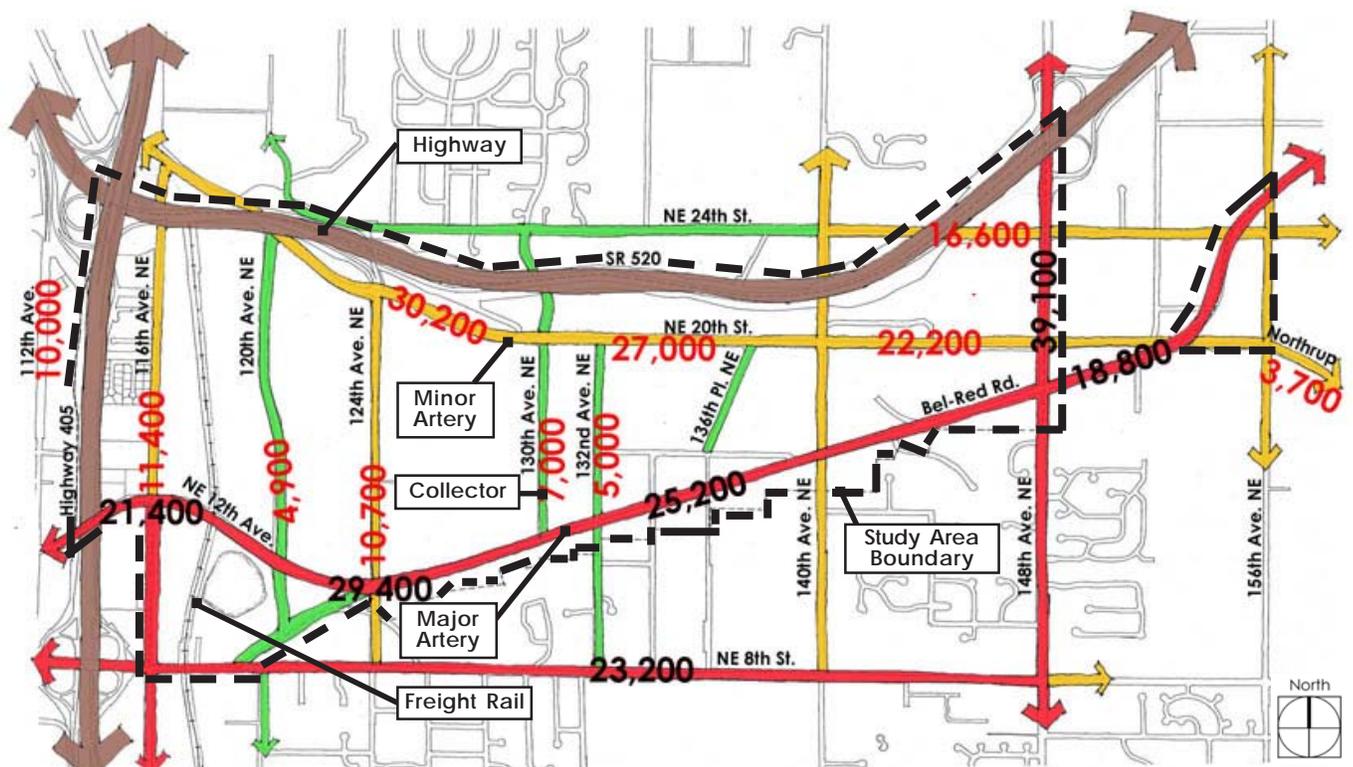
Road Designations

In the city's Comprehensive Plan, Bellevue-Redmond Road itself is designated as a major arterial, as are two main north-south routes, 116th Avenue NE towards the west and 148th Avenue NE towards the east.

A railroad right-of-way owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe runs north-south on the western portion of the study area, and is used on a limited basis for freight delivery.

Traffic Counts

Traffic counts taken in 2004 recorded annual average weekday traffic figures for major roads as noted on the map below. The major arterials, Bel-Red Road, NE 20th Street, and 148th Avenue NE, receive the heaviest use, with numbers in the 22,000-40,000 range. The north-south routes all received daily usage generally from 5,000 to 11,000.



