



# BENSON HILL COMMUNITY PLAN

**DRAFT March 2013**

Prepared by: MAKERS architecture and urban design

RENTON. AHEAD OF THE CURVE.

City of  
**Renton**

Community & Economic Development





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# 1. Introduction

## Purpose

The Benson Hill Community Plan guides the direction of future growth and change in Benson Hill. The City of Renton and many Benson Hill residents, businesses, and community stakeholders partnered to create this Plan. Their collaborative effort strengthened connections between neighborhoods and the City, prioritized City investments in services and infrastructure, and supplied a vision for Benson Hill vetted by participants. As Benson Hill develops and conditions change, this Plan provides a means for the City and community to address emerging issues and gives power to Benson Hill residents and businesses in shaping their community's future.

Reflecting participants' priorities for Benson Hill, this plan recommends strategies to:

- Create a focus in the heart of Benson Hill to foster community gathering and keep commercial destinations close to home,
- Connect the neighborhoods with sidewalks, trails, bike routes, and transit access, and especially enhance the walking and biking environment on 116th Avenue SE, and
- Enrich the community with many small-scale improvements to parks, recreational opportunities, police-resident relationships, human services, neighborhood clean-up, and development regulations that encourage safe and quality buildings and landscapes.
- Coalesce the neighborhoods through a Benson Hill Community Plan Advisory Board to advocate for equitable treatment of Benson Hill as a whole and among its diverse neighborhoods.

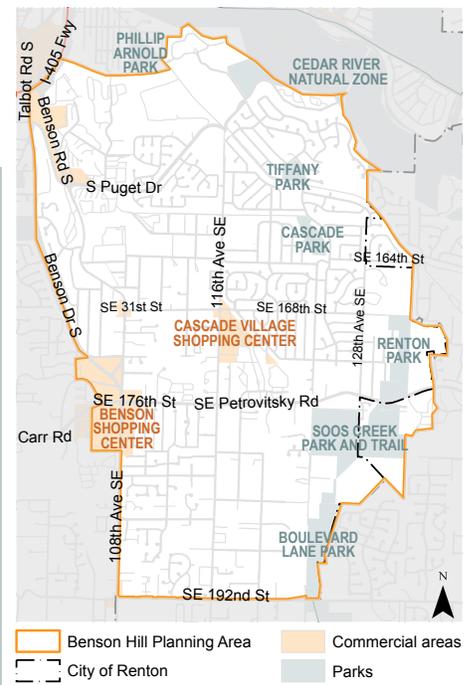
*Chapter 3: Vision* describes these in further detail, and *Chapter 4: Plan Elements* offers specific steps to achieving the vision.

### Planning Process and Timeframe

Steps to creating this plan include:

1. Engage community members to understand values and visions, and study specific issues, such as economic development (completed).
2. Draft a plan that reflects the community's goals (completed).
3. Refine the plan and incorporate comments through an iterative process (ongoing).
4. City Council adopts the plan, and it becomes guiding policy for decision-making (expected 2013).
5. Update Zoning Map, Land Use Regulations, and Capital Improvements Plan to reflect community priorities and spur implementation of plan (expected 2013).

Throughout the process, there were opportunities to come to events and participate online to provide visions for the area and feedback on draft materials (see *Chapter 2: Public Engagement*).





**Figure 3-1.** Fred Meyer, fast food and automobile services, and fire station in Benson Plaza area



**Figure 3-2.** Retail, restaurants, and large surface parking at Cascade Village

## Current Conditions

### Land Use

The Benson Hill Community Plan area is over 4 square miles on the south side of Renton. Much of the area was annexed in 2007. Benson Hill's 2,960 acres of land is predominately residential with two major commercial centers.

### Commercial Centers

Two major commercial centers serve Benson Hill. Benson Plaza (74 acres) at the southwest boundary houses a Fred Meyer and other region-serving commercial establishments (Figure 3-1). Cascade Village (26 acres), in the center of Benson Hill, is an older strip mall style development with local businesses such as restaurants, ethnic groceries, and a dollar store (Figure 3-2).

Notably, Benson Plaza and Cascade Village are the only large areas zoned for commercial uses. They are zoned Commercial Arterial, along with a stretch of parcels in the northwest corner of the study area on Benson Road S and S Puget Drive. Two small Commercial Neighborhood zones exist at 108<sup>th</sup> Ave SE/SE 31<sup>st</sup> Street and southwest of the study area at SE 192<sup>nd</sup> Street/108<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. With so few commercial centers, many residents do not live within walking distance of commercial services and amenities.

### Neighborhoods

Twelve recognized Neighborhood Associations exist in Benson Hill: Renton Hill (partial), Victoria Park (partial), Rolling Hills, Falcon Ridge, Shadow Hawk, Tiffany Park, Ponderosa Estates, Cascade, Renton Park, Huntington Heights, Woodbury Lane, and Chinquapin (Figure 3-3). Cascade covers the largest area and is central to the planning area. Almost half of Benson Hill homes are located in neighborhoods without City-recognized neighborhood associations. Most of the area south of Petrovitsky Road is not currently organized into a Neighborhood Association. Neighborhoods north of Petrovitsky Road are better represented by Neighborhood Associations. The recently annexed areas are relatively new to Renton's neighborhood program while others have longstanding relationships with Renton.

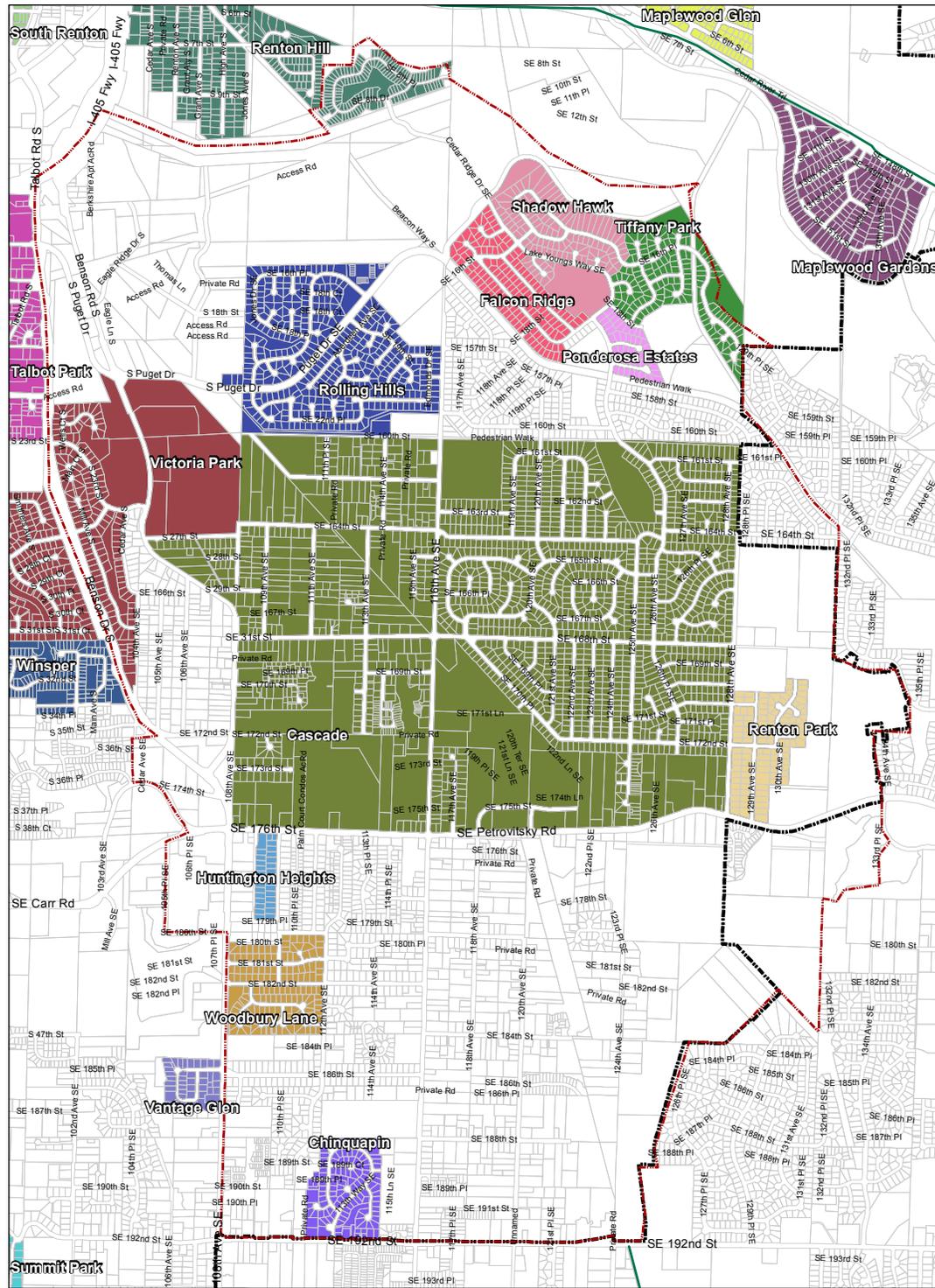


Figure 3-3. City-recognized neighborhood associations



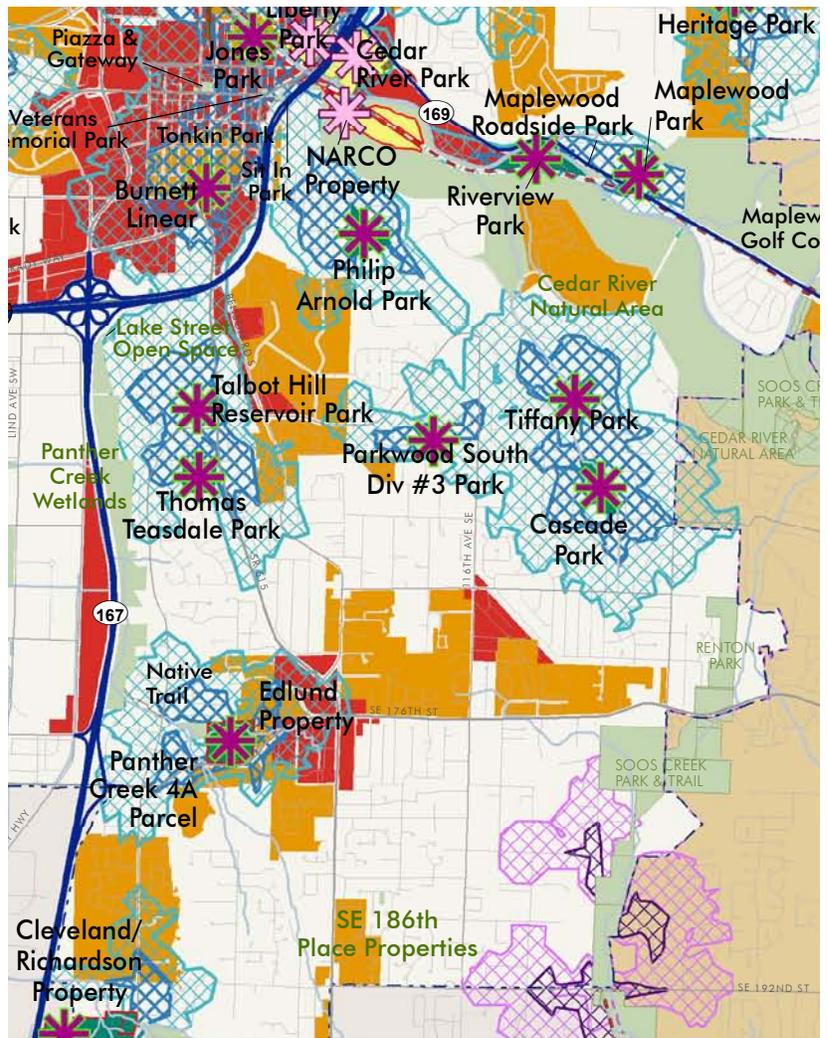
Figure 3-4. Parks and schools in the Benson Hill planning area



Figure 3-5. Utility corridors weave through Benson Hill

### Parks and Recreation

Tiffany Park, Cascade Park, Renton Park, and Phillip Arnold Park provide walking trails, children’s play areas, and recreational opportunities to residents of the Benson Hill. Phillip Arnold Park is just north of the planning area, but is accessible to Benson residents via an unpaved right-of-way owned by Seattle Public Utilities. The Cedar River Natural Area defines the northern boundary of the area (although it is not directly accessible from Benson Hill). To the east, the Soos Creek Corridor and Boulevard Lane Park offer large natural areas. Several major utility corridors cross the area, providing informal trails, recreation links, and views (Figure 3-5).



