



# LIGHT RAIL PERMITTING CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## ADVISORY DOCUMENT DOWNTOWN SEGMENT PRE-DEVELOPMENT REVIEW JULY 15, 2014

### Introduction

The Light Rail Permitting Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was appointed by the Bellevue City Council consistent with the terms of the Light Rail Overlay regulations contained in the city's Land Use Code (LUC). Land Use Code section 20.25M.035.A describes the CAC purpose to:

1. Dedicate the time necessary to represent community, neighborhood and citywide interests in the permit review process; and
2. **Ensure that issues of importance are surfaced early in the permit review process while there is still time to address design issues while minimizing cost implications\***; and
3. Consider the communities and land uses through which the RLRT System or Facility passes, and set "the context" for the regional transit authority to respond to as facility design progresses; and
4. **Help guide RLRT System and Facility design to ensure that neighborhood objectives are considered and design is context sensitive by engaging in on-going dialogue with the regional transit authority and the City, and by monitoring follow-through\***; and
5. **Provide a venue for receipt of public comment on the proposed RLRT Facilities and their consistency with the policy and regulatory guidance of paragraph 20.25M.035.E below and Sections 20.25M.040 and 20.25M.050 of this Part; and**
6. **Build the public's sense of ownership in the project\***; and
7. Ensure CAC participation is streamlined and effectively integrated into the permit review process to avoid delays in project delivery.

\* Identifies the focus of this Advisory Document

### Pre-Development Review

This phase of review is intended to provide feedback regarding effectiveness at incorporating contextual direction into the early phases of design. The CAC is expected to provide advice regarding complementary building materials, integration of public art, preferred station furnishings from available options, universal design measures to enhance usability by all people, quality design, materials, landscape development, and tree retention. The CAC is to provide

further input and guidance, based on the input and guidance provided in the context setting phase, on compliance (or lack of compliance) with the policy and regulations and whether information is sufficient to evaluate such compliance.

### CAC Work Product

The work of the CAC at each review stage will culminate in a CAC Advisory Document that describes the phase of review and CAC feedback. The work product required following the Pre-Development Phase of CAC review is intended to provide Sound Transit with early guidance and advice that is integrated into future Design and Mitigation Permit submittals.

At the March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014 CAC meeting Sound Transit presented its pre-development review stage package for the Downtown Segment which includes both the Downtown Transit Center and Hospital Stations. The CAC continued to discuss the Downtown Segment at the April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014, and May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014 meetings.

**The following represents the CAC advisory comments regarding LUC 20.25M.040, 20.25M.050, and context setting sensitivity.**

#### 20.25M.040 RLRT system and facilities development standards

1. Building Height – No concerns expressed by the CAC. More project specific information will be included during the Design and Mitigation Permit review stage.
2. Setbacks – No concerns expressed by the CAC. More project specific information will be included during the Design and Mitigation Permit review stage.
3. Landscape Development
  - The CAC recommends that landscape development at the Hospital Station, particularly in the vicinity of NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street, be designed in a way which does not create a site obstruction for motorists.
4. Fencing – No concerns were expressed by the CAC. More project specific information will be included during the Design and Mitigation Permit review stage.
5. Light and Glare - No concerns expressed by the CAC. More project specific information will be included during the Design and Mitigation Permit review stage.
  - The CAC recommends that no stations should have up lights that could shine into neighboring buildings or residential areas. All lighting should remain within the confines of the stations to the greatest extent possible.
6. Mechanical Equipment - No concerns were expressed by the CAC. More project specific information will be included during the Design and Mitigation Permit review stage.

7. Recycling and Solid Waste - No concerns were expressed by the CAC. More project specific information will be included during the Design and Mitigation Permit review stage.
8. Critical Areas - No concerns expressed by the CAC. More project specific information will be included during the Design and Mitigation Permit review stage.
9. Use of City Right of Way – See comment above regarding landscape development. More project specific information will be included during the Design and Mitigation Permit review stage.

#### 20.25M.050 Design guidelines

1. Design Intent – Downtown Subarea - In addition to complying with all applicable provisions of the Downtown Subarea Plan, the design intent for the RLRT system and facility segment that passes through this subarea is to enhance Downtown Bellevue’s identity as an urban center that serves as the residential, economic, and cultural heart of the Eastside. The above-ground expression of the Downtown Station is envisioned as a highly utilized urban “place” with an architectural vocabulary that not only reflects and communicates the high quality urban character of Downtown as a whole, but also complements the immediately adjacent civic center uses including Bellevue City Hall, Meydenbauer Convention Center, the Transit Center, Pedestrian Corridor, and the Downtown Art Walk. The alignment crossing over I-405 will be prominent to visitors entering, leaving, and passing through the Downtown, and its design should be viewed as an opportunity to create a landmark that connects Downtown Bellevue with areas of the City to the east. The station and freeway crossing should reflect Bellevue’s branding, and should be comfortable and attractive places to be and experience, with high quality furnishings and public art that capitalize on place-making opportunities.