Existing Transportation Network with Traffic Counts

Pedestrian and Bicycle System

The Bel-Red Corridor study area existing pedestrian and bicycle network is illustrated on the diagram below. Sidewalks are drawn in red, bicycle paths in yellow.

Pedestrian Sidewalks

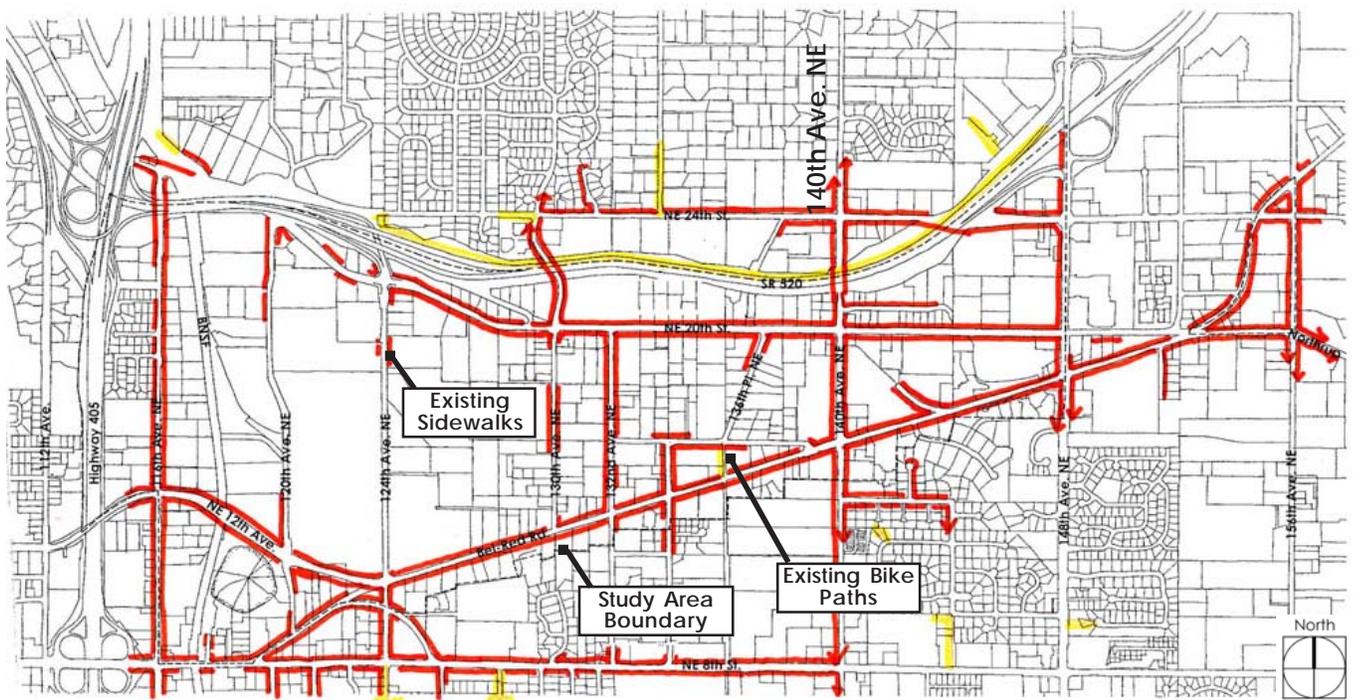
Sidewalks appear on many of the major arterial roads, but are sporadic especially through the interior of the study area. Moreover, the existing block system in the majority of the study area is quite large in scale: four of the existing east-west blocks measure about one-quarter mile long, two are one-third to nearly one-half mile long, and one block in the study area is a relatively pedestrian-friendly one-eighth of a mile. Thus a small percentage of the study area is accessible from a street network, and only a small percentage of these streets in turn provides the pedestrian with a sidewalk.

The lack of a pedestrian system has occurred alongside the development of predominantly car- and truck-oriented land uses such as warehouse/storage and distribution facilities.