- Community Park
- Neighborhood Park
- All Other Parks
- Regional Trail
- Local Trail
- Pedestrian Roadway Barrier

- Pedestrian Service Area**
- 1/4 mile
  - 1/2 mile
  - Community Park
  - Neighborhood Park

- General Zone**
- High Density Residential
  - Commercial:
    - Urban Center - North 1,
    - Urban Center - North 2,
    - Center Village,
    - Commercial/Office/Retail,
    - Commercial Arterial,
    - Center Downtown

- Freeway
- Principal Arterial
- Major Road
- Local Street
- River/Creek
- Renton City Limits
- Potential Annexation Area
- Undeveloped
- Other Jurisdiction Park Land
- Water Body

Figure 3-6. Local park access by high density zoning (Renton Parks Plan). Note the lack of parks serving the high density zones in central Benson Hill.

While, it would seem that this wide collection of parks and natural areas provide many opportunities for the community, parts of Benson Hill are currently underserved (see Figures 3-6 and 3-7). Central and south Benson Hill are particularly devoid of local parks and recreation assets, which is especially surprising given the amount of multifamily housing. The long term Parks Plan identifies the need for a large recreational park to serve Benson Hill, especially the area south of Petrovitsky Road. See the *Parks, Recreation and Natural Areas Plan—Benson* in Appendix X for full details on parks planning for Benson Hill.

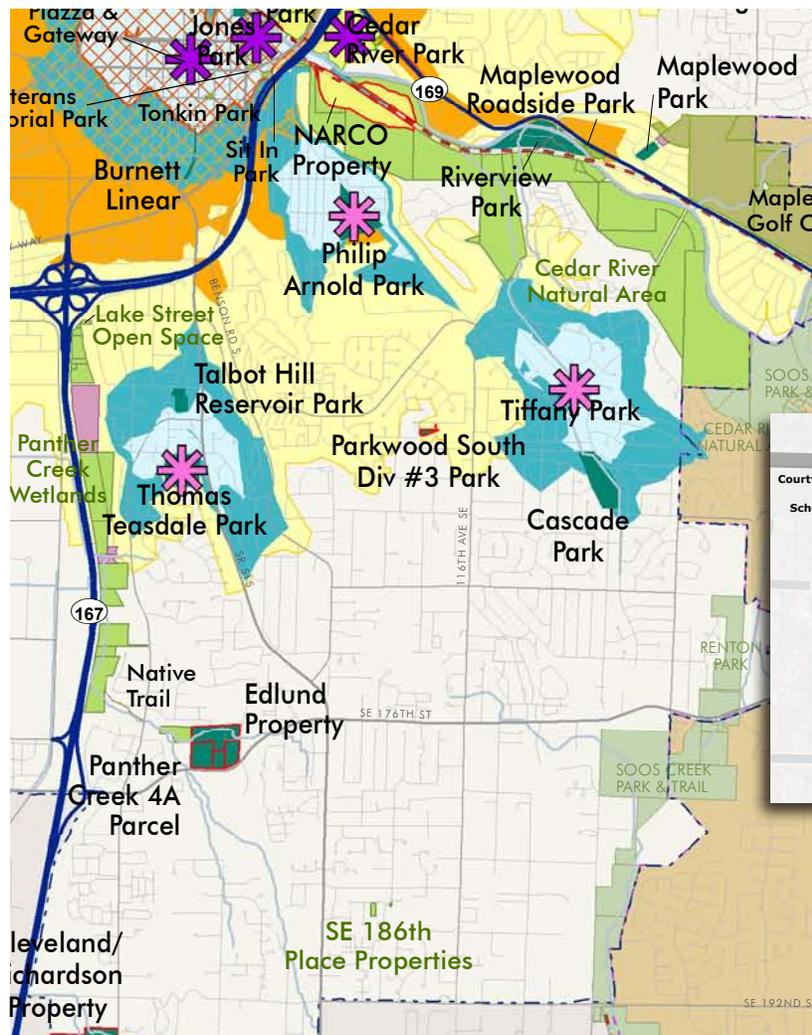


Figure 3-7. Indoor programmable space access (Renton Parks Plan). Note the lack of programmable space serving southern Benson Hill.

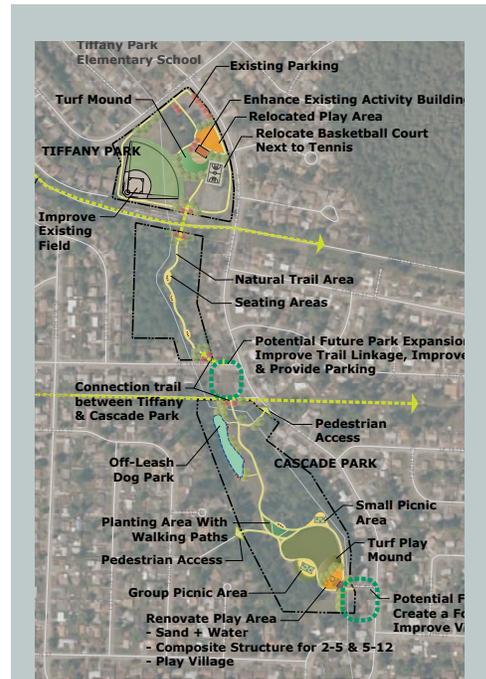


Figure 3-8. Tiffany/Cascade Park concept plan (Renton Parks Plan)

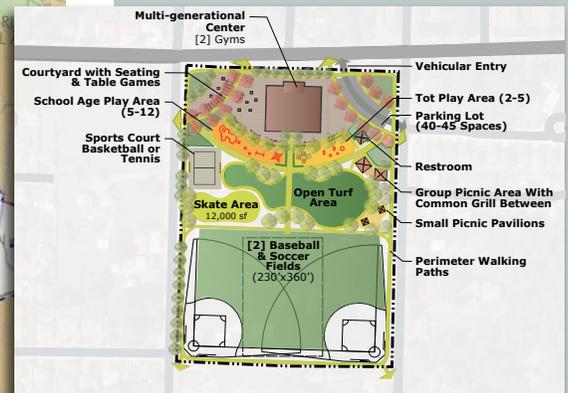


Figure 3-9. The Renton Park Plan calls for a new community park in the Benson Hill planning area like this diagrammatic example.

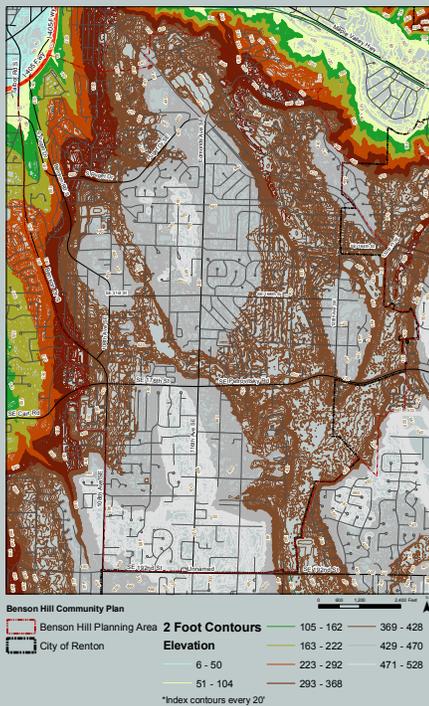


Figure 3-10. Topographic contours map



Figure 3-11. Unique topography affords views to the Cascades and Lake Washington



Figure 3-12. Soos Creek at 116th Ave SE

### **Schools**

The Renton School District operates seven facilities in the area:

- Lindbergh High School
- Nelsen Middle School
- Cascade Elementary School
- Renton Park Elementary School
- Tiffany Park Elementary School
- Benson Hill Elementary School
- Spring Glen special programs facility

### **Natural Environment**

Benson Hill’s high point is near the center of the study area, and the land slopes down to the Cedar River to the north, Soos Creek to the east, and descends quickly at Benson Road and Benson Drive to the west. The southwest side is part of the Green/Duwamish Watershed, while the northeast side belongs to the Lake Washington/Cedar River Watershed. Wetlands exist northwest of the SE Petrovitsky Road/116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE intersection and at the Benson Drive S/ Benson Road S intersection, and are connected by an informal wildlife corridor. The Cedar River Natural Area, Soos Creek Park, and Renton Park comprise approximately 163 acres of undeveloped wooded area.

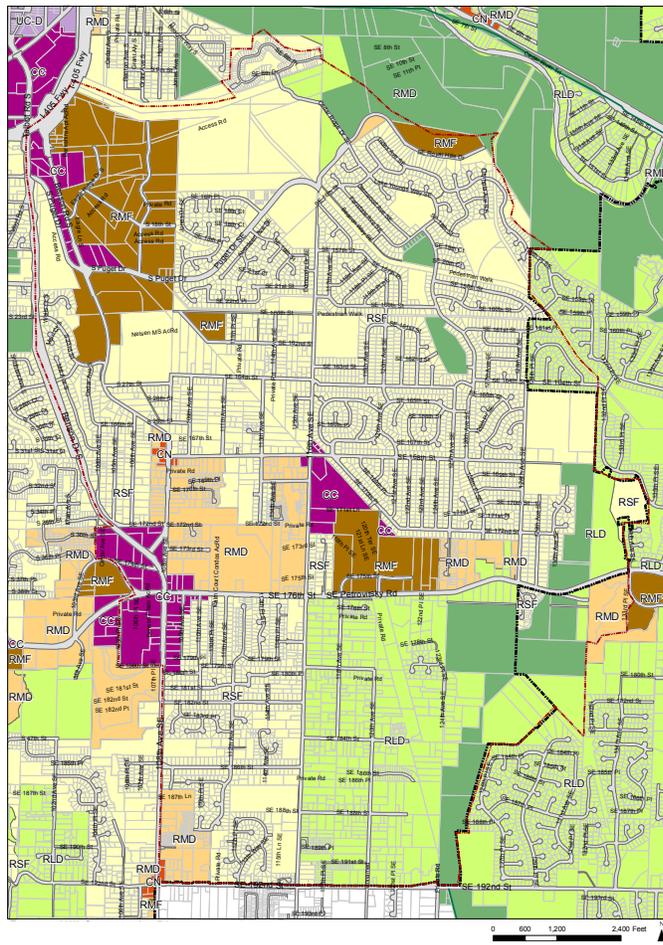
### **Renton Comprehensive Plan**

The City of Renton Comprehensive Plan (Comprehensive Plan) provides policy guidance for the growth and development of the City as a whole based on a community vision. The Comprehensive Plan is in compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA), which requires that Comprehensive Plans include policy direction for land use, housing, capital facilities, and transportation. Renton’s Comprehensive Plan is due to be updated in 2015.

The Comprehensive Plan incorporates statewide planning goals, including provisions that discourage urban sprawl, support affordable housing, protect the environment, and encourage the provision of adequate urban services. The Comprehensive Plan is designed to accommodate 20 year growth forecasts determined by regional agencies and local jurisdictions. Benson Hill is outside of Renton’s urban centers, so the Comprehensive Plan promotes a lower level of intensity than in Renton’s more urban areas.