Design Intent – Wilburton/NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street Subarea - In addition to complying with all applicable provisions of the Wilburton/N.E. 8th Street Subarea Plan, the design intent for the RLRT system and facility segment that passes through this subarea is to focus on the hospital station’s role as a gateway location to points east of Downtown on to Bel-Red and beyond. The alignment crossing over I-405 should create a cohesive connection between the Downtown and hospital stations, but the hospital station itself should have its own identity. With significant ridership anticipated to be generated from the Medical Institution District to the west, the hospital station should take design cues from the hospital, the ambulatory health care center, and the medical office buildings that were designed to be responsive to the Medical Institution Design Guidelines that are shaping the character of this area.

2. Context and Design Considerations - The CAC was tasked with evaluating the existing context setting characteristics included in the Land Use Code in order to verify that the design of the stations and alignment is consistent with the vision for the Downtown and Wilburton/NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street Subareas. The Land Use Code states that the character of this area is defined by:

### Downtown Subarea

- Private entertainment and cultural attractions;
- High quality urban amenities such as pedestrian oriented development and weather protection that encourages people to linger and not just pass through;
- High rise buildings that attract a creative and innovative work force;
- Multifamily developments that attract urban dwellers that are less tied to their vehicles to accomplish day-to-day tasks;
- Great public infrastructure including roadways, transit and pedestrian improvements, parks and public buildings; and
- Stable property values that make it a desirable place for businesses to locate and invest.

### Wilburton/NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street

- Outdoor spaces that promote visually pleasing, safe, and healing/calming environments for workers, patients accessing health care services, and visitors;
- Buildings and site areas which include landscaping with living material as well as special pavements, trellises, screen wall planters, water, rock features, art, and furnishings;
- Institutional landmarks that convey an image of public use and provide a prominent landmark in the community; and
- Quality design, materials, and finishes to provide a distinct identity that conveys a sense of permanence and durability.

The CAC advised that the following additional context and design considerations should be considered when evaluating the East Link project in the Downtown Bellevue and Wilburton/NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street Subareas for context sensitivity during future CAC and permit review phases. The following items pertain to the Downtown Segment:

### Downtown Subarea

The CAC advises that the following additional context and design considerations should be considered when evaluating the East Link project in the Downtown Subarea for context sensitivity during future CAC and permit review phases.

- a. The Downtown Station should convey a sense of arrival at a bustling economic hub that provides access to retail, visitor services, offices, and urban residential neighborhoods.
- b. The station should convey a future focus on smart growth, and the importance of transit to the success of sustainable development.
- c. The aesthetics of the station roof should be taken into account and finished to enhance views down on the Downtown station for adjacent high rise and convention center development.
- d. Clear connectivity, accessibility, and way finding should be provided between the Downtown Station and the Bus Transit Center.

#### Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subarea

The CAC advises that the following additional context and design considerations should be considered when evaluating the East Link project in the Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subarea for context sensitivity during future CAC and permit review phases.

- a. Height of the flyovers (freeway, 116<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, and NE 8<sup>th</sup>) between the Downtown Station and the Hospital Station presents unique opportunities and challenges.
  - i. Design attention should be given to the under-portions of the flyover structures that will be visible from vehicles and pedestrians that pass underneath them.
  - ii. Required railings on the flyover structures could present an art opportunity if they could be employed without further emphasizing the mass of the structure.
- b. The aesthetics of the Hospital station roof should be taken into account and finished to enhance views down on the station for adjacent development on Midlakes Hill to the east and future development anticipated in the Wilburton Village.
- c. Clear connectivity, accessibility, and way finding should be provided between the Hospital Station and the Medical Institution District where Overlake Hospital and the Group Health Ambulatory Care Center are located.
- d. Weather protection should be provided on the route between the Hospital Station and the Medical Institution District.
- e. References to the freight hub and rail platform that served Bellevue's historic truck farming industry should be incorporated into the Hospital Station.
- f. The Hospital station context should convey a sense of institutional permanence and quality that is broader in focus than accessibility to health care.

### 3. Additional General Design Guidelines

- The CAC recommends that the issue of lighting be uncoupled from the issue of meeting the needs of those with disabilities and that both audio and visual cues be included in station design.
- The CAC recommends that the design of the Downtown Transit Center Station should complement the existing City Hall and new plaza design while providing distinct elements that demarcate the different uses.
- The CAC recommends enhanced weather protection at the corners between the existing bus transit center and the new Downtown Transit Center Station.
- The CAC recommends that restroom facilities be incorporated into the Downtown Transit Center Station design.
- The CAC recommends that variable seating heights be provided at all light rail stations in Bellevue.
- The CAC recommends that Sound Transit include places for people to rest along the walkway connecting the Hospital Station to 116<sup>th</sup> Ave NE.
- The CAC recommends a signature treatment of the railing for the entire span from the Downtown Transit Center Station to the Hospital Station. The CAC recommends painting the underside of the elevated guideway green and for Sound Transit to look for opportunities to further enhance the aesthetics of the NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street crossing south of the Hospital Station.

In addition to the items noted above, the CAC also makes the following recommendation that should be forwarded to the Station Area Planning team:

- The CAC recommends that Sound Transit work with the City to establish a multi-purpose path for pedestrians and bicyclists over I-405.

#### Next Steps

The advice contained in this Advisory Document should be forwarded to Sound Transit for use in refining its design of elements and features of the East Link light rail system features in support of its Design and Mitigation Permit submittal.