Bicycle Paths

One bike path appears in the study area, an approximately 350' stretch connecting from 136th Place NE to Bel-Red Road.

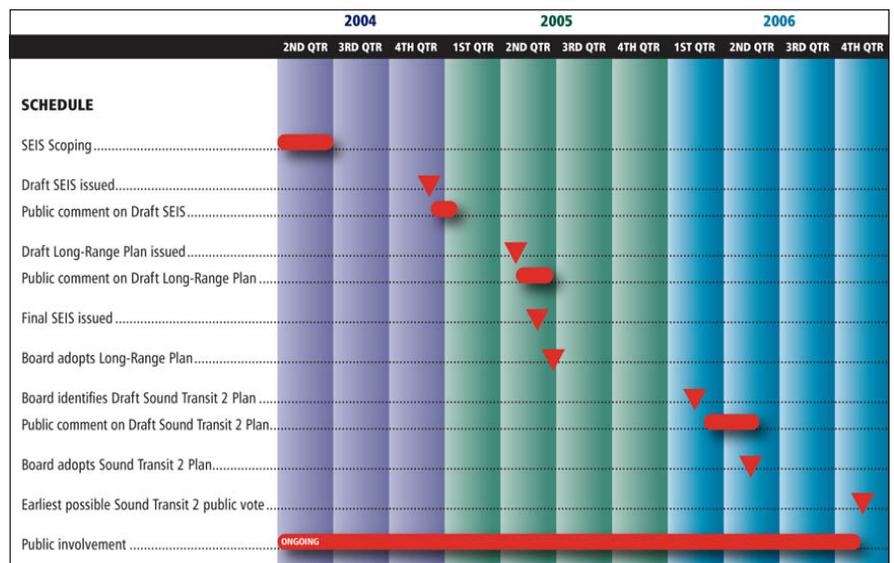
The planned pedestrian and bicycle system, as described in the 1999 update of the city's pedestrian and bicycle transportation plan, is more extensive, consisting of sidewalks on some roadways, as well as a paved path along the BNSF railroad right-of-way. Bicycle facilities planned include designated shared roadways on Bel-Red Road and on 140th Avenue NE.



Existing Sidewalks and Bike Routes

High Capacity Transit

SoundTransit has recently updated their Long Range Plan regarding the future regional transit system. The next phase of High Capacity Transit (HCT) improvements, which will likely include extensions to the Eastside, could potentially go to the voters as early as November 2006.