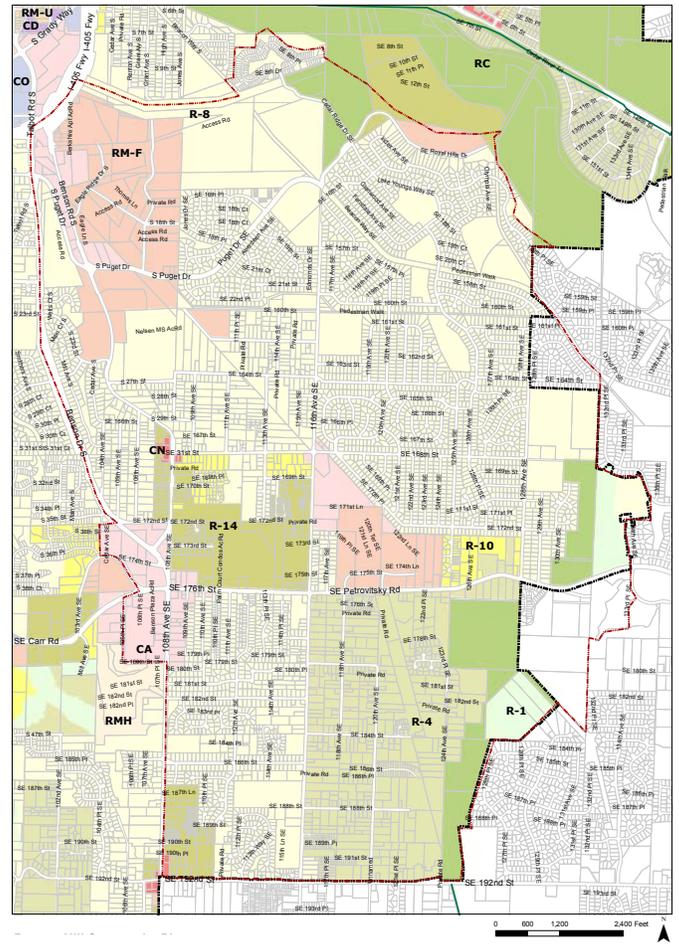
### Commercial Districts

The Commercial land use designations in Benson Hill (Commercial Corridor and Commercial Neighborhood) are intended to “Support existing businesses and provide an energetic business environment for new commercial activity providing a range of service, office, commercial, and mixed use residential uses that enhance the City’s employment and tax base along arterial boulevards and in designated development areas” (Comprehensive Plan, Land Use XI: Commercial Goal, IX-49).



- |                                     |                                  |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Benson Hill Planning Area           | <b>Residential Designations</b>  |
| City of Renton                      | RMF - Residential Multi-Family   |
| <b>LandUse</b>                      | RMD - Residential Medium Density |
| <b>Commercial Designations</b>      | RLD - Residential Low Density    |
| CC - Commercial Corridor            | RSF - Residential Single Family  |
| CN - Commercial Neighborhood        | Parks                            |
| COR - Commercial-Office-Residential |                                  |

Figure 3-13. Comprehensive Plan land use designations map



- |                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Benson Hill Planning Area            | Residential Multi-Family Urban Center |
| City of Renton                       | Center Village                        |
| <b>Zoning</b>                        | Center Downtown                       |
| Resource Conservation                | Urban Center - North 1                |
| Residential 1 du/ac                  | Urban Center - North 2                |
| Residential 4 du/ac                  | Commercial Office/Residential         |
| Residential 8 du/ac                  | Commercial Arterial                   |
| Residential Manufactured Homes       | Commercial Office                     |
| Residential 10 du/ac                 | Commercial Neighborhood               |
| Residential 14 du/ac                 | Industrial - Light                    |
| Residential Multi-Family             | Industrial - Medium                   |
| Residential Multi-Family Traditional | Industrial - Heavy                    |

Figure 3-14. Zoning map (implements the Comprehensive Plan)



Figure 3-15. Multifamily housing



Figure 3-16. Low density housing

The Comprehensive Plan encourages **Commercial Corridor (CC)** districts (Benson Plaza and Cascade Village) to “evolve from ‘strip commercial’ linear business district to business areas characterized by enhanced site planning incorporating efficient parking lot design, coordinated access, amenities, and boulevard treatment” (IX-49). Although anticipated to accommodate medium-intensity levels of activity now, the Comprehensive Plan recognizes that the intensity and efficiency of land use will likely rise over time as conditions change. Pedestrian amenities and linking to adjacent neighborhoods are encouraged. These land uses are implemented through the Commercial Arterial zone in Benson Hill.

The **Commercial Neighborhood (CN)** designation advocates “small scale, low-intensity commercial areas located within neighborhoods primarily for the convenience of residents who live nearby” (Comprehensive Plan, IX-54).

### Residential Districts

The **Residential Multi-Family (RMF)** and **Residential Medium Density (RMD)** land use designations support cost-efficient housing options, encourage infill development, and are implemented through the Residential Multi-family (RM-F), Residential 14 dwelling units per net acre (R-14), and Residential 10 dwelling units per net acre (R-10) zones in Benson Hill.

The **Residential Low Density (RLD)** and **Residential Single Family (RSF)** designations support small-scale, quality homes in existing single-family neighborhoods on lands that are not appropriate for urban levels of development. The Residential Low Density districts are near Soos Creek Park, Renton Park, and Cedar River Natural Zone to limit impacts on sensitive natural areas. The Residential 8 dwelling units per net acre (R-8) and Residential 4 dwelling units per net acre (R-4) implement these districts, with the R-8 zone covering the largest land area in Benson Hill.

## Environment

The current Comprehensive Plan Environment Element addresses the protection of natural and sensitive areas and overall ecological functions in the City. The 2015 Comprehensive Plan update will incorporate environmental policies throughout the Plan rather than as a separate element. Because much of Benson Hill remains in a natural state or drains toward natural areas, policies relating to water quality, low-impact development, and protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat may be considered.

## Transportation

Benson Hill's roads are primarily designed for motor vehicles. Benson Drive/Highway 515/Talbot Road and Benson Road/108<sup>th</sup> Avenue are major north-south routes that cross Interstate 405 to connect Benson Hill with downtown Renton. Major east-west routes include Puget Drive S, 168<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, SE 176<sup>th</sup> Street/SE Petrovitsky Road, and SE 192<sup>nd</sup> Street.

## Walking, Biking, and Transit

Sidewalk links are missing within some neighborhoods and along some major roads, such as on 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE near Petrovitsky. Bike lanes are not marked, except as shoulders on some stretches of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. Speed bumps and landscaped medians are used in some places to calm traffic, but many residents complain of automobiles travelling at unsafe speeds in their neighborhoods. The intersection of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and Petrovitsky Road poses a particular barrier to walkability with fast traffic, a lack of visibility, and



Figure 3-17. Soos Creek at 116<sup>th</sup> Ave SE



Figure 3-18. Invasive plants in undeveloped area south of Phillip Arnold Park



Figure 3-19. Youth walk home from school; missing sidewalk link



Figure 3-20. Cyclist using sidewalk

inadequate pedestrian space. As noted in the Commercial Centers section above, many residences are not within walking distance of commercial amenities. See the *Walkability Audit Results: Next Steps Memo* in Appendix X for more information on the walkability of Benson Hill.

Five Metro bus routes serve Benson Hill: 155, 161, 169, 102, and 148. These connect Benson Hill to Southcenter, downtown Renton, Fairwood, Tukwila, Seattle, and Kent. People in the Cascade neighborhood area use bicycles and carpools more frequently than other neighborhoods in Renton (see commute trip mode map in Appendix X). Southeastern Benson Hill residents have to walk between five and 20 minutes to reach a bus stop.

See Appendix X for a comparison of Benson Hill and Renton commute trip times and commute trip modes of people in poverty.



Figure 3-21. Bus stops on 116th Ave SE near Petrovitsky Road

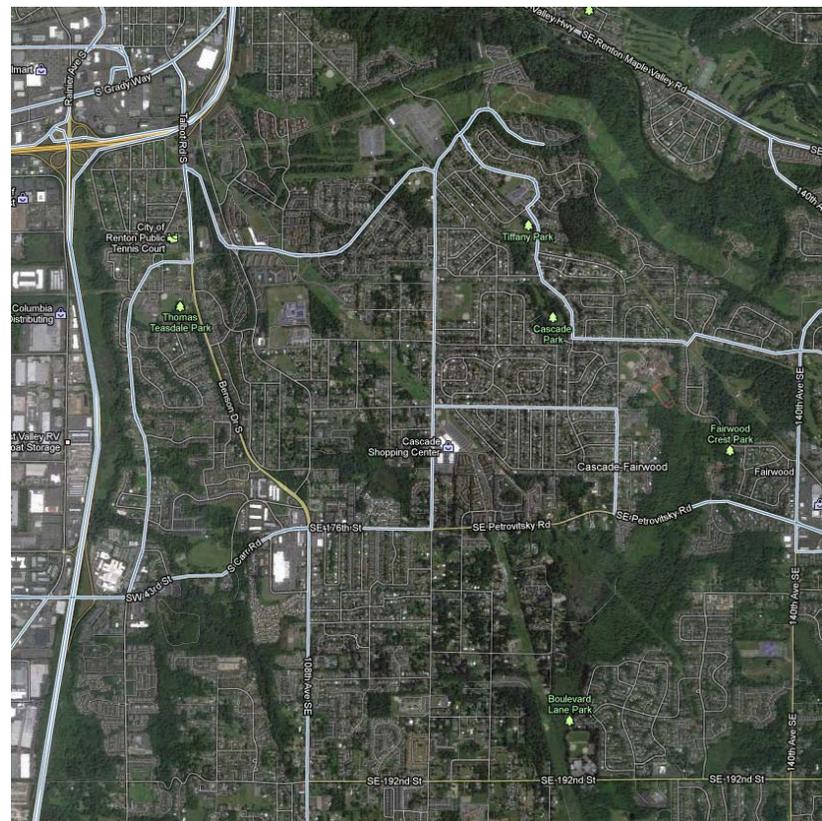


Figure 3-22. Transit routes map (Google Maps). Note the lack of routes in the southeastern planning area.

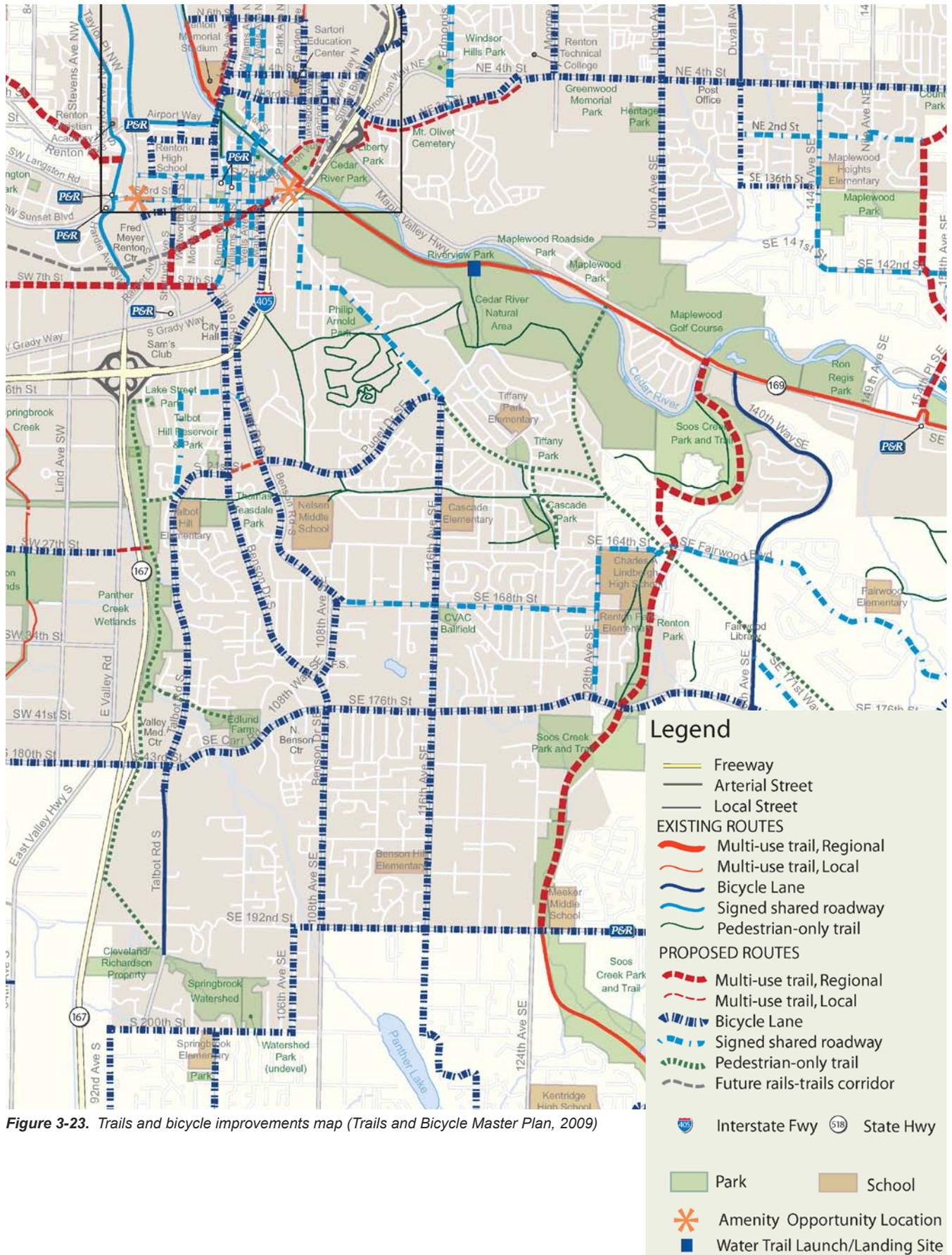


Figure 3-23. Trails and bicycle improvements map (Trails and Bicycle Master Plan, 2009)

## Demographics and Regional Equity

For detailed demographic information, see *Appendix A: Demographic Summary Profile: Benson Hill*.

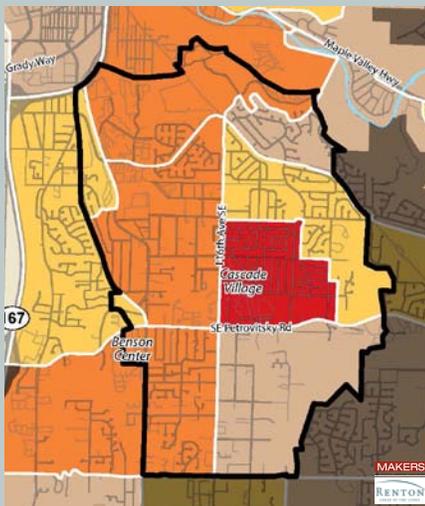
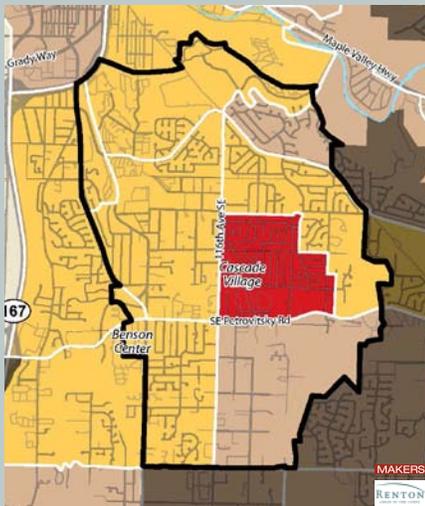
### Population and Housing Density

Benson Hill grew from 8,438 households in 2000 to 9,808 households in 2010, and is expected to gain another 700 units by 2015.<sup>1</sup> It is home to almost 22,000 residents and almost 400 businesses. Benson Hill houses about 24 percent of Renton's population and 27 percent of its households (and is about 20 percent of its land area).

	Population	Households
<b>Benson Hill</b>	21,942	9,808
<b>Renton</b>	90,927	36,009

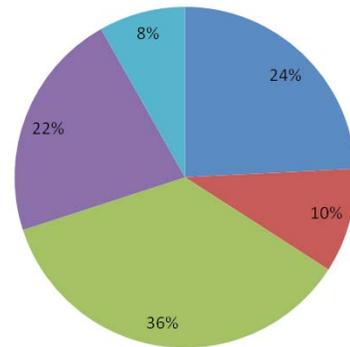
Source: U.S. Census 2010

The area is primarily composed of single-family homes, with denser clusters of residences centered on Cascade Village and Benson Plaza. The western half of Benson Hill has grown more dramatically than the eastern half in the last ten years (Figure 3-24).

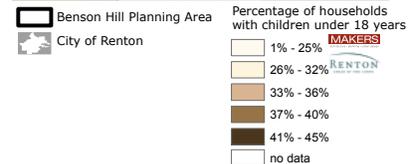
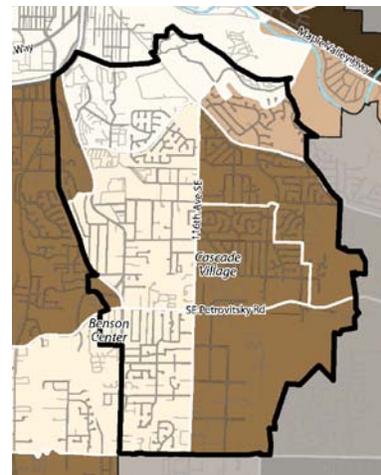


**Figure 3-24.** Housing unit density, 2000 and 2010 (Census 2000 and 2010 SF1 Table DP-1, census tract level)

### 2010 - Age



**Figure 3-25.** Age in Benson Hill



**Figure 3-26.** Households with children map (Census 2010 SF1, Table DP-1, tract level)

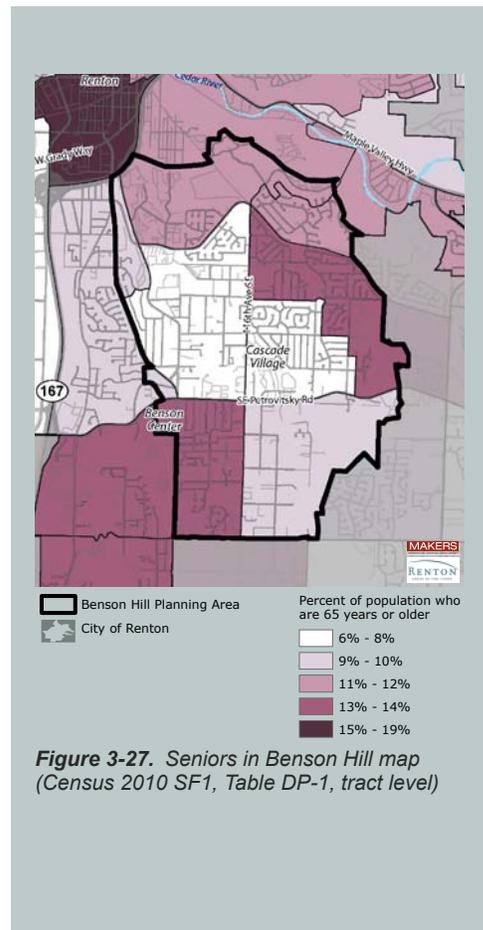
<sup>1</sup> ESRI forecasts for 2010 and 2015; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

**Age**

Benson Hill has a high proportion of households with children as compared to the region, particularly east of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE (Figure 3-26). Seniors are a very small portion of the population in central Benson Hill (Figure 3-27).

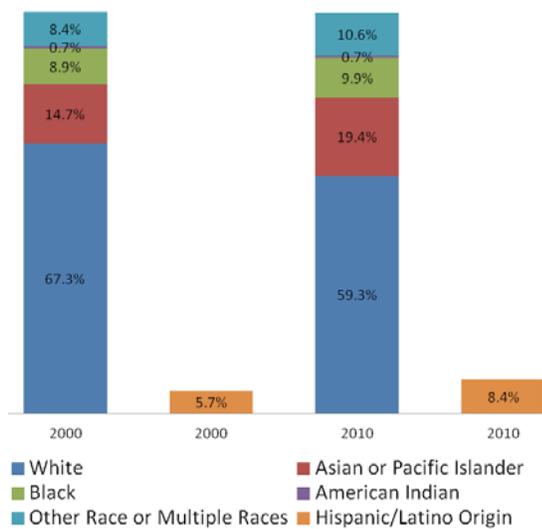
**Race/Ethnicity**

Residents are racially/ethnically diverse, with a large portion speaking languages other than English (Figure 3-29). The population of people born outside the U.S. grew from 15 percent to 23 percent in the last 10 years, which follows the trend experienced by Renton as a whole. About seven percent of the population lives in families where the adults are not proficient in speaking English.



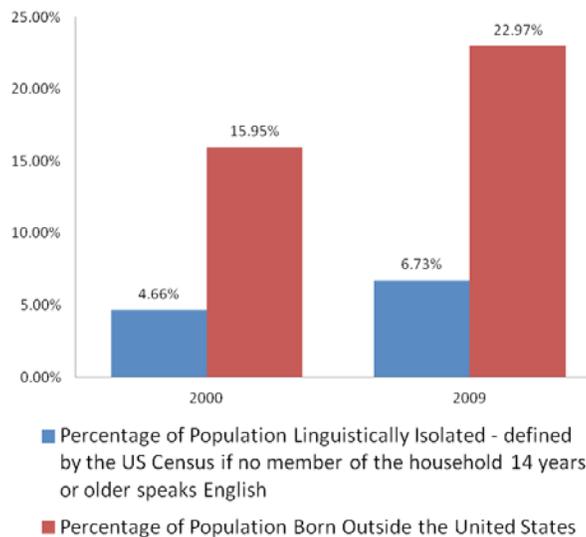
**Figure 3-27. Seniors in Benson Hill map**  
(Census 2010 SF1, Table DP-1, tract level)

**2000 and 2010 - Race, Ethnicity, and Hispanic Origin**

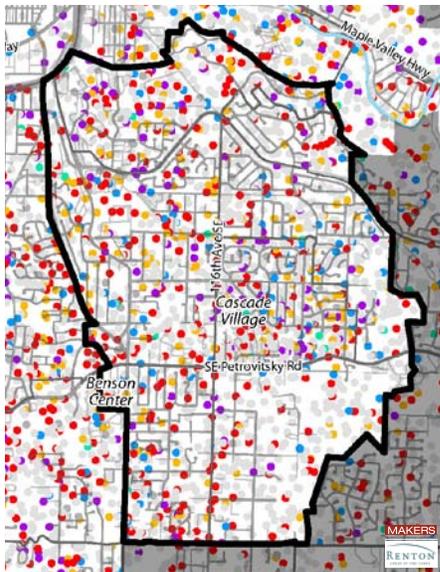


**Figure 3-28. 2000 and 2010 Race, ethnicity, and Hispanic origin**

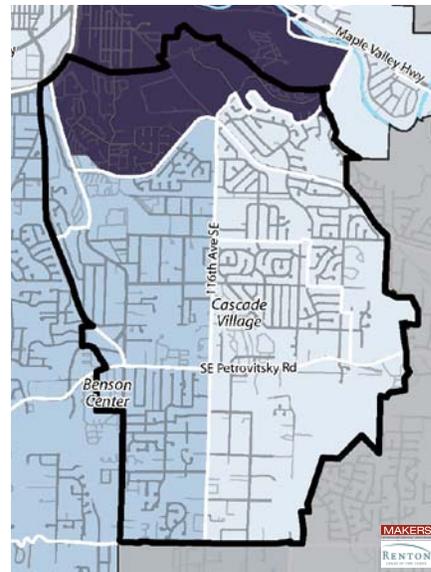
**Linguistic Isolation and Foreign Born Residents**