SoundTransit Schedule through 2006

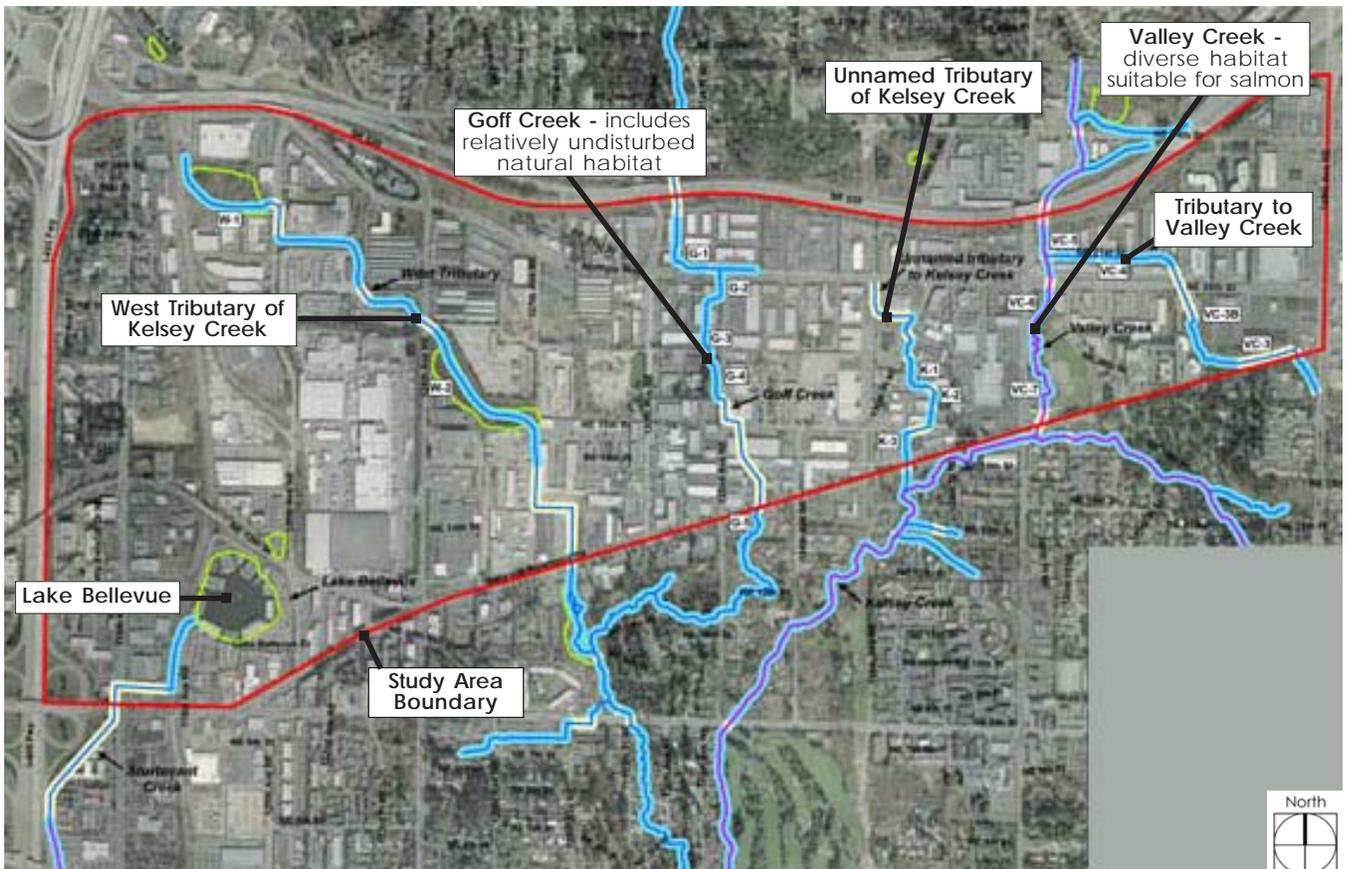
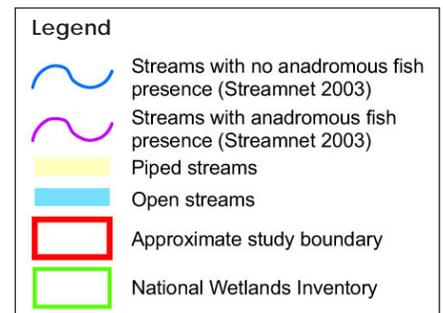
Natural Resources

The Bel-Red Corridor includes several wetlands and streams which generally flow south, into Kelsey Creek, which in turns flows into Lake Washington. These natural areas are detailed in the Natural Resources Inventory Memo prepared by Herrera Environmental Consultants and included as an appendix to this report.

While existing conditions and potential for restoration vary, some locations provide fairly intact natural habitat; for instance, portions of Goff Creek are good examples of what much of the Bel-Red Study area’s stream and riparian areas could be like if restored. Parts of Valley Creek include good “spawning gravel” and other conditions hospitable to salmon populations.