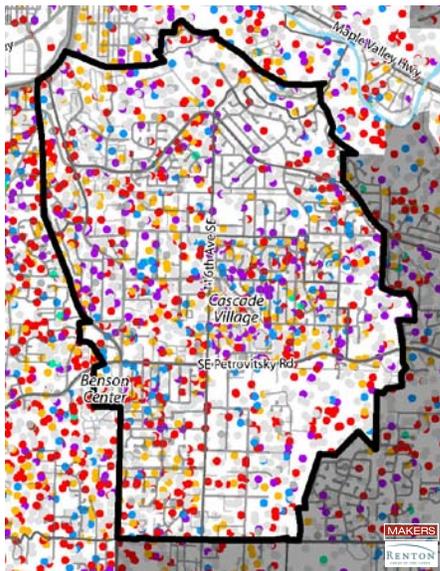
**Figure 3-29. Linguistic isolation and foreign born residents**



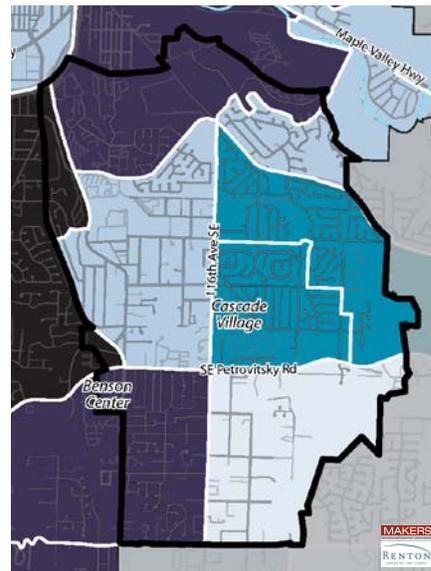
Race and Ethnicity Density, 2000



Population born outside U.S., 2000



Race and Ethnicity Density, 2010



Population born outside U.S., 2010

- Benson Hill Planning Area
- City of Renton
- 1 Dot = 10 people
- White
- Black/African American
- American Indian and Alaska Native
- Asian
- Other
- Two or more races
- Hispanic or Latino (of any race)

**Figure 3-30.** Race and ethnicity density map, 2000 and 2010 (Census 2000 and 2010 SF1, Table DP-1, census tract level)

- Benson Hill Planning Area
- City of Renton
- Percentage of population born outside the U.S.
- 1% - 15%
- 16% - 22%
- 23% - 28%
- 29% - 33%
- 34% - 38%

**Figure 3-31.** Population born outside the U.S., 2000 and 2010 (Census 2000 and 2010 SF1, Table DP-1, census tract level)

### Regional Equity

Regionally, Benson Hill has lower “opportunity” than northern Renton, Seattle, and Bellevue (see PSRC’s *Comprehensive Opportunity Map* for Puget Sound below). This index is based on factors such as access to education, jobs, transportation alternatives, healthy food, social networks.

Benson Hill’s median household income, \$70,089, is slightly above Renton’s average of \$67,639. The level of poverty is similar to all of Renton, which is slightly less than the poverty level of Seattle or Washington state.<sup>2</sup> However, a closer look at central Benson Hill shows more people in poverty than Renton’s average. Figures 3-34

#### Zoom-in: Comprehensive Opportunity Map Puget Sound Urbanized Area



Sources: Puget Sound Regional Council, 2011; Environmental Protection Agency, 2010; Washington Dept. of Ecology, 2011; ESRI Business Analyst, 2010; American Community Survey, 2006-2010; U.S. Census, 2010; Tetrad, Inc. FCensus Dlx, 2010; Washington State Report Card, 2010-2011

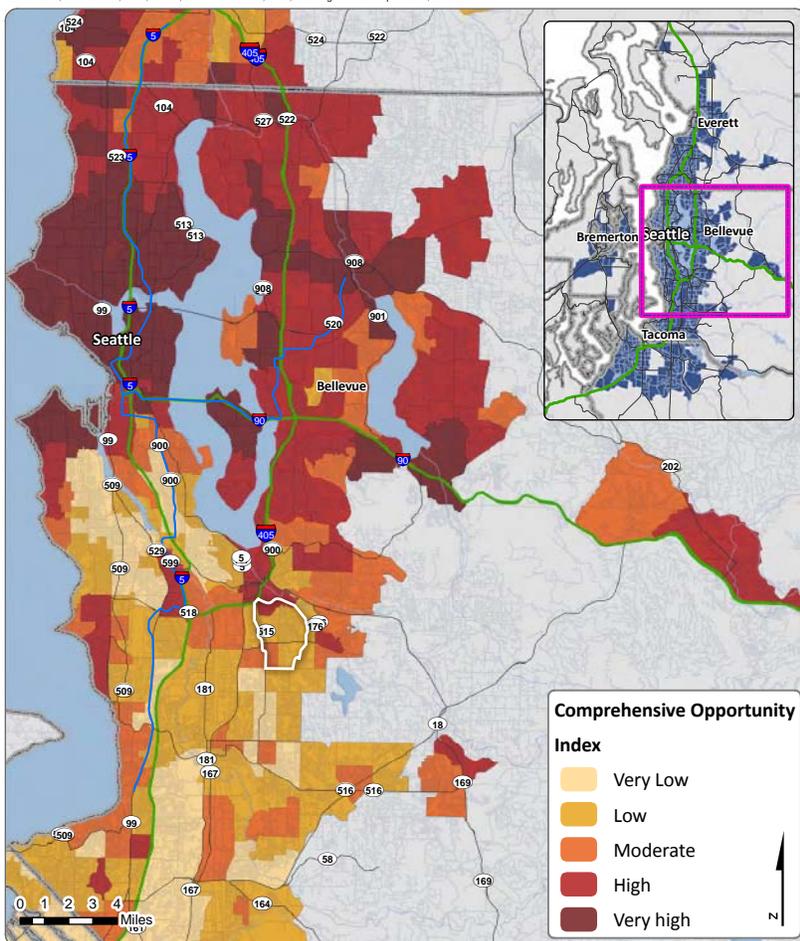


Figure 3-32. Comprehensive opportunity map: Puget Sound urbanized area (PSRC, 2011)

### Percentage of Population Below the Poverty Level

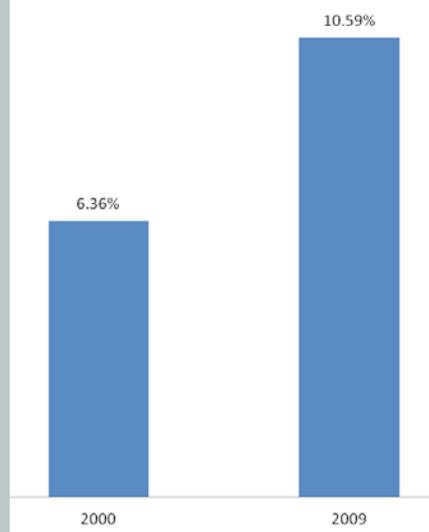
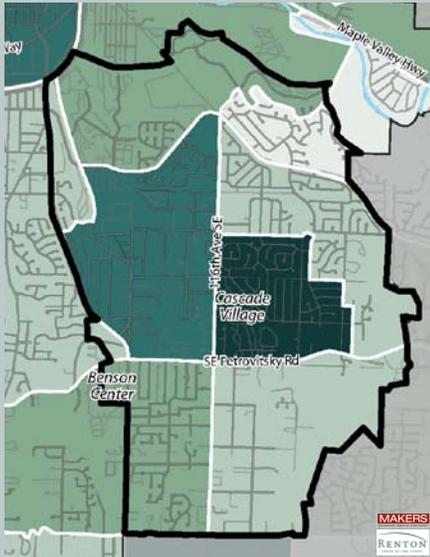


Figure 3-33. Percentage of population below the poverty level, 2000 and 2009

2 “In poverty” used here to mean population below 150% of the poverty threshold (American Community Survey 2010).

and 3-35 show that central Benson Hill, particularly east of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE north of Petrovitsky Road have lower median incomes and a higher proportion of people in poverty. It is important to note that the geographic areas associated with lower incomes are not the same as those areas associated with increased racial, ethnic, and place of origin diversity.



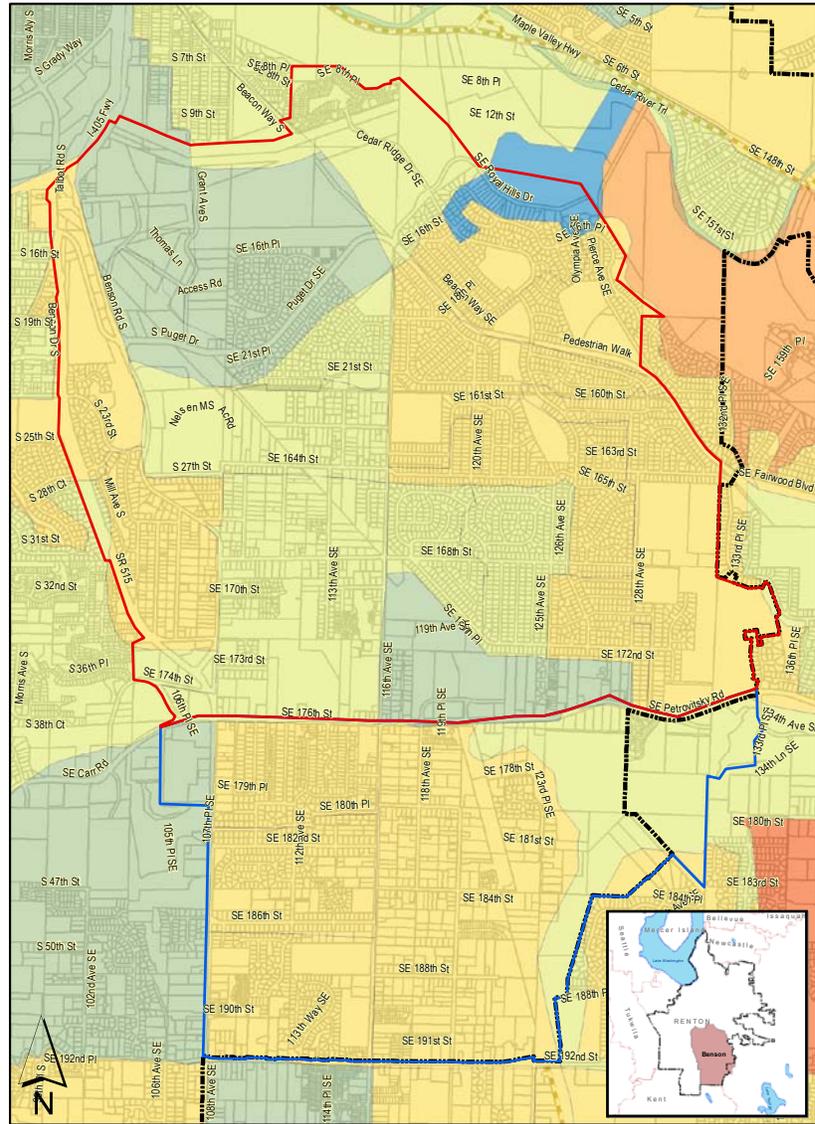
**Poverty (2010)**

- Benson Hill Planning Area
- City of Renton

Percent of population below 150% of the poverty threshold

- 1% - 2%
- 3% - 5%
- 6% - 9%
- 10% - 11%
- 12% - 22%
- no data

**Figure 3-34.** Portion of population below 150% of the poverty threshold map (American Community Survey 2010, 5 Year Estimate, Table B08122, census tract level)



Path: H:\CED\Planning\GIS\GIS\_projects\community\_planning\_initiative\mxd\Benson\_planning\_area\Benson\_income\_by\_2010\_census\_block\_group.mxd

**2010 Median Household Income by Block Group**

Community & Economic Development  
 C. E. "Chip" Vincent  
 Administrator

Adriana Abramovich  
 GIS Analyst

Date: 06/26/2012

0 750 1,500  
 Feet

1:15,000

**MEDHINC\_CY**

- \$0.00 - \$35,000.00
- \$35,000.01 - \$42,000.00
- \$42,000.01 - \$56,000.00
- \$56,000.01 - \$75,000.00
- \$75,000.01 - \$95,000.00
- \$95,000.01 - \$120,000.00
- \$120,000.01 - \$150,000.00
- \$150,000.01 - \$225,369.00

- BHCPA North Petrovitsky Bdry
- BHCPA South Petrovitsky Bdry
- City Limits

**Figure 3-35.** 2010 median household income by block group map

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## Summary

Benson Hill is a set of suburban neighborhoods loosely tied together because of surrounding barriers: natural (i.e., Cedar River, Soos Creek Park, Renton Park, Boulevard Lane Park) and created (i.e., Interstate 405, Highway 167, and the Renton-Kent boundary at SE 192nd Street). Although Benson Hill has many positive qualities—such as active neighborhood associations that spur community events, great schools, beautiful views, rolling topography, large natural areas, excellent driving access to downtown and the region, and the start of an extensive trail network—this analysis shows that some areas could improve. The following are some aspects of Benson Hill that should be addressed in this plan:

- **Uneven social equity.** Average income in Benson Hill is on par with Renton, but people with lower incomes are concentrated in central and northern Benson Hill (Figure 3-35). Benson Hill as a whole may have less “opportunity” than much of Puget Sound (Figure 3-32). Thus, to work toward social equity, this plan should promote the addition or improvement of resources in those areas. Homeownership and business retention programs may also be key to ensuring that future improvements benefit current residents and businesses as opposed to merely attracting newcomers.
- **Disjointed neighborhoods.** Benson Hill is segmented and lacks a unified identity. Some neighborhoods have neighborhood associations and long-standing relationships with the City, but others have only been annexed to Renton for a few years, and many households are not part of any organized neighborhood. Community residents are diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, country of birth, and household income. In addition, some neighborhoods are physically disconnected from each other. Benson Hill’s social and geographic diversity itself could be a unifying element if social and physical connections between neighborhoods are improved. In this way, Benson Hill could truly become a *community* of neighborhoods.
- **Lack of focused activity.** Cascade Village and Benson Plaza are the only major commercial centers, and neither support community gathering or active living. Area parks provide amenities to the households that live nearby, but recreation opportunities alone do not create comprehensive neighborhood centers. Attractive centers are important to

creating a cohesive community. They draw people together and provide commercial services and recreational opportunities within walking and biking distance. Because Benson Hill is such a large area, it is important that this plan create at least one focused area of community activity.

- **Park and community center need.** The *Parks Plan* clearly states the need to strategically locate a park and community center in central or southern Benson Hill, which currently lacks access to parks (Figures 3-6 and 3-7).
- **Limited non-motorized mobility.** Neighborhoods are physically disconnected from each other, as well as from retail and restaurant services. People cannot easily walk or bicycle to commercial destinations, and in the southeast, public transit can be over a mile away from residences. However, the existing informal network pedestrian paths and the planned Soos Creek Trail expansion offer the opportunity to build a more comprehensive trail system.

Benson Hill could become a stronger community if the above themes are addressed. These, combined with the community's input represented in the *Chapter 2: Public Engagement*, provide the basis and underlying assumptions for this plan.

## 2. Public Engagement

### Phase 1 Input

#### Beyond Conventional Outreach

In June 2011, Renton held a walking audit of the Cascade neighborhood. Although the City advertised the event with posters, postcard mailouts, and media releases, attendance was poor. From this experience, the planning team learned that they would need to employ additional or unconventional outreach strategies to garner ideas and feedback for this plan. So in addition to the traditional mailers, posters, and press releases, an online strategy, informal conversation at neighborhood events, and outreach to specific individuals and groups became important to this process. Notably, it was the combination of techniques, and the replication of efforts into multiple formats, that reached the broad audience used to develop the plan. Mailings, posters, workshops, interactive online tools, social media, and personal outreach all target different groups of people. These techniques were part of the public process for this plan, but also resulted in the outcome of creating additional communication between the neighborhoods and the City.

#### Conversations

##### Neighborhood Picnics

Prior to the start of the project, City staff met with residents at the 2011 neighborhood picnics. People talked about what they liked and would like to see improved in Benson Hill, and these informal interviews were videotaped and later posted on the Benson Plan website.

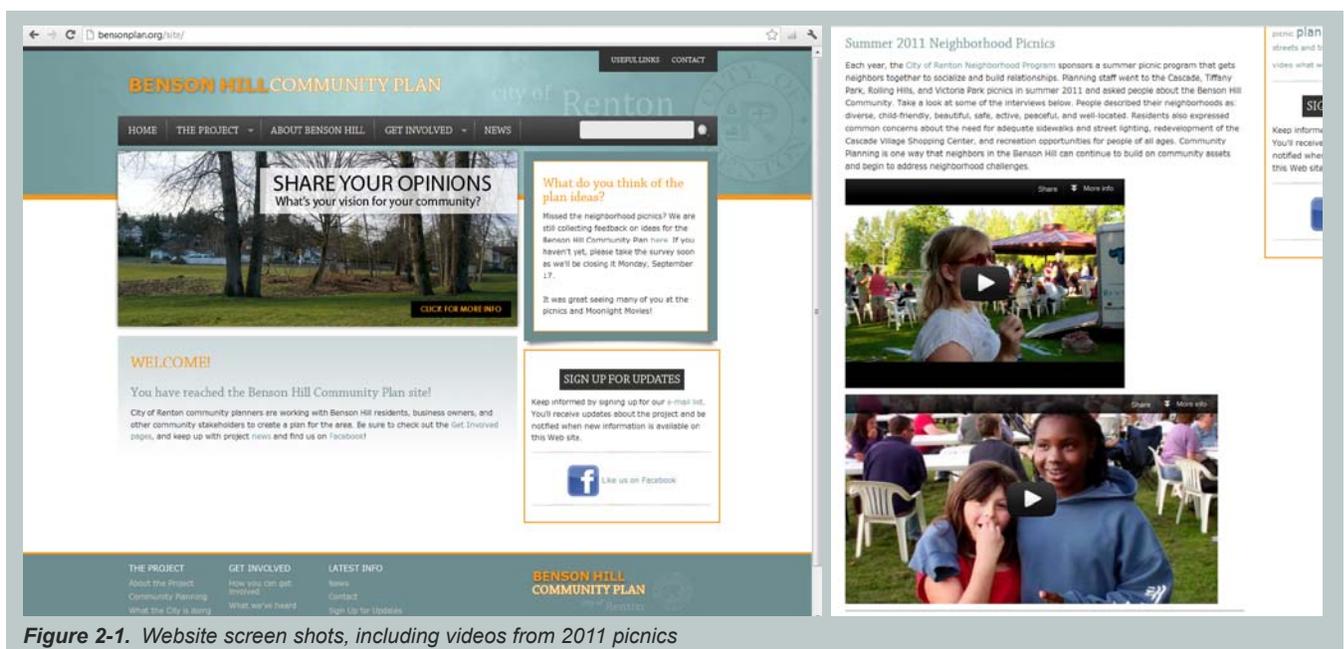


Figure 2-1. Website screen shots, including videos from 2011 picnics



Figure 2-2. Steering Committee driving tour



Figure 2-3. Steering Committee direction on major concepts

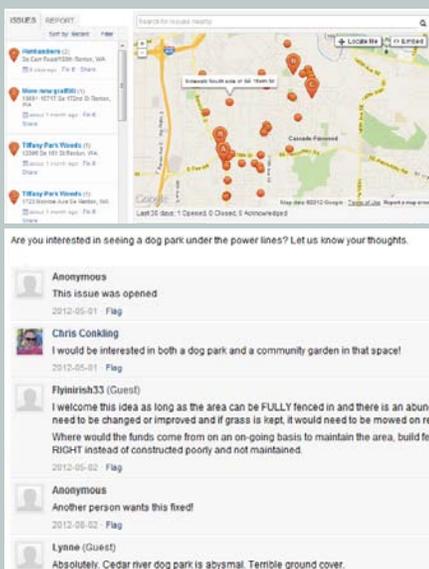


Figure 2-4. Interactive map used to collect comments and facilitate discussion

### **Benson Hill Steering Committee Meetings**

Planning staff reached out to individuals they met at the neighborhood picnics, or heard about through the Neighborhood Program, to form the Benson Hill Steering Committee (BHSC). The BHSC, comprised of residents, business owners, and community leaders, met three times during the initial phase of the project. In the first meeting, members were introduced to the planning process and discussed their priorities for Benson Hill. The second meeting focused on the best means of engaging more people in the process and helped to develop the outreach strategy for the plan. It also solidified the agenda for the February Open House, where Steering Committee members led small group discussions. In the third meeting, members responded to the open house results and provided further input to staff on the draft vision statement for the plan.

### **Online Presence**

#### **Website**

*BensonPlan.org* was launched in early 2012 to provide information about community planning in general and this project specifically, announce updates and events, and solicit input and feedback at various stages of the planning process. The website drew nearly 1000 unique visitors, about a quarter of which returned to the site multiple times. People tended to arrive at the site via the City of Renton's page, the Benson Plan Facebook page, reddit, the Renton Patch, or by directly typing in the page address. Spikes in usage occurred when we coupled our efforts with other methods, such as when people were asked to vote on the summer 2012 Midnight Movie at Cascade Village, after updates sent by email or post, upon announcing an online survey, and around the day of the Moonlight Movie itself.

#### **Interactive Map**

An interactive map on the website provided a forum for geographically specific comments and discussions (Figure 2-4). It allowed users to post unique comments and provided locations for sidewalk and intersection improvements, speeding traffic, and input on other issues, such as the dog park, community garden, panhandlers, and preserving natural areas. One of the great features of the interactive map was that it also allowed other members of the public to respond and vote on suggestions, opening a dialogue not just with the City but within the community as well.

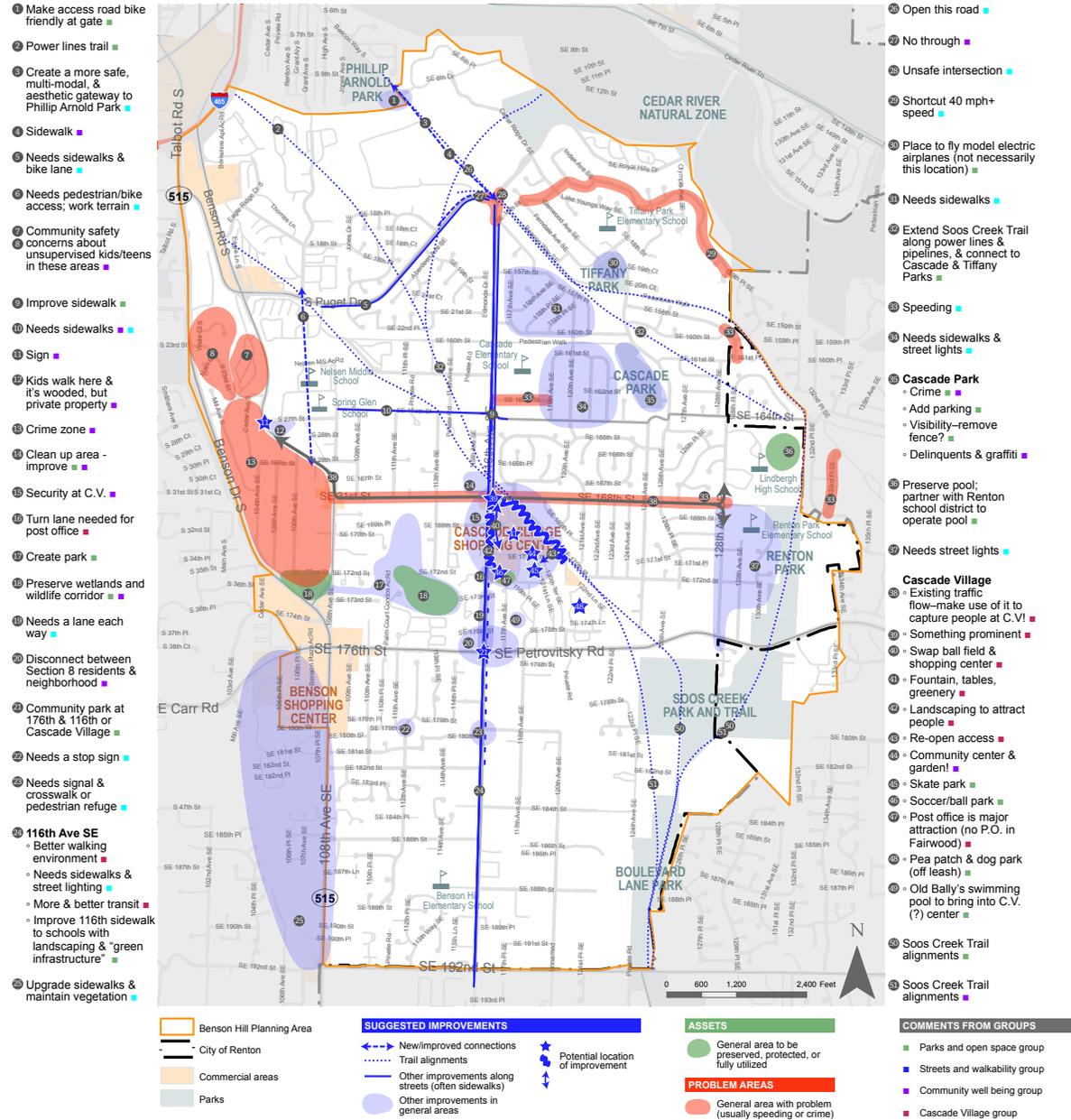
#### **News Blog**

Also featured on the website was a blog where meeting announcements and other information could be posted (Figure



# Open House #1 Mapping Exercise Compilation

Notes compiled from 4 groups at the February 29, 2012 open house. Colored squares at the end of each note indicate which group made the comment (see legend below).