The major natural resources found in the inventory are illustrated on the map below and listed as follows:

- Lake Bellevue (a.k.a. Lake Sturtevant) and Sturtevant Creek
- West Tributary of Kelsey Creek
- Goff Creek
- Unnamed tributary of Kelsey Creek
- Valley Creek
- Tributary to Valley Creek



Existing Natural Resources

Topography

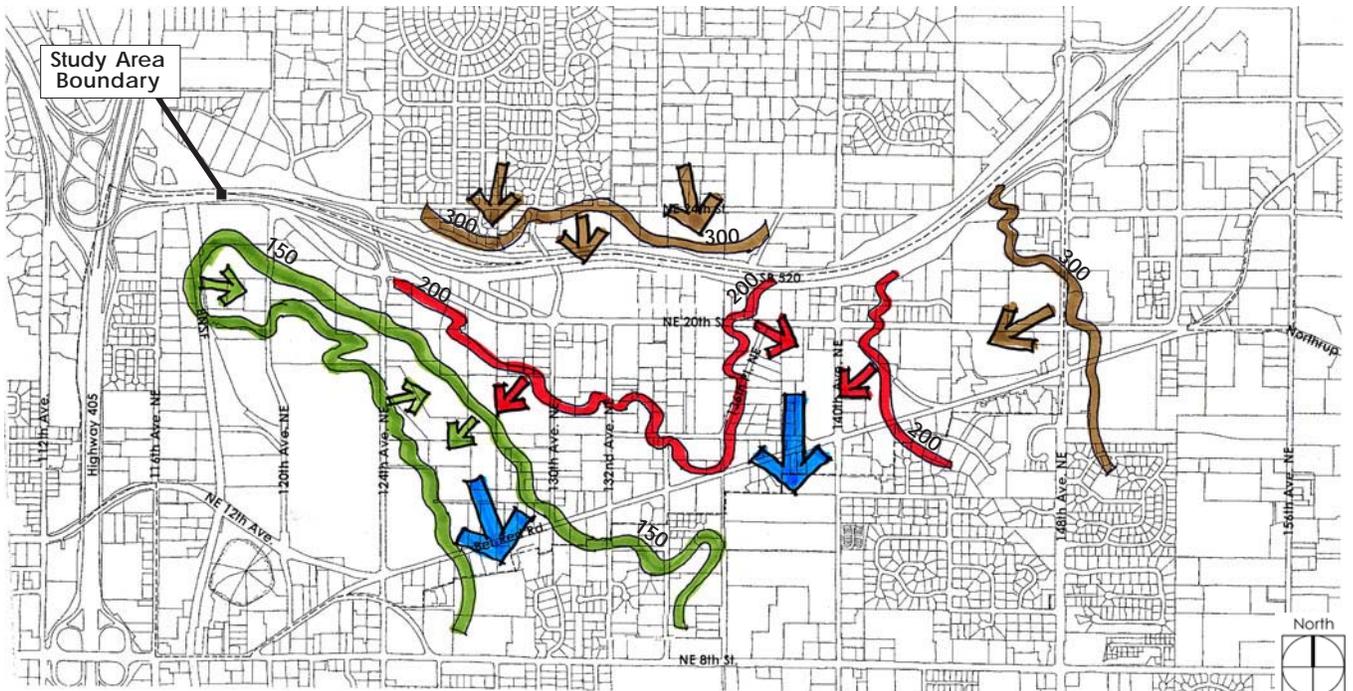
The Bel-Red Corridor offers many areas of sloping terrain. The diagram below illustrates the primary direction of slopes in the study area, indicating watershed location and how drainage will be oriented.

The contour lines on the diagram indicate actual elevations and direction of slope. For instance, they reveal that overall elevations of the study area drop from the ridge at 300' just north of SR 520 and east near 148th Avenue NE, into the 100-200' range further south. The West Tributary of Kelsey Creek is evident in the gully outlined by the green 150'-contour line which angles from northwest to southeast.

Several parcels include steep slopes of 40% or greater; in some cases these will present either opportunities or constraints (which will be discussed in a later Tech Memo as a part of the Bel-Red Corridor Project).