## Additional General Comments

### Streets and Walkability

- Better pedestrian and bike connections between parks
- Cycling accessibility does not erode accessibility that's already there
- Lighting after dark
- Radar speed signals
- Improving vehicular access and traffic flow
- Controlling density
- Safety signals at crosswalks
- Planted medians - landscape strips
- Traffic circles on main thoroughfares
- Need safety flashers, lighting at shelters and transit stops
- Within every square mile zoning to accommodate small scale neighborhood commercial for better pedestrian access

### Community Well Being

- Community sign!
- Covenants enforced to clean up neighborhoods and promote pride
- Community picnics!
- Partner with local churches!

### Cascade Village

- Attract people to existing businesses
- Tax breaks for businesses moving into Cascade Village
- Nucleus for small home-grown businesses, especially ethnic businesses
- Make use of the space available
- Community Center should include:
  - A variety of recreation activities, including yoga, indoor basketball, exercise
  - Library
  - Community room/event space

- for 40-50 people
- Multiple rooms for different size groups
- Affordable grocery store or Trader Joe's
- Coffee shop with wifi, baked goods, and great coffee (visible from street)
- Health clinic
- Vet
- Farmers market
- Fruit stand
- Swap meet
- Rest-family
- Bakery
- Fast food
- Bowling alley / activity center
- Renovate - rebuild center - updated architecture
- Keep small scale
- Unique
- Community garden
- Electric vehicle plug in

- Traveling carnival
- Arts & crafts
- Use power line land
- Mixed-use - Live upper level, work lower level (graphic)

### Parks & Open Spaces

- Soccer complex, maybe at Cascade Center or under power/transmission lines; or maybe use existing pool
- PSE sports field - partner
- Add a bench area for teens - "save the playground for kids"
- Build Soos Creek Trail
  - Maintain green space for stormwater
- Teen skate park to help with Cascade Park
- Move Cascade Picnic to a park not a parking lot

Figure 2-8. February Open House mapping exercise compilation

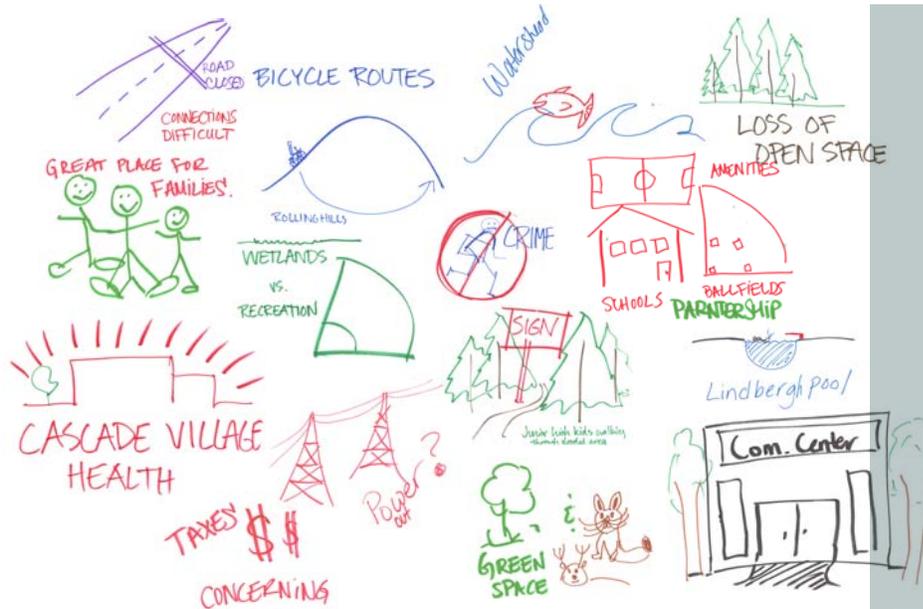


Figure 2-9. Example topics from February Open House values and visions discussion

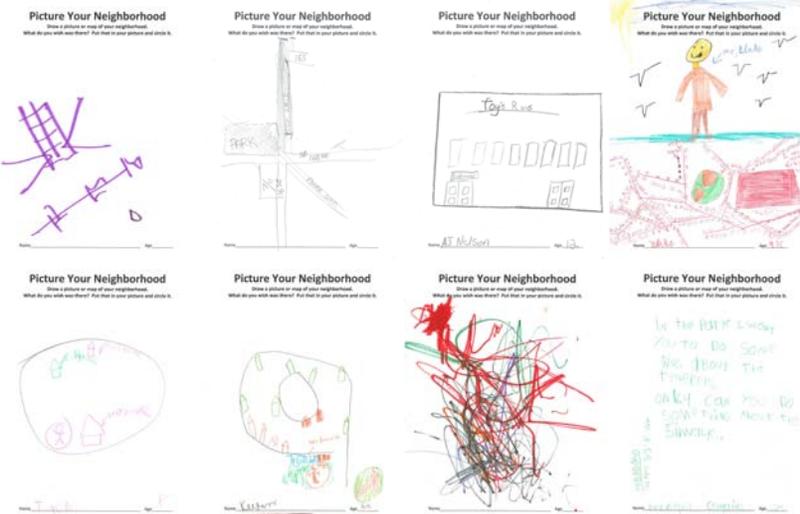


Figure 2-10. Kids “picture your neighborhood” activity

Walkability—to map their ideas (Figure 2-8). Topic groups were led by members of the Benson Hill Steering Committee. Figure 2-9 shows the compilation of their comments. Many ideas centered on Cascade Village, with street, sidewalk, and trail improvements woven throughout.

Finally, participants prioritized the ideas recorded during the mapping exercise by placing dots on the items they cared most about (Figure 2-10). A grocery store was the number one priority, followed by a community recreation center for a range of events and activities and improvements to 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE.

During the meeting, children also sketched their ideas on what was important in their neighborhood (Figure 2-6).



Figure 2-11. February Open House mapping exercise



Figure 2-12. February Open House prioritization activity

## Stakeholder Meetings

### City Departments

The planning team met with the City's Interdepartmental Team (IDT) at key points. Topics discussed with the IDT included: assisting community groups in building amenities like a dog park or community garden; improving a sense of safety at Cascade Village; opportunities for parks and recreation in the Benson Hill, and public safety improvements for streets and sidewalks. Some of the meetings included field visits to evaluate sites and conditions. One of the important outcomes of the IDT meetings was an understanding that the City already has resources and programs in place that could be used to assist the community with some of their identified issues. Neighborhood Program Grants, Block Watch, Crime Prevention training, the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Areas Plan, and Renton's Complete Streets Ordinance are all resources that are already in place.

### Cascade Village Property Owners

The planning team met with the Cascade Village property owners several times in the process to understand their needs, plans, and what they had already tried at the shopping center. Cascade Village's owners were willing to allow temporary community uses of their property such as a dog park or community garden. They described their attempts to attract a grocery store,<sup>1</sup> a YMCA or similar community center, and other business tenants to fill the center.

## Summary of Phase 1 Input

### How people feel about Benson Hill

Overall, participants ranked Benson Hill's attributes as fairly neutral. Benson Hill scored high as a good place to live and raise a family and people enjoy its automobile access. People really like some places in Benson Hill. The Benson Plaza Shopping Center, the trails under the powerlines, parks, schools, and some particularly great views are especially liked.

However, people do not think it is a visually attractive place, do not like its pedestrian and bicycle environments, and do not think it does well as a "green" or environmentally-conscious place. Comments reflected an interest in more pet-friendly places, more activities for

#### **People like views from:**

- Phillip Arnold Park (and road to it)
- 7-11/Little League baseball fields on 116th and 168th – view of Mt. Rainier
- Cascade Village – view of Mt. Rainier
- Nelson Middle School
- Falcon Ridge
- Cascade Elementary playground
- Above Tiffany Park – view to foothills
- 108th and Petrovitsky/Carr – looking west at sunset
- Vantage Glen – looking west to Olympics and sunsets
- Driving south on 116th – views of Mt. Rainier
- Benson Way (Talbot Rd) – looking west

#### **Some other places people like include:**

- CVAC baseball fields
- Renton Pool
- Forest behind Benson Hill Elementary
- Teasdale Park and surrounding neighborhoods
- Lindbergh Pool

<sup>1</sup> In the second meeting, planning team members, the property owners, and a market operator interested in opening a "community marketplace" at Cascade Village, came together to discuss any ways the City could assist in catalyzing the market. All parties were on board, but the market operator later pulled out due to the "hard-to-find" location of Cascade Village.

**People’s favorite places are:**

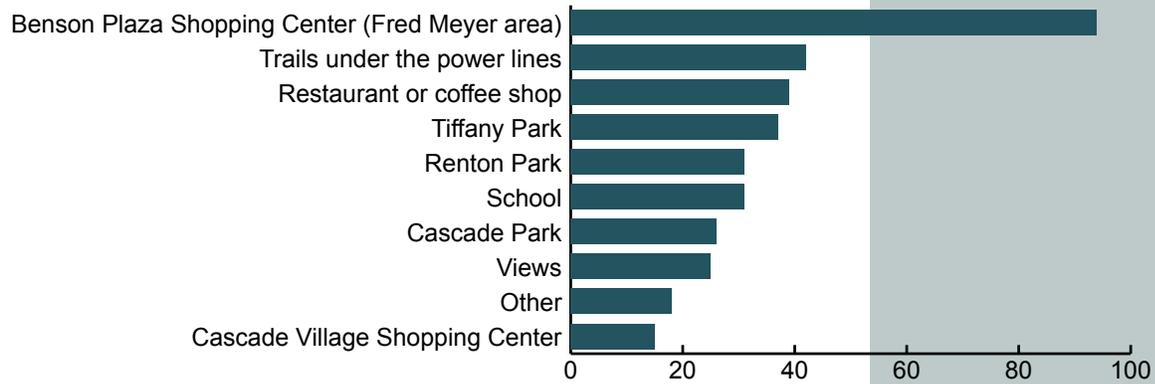


Figure 2-14. Benson Hill assets from Survey #1

kids, a greater focus on safety and crime reduction, building a feeling of community, improving parks and recreation opportunities, and making a better environment for businesses.