Legend

- 300 foot contour line
- 200 foot contour line
- 150 foot contour line
- Streams and Wetlands (direction of flow)

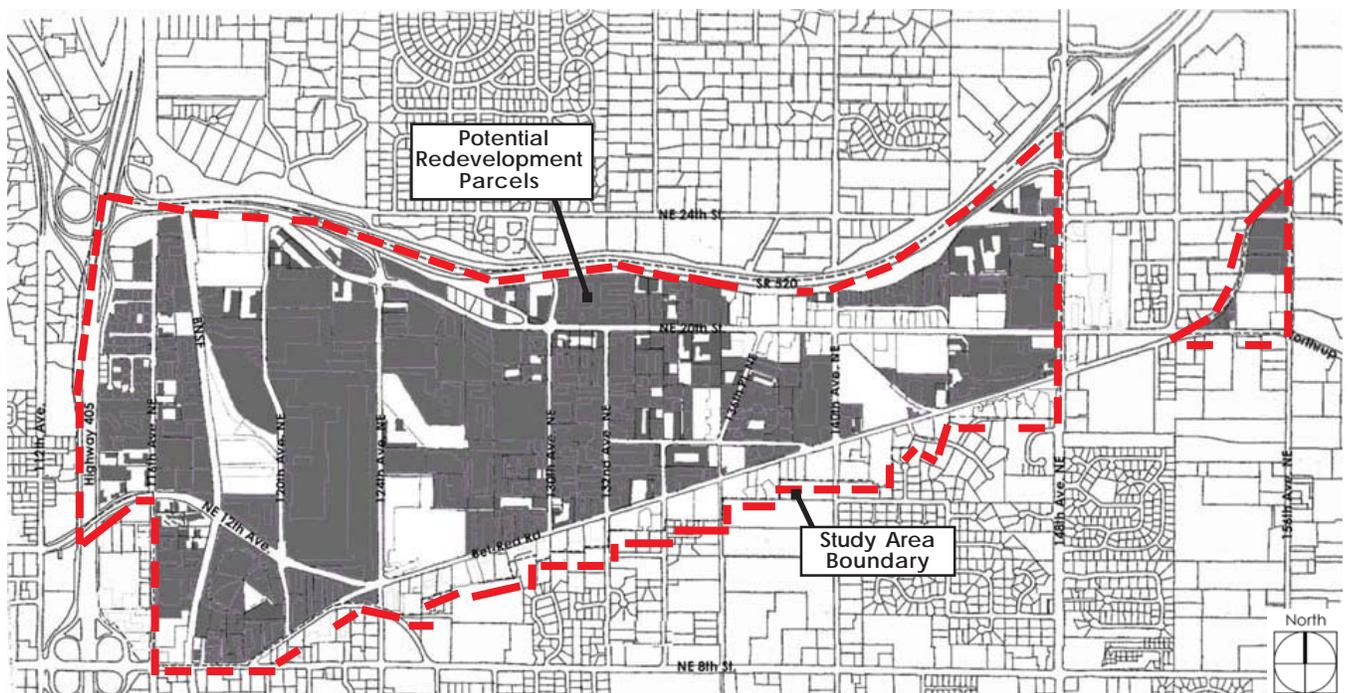


Existing Elevations and Direction of Slopes

Potential Redevelopment Sites

Much of the study area is relatively underutilized, and therefore may be considered “soft sites” which are perhaps particularly open to redevelopment. These sites are identified for information and discussion purposes only. No redevelopment would occur without owner cooperation and thorough study. The potential redevelopment parcels are mapped on the diagram below, and include:

- Vacant lots
- Buildings which could redevelop in next few years (because of age and condition), and their associated surface parking lots
- Parcels where the value of the land itself is of relatively greater value than anything built on it (i.e., land to improvement ratio of 60% or less)

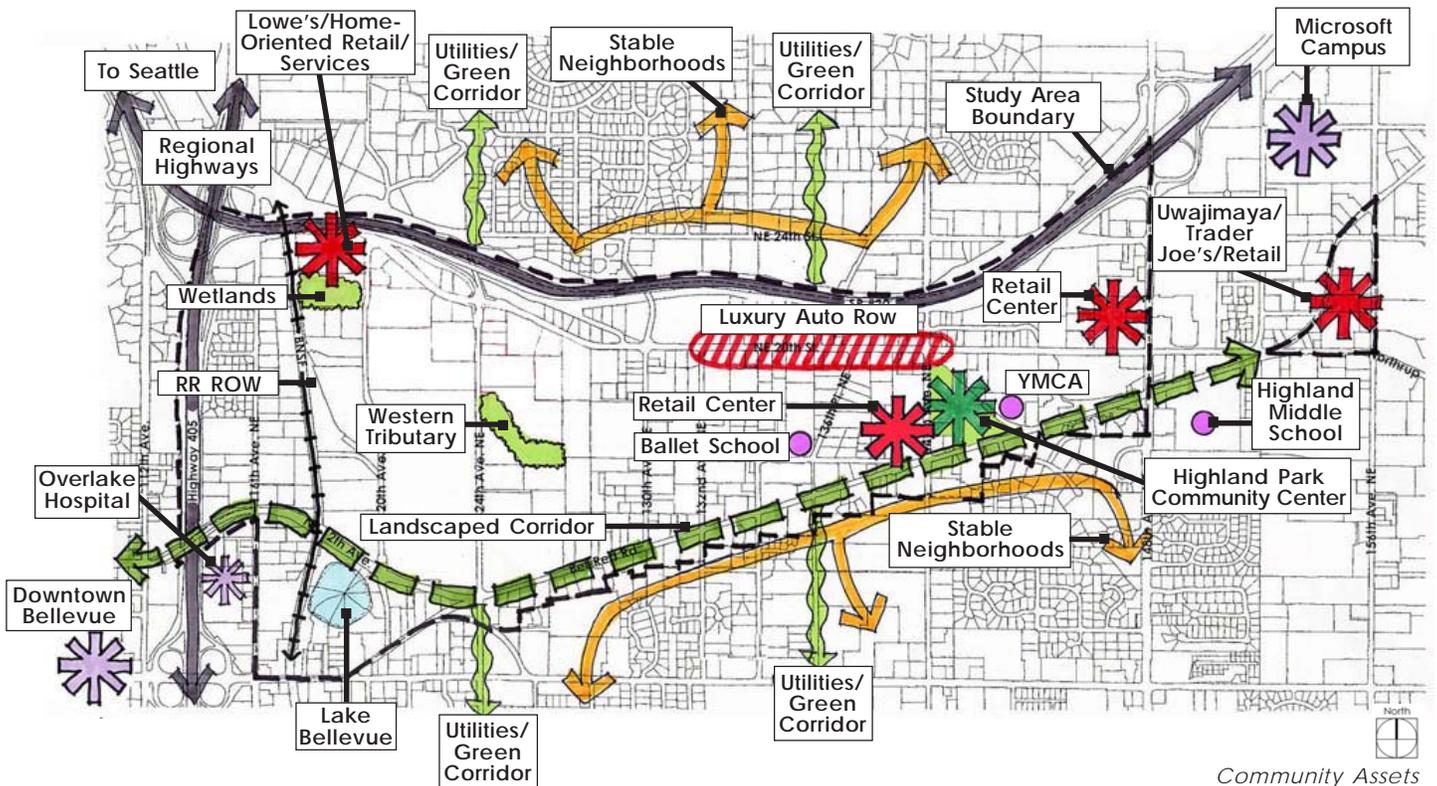


Potential Redevelopment Parcels

Community Assets

The Bel-Red Corridor offers a broad range of community assets both within the study area and in adjacent areas. Its location between downtown Bellevue and Redmond and bounded on north and west by freeways, for instance, creates unique locational advantages and benefits. A selection of these assets is listed below and illustrated on the diagram on this page:

- Mature landscaping on Bel-Red Road
 - Lake Bellevue
 - Highland Park Community Center
 - YMCA
 - Highland Middle School
 - Pacific Northwest Ballet School
 - Numerous retail and consumer services
 - High-end auto dealerships
 - Overlake Hospital and offices
- Downtown Bellevue to west
 - Overlake/Microsoft Campus to northeast
 - Highways providing regional access
 - Potential for regional high capacity transit
 - BNSF right-of-way
 - Stable residential neighborhoods to north and south
 - Wetlands and streams (see natural resources summary on page 10 and separate inventory memo for further detail)



Community Assets