**How Benson Hill ranks in the following areas:**

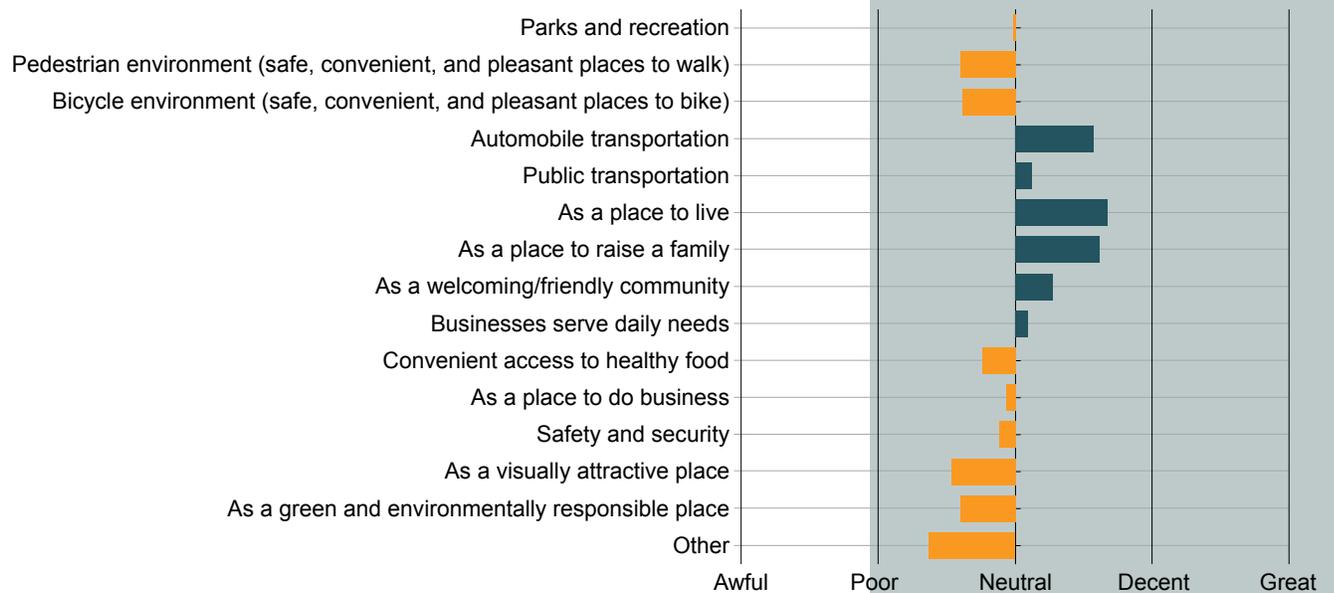


Figure 2-13. How people feel about different aspects of Benson Hill from Survey #1

People’s priorities:

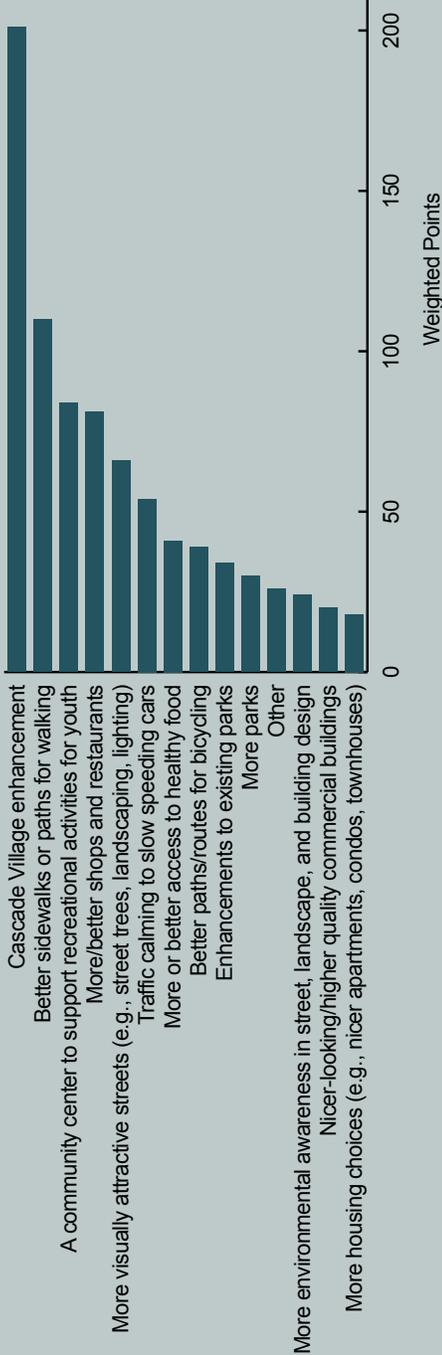


Figure 2-15. Priorities from Survey #1

**Priorities for Benson Hill**

The ideas from the Open House, survey, Steering Committee, online interactive map, and 2011 neighborhood picnics were compressed into a few major concepts:

- Cascade Village enhancements.** Geographically, the Cascade Village is in the center of the Benson Hill and many long-time residents remember this area as the heart of the community. Most of the shopping center is currently vacant and ideas for enhancing it ran the gamut from attracting a new grocery store, to short-term improvements like a dog park or swap meet site, to building a community/ethnic market place, to using the land as a park, to using the area for housing.
- Parks and Recreation improvements.** Consistent with the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Areas plan adopted in 2011, Benson Hill residents identified the great need for additional parks and recreation service. A community center to support families and youth programs, sports fields, safe playgrounds, community gardens, and improvements to connect informal trails into a comprehensive network are all key elements.
- Street upgrades.** 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE should be transformed into a “jewel” pathway, tying north and south Benson Hill together with nice sidewalks, bike lanes, street lights, landscaping, native plants and natural drainage, and improved transit. While that is an especially important corridor, many other areas were identified for pedestrian and bicycling improvements such as completing sidewalk connections, traffic calming, and improving intersection safety.

The Planning Team built on these priorities and concepts to set the stage for public input during Phase 2, where major concepts were vetted with the public.

# Phase 2 Input

The Planning Team, in consultation with the IDT, built on the priorities identified during Phase 1 to present a set of planning concepts (Figure 2-16) to the public for input during Phase 2.

- Cascade Village enhancements**, Short-term opportunities included adding a community-run dog park and community garden to the Cascade Village site, or establishing a community market in the old grocery building. Long-term alternatives included the opportunity to establish a community park on the site, with or without preserving some of the commercial space.
- 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE upgrades**. Make 116<sup>th</sup> a “jewel” pathway, tying north and south Benson Hill together with nice sidewalks, bike lanes, street lights, landscaping, native plants and natural drainage, and improved transit, and
- Walking and bicycling improvements**. Identification of specific areas in the community that need safety improvements to connect sidewalks, reduce speeding, and improve intersection safety.



Figure 2-16. Ideas brought to 2012 Neighborhood Picnics, Moonlight Movie, and online Survey #2



Figure 2-17. Phase 2 participants were asked to mark specific places needing sidewalk, intersection, lighting, or traffic calming improvements.

## Example comments from surveys

### **Community Building and Lasting Relationship with Renton Government**

- “More opportunities for gathering casually with neighbors.”
- “far more places where the community can gather in a peaceful and relaxed manner”
- “Unity in diversity.”
- “Continue this process of community involvement in the planning process.”
- “A community identity that people can get behind and start working together with.”
- “Strengthen a coalition of neighborhoods or HOAs to provide a more unified voice for the area.”

### **Cascade Village**

- “We so wish there was something to draw us to Cascade Center, as we live blocks from it, but unfortunately there is nothing.”
- “There is so much potential [at Cascade Village] but the layout there is terrible and needs to be changed.”
- “Let’s attract businesses to Cascade Village.”
- “Cascade Village needs to be revitalized with a neighborhood friendly grocery store and recreational alternatives for teens/ youth.”
- “Open the back entrance to the Cascade shopping center; remove the chain across the adjacent apartment driveway, also, to allow better access and minimize feelings of being second rate citizens among those affected by those closures.”

### **Parks and Recreation**

- “Recreation programs are needed for all ages up here.”
- “Community gardens, rain gardens, a community center, more parks...”
- “A community garden combined with a community center space.”
- “Off-leash areas for pets.” “Pet-friendly.”
- “We need safe activities for the youth.”
- “Allow the park buildings to be rented again.”
- “The Lindbergh Pool is a gem for Benson Hill and a very large surrounding community. Very few public aquatic facilities exist that provide year round recreation, swimming lessons, and a venue for swim team practices and meets. The Renton Pools Community is ready to partner with government officials in ensuring the ongoing financial viability of the Lindbergh Pool.”

## Vetting the Major Concepts

In addition to using the communication channels already established in Phase I, in Phase II the planning team used some additional outreach methods to get feedback on the major concepts above.

### **Benson Plan Mobile Workshops**

Instead of holding a single planning workshop and inviting the public to attend, the Benson Plan Mobile Workshop attended community events and neighborhood picnics in the Benson Hill Community throughout the summer of 2012. Participants learned about the Benson Plan and how the major concepts evolved from community input. They were given ballots (Figure 2-16) to vote on the major concepts, provide suggestions on a draft Vision for the plan, and make general comments. Those interested in working toward community efforts for a dog park or community garden were able to sign up for a mailing list. Neighborhood picnics were held at Renton Park Elementary (July), Tiffany Park (August), and Rolling Hills (August).

Another mobile workshop stop was the Moonlight Movie event at Cascade Village in August 2012. In partnership with Community Services, this event was cross promoted with the Benson Plan, which drew people to the Benson Plan website and got community



Figure 2-18. 2012 Neighborhood Picnics and Moonlight Movie

residents interested in the popular City program. Special flyers promoting the movie and the Benson Plan were also distributed through summer lunch program, allowing outreach to a community of people that is traditionally underrepresented.

### **Online Survey #2**

As a companion to the mobile workshops an online survey presented the same concepts and questions in a different format. The survey was available from July to September 2012 and provided a convenient way to gather input from those who did not attend any of the summer community events.

The 86 ballots from the picnics, movie, and online survey showed:

- An overwhelming support for improvements to 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE.
- People liked the overall vision, but wanted it to be more specific.
- A great majority of people liked the idea of parks and recreation at Cascade Village. The people who voted against it expressed concerns over eliminating commercial, residential, and mixed land uses from the property.
- The international community market was not quite as popular as the above, but still with a vast majority voting for it. Concerns regarded a lack of demand for this type of market and the desire for a more permanent and drastic redevelopment of Cascade Village with new restaurants and shops.
- Most people approved of the dog park and community garden, but some people expressed concern over proximity to homes, noise and smell, and potential issues with maintenance. At all of the events and online survey, people interested in volunteering for the dog park or community garden joined email lists for each.

#### ***Pedestrian/Bicycle/Transit Riders Accessibility***

- *“A walkable community.”*
- *“Renton should keep its commitment to complete streets. This includes roads that are bicycle friendly so that a person can go from anywhere to anywhere by bicycle.”*
- *“Walking around seems to be quite the challenge in this area; I would do it more often but really feel I am a target for cars!”*
- *“It would be great to have better bus service, as I have to walk 2 miles from my house to catch a bus!”*

#### ***Environment***

- *“Need to interact more with water ecology for our neighborhoods.”*
- *“Greenbelts preserved for wildlife.”*

#### ***Crime and Safety***

- *“We need assistance with rousing neighborhoods into becoming more involved with block watch programs and what they can do to protect themselves and their property.”*
- *“Pedestrian/bike friendly neighborhoods with less crime (our quiet, crime free area has had a sudden rash of home burglaries). Neighbors knowing neighbors and watching out for each other.”*

#### ***Neighborhood Aesthetics***

- *“I would like to see the community do a better job with keeping up the appearance of their homes and their neighborhood.”*
- *“We need to try and instill a sense of pride in our neighborhoods.”*

## Summary of Input through Phase 2

### **Cascade Village as Community Focus**

Cascade Village enhancement is the single-most desired improvement. At the center of Benson Hill, it has the potential to offer recreational and commercial amenities within walking and biking distance of much of the community. The existing CVAC baseball fields draw people for recreational events, the neighboring post office draws many users, and the views under the power lines are valued by community members. Cascade Village is challenged by retail vacancies and a perception of crime related to a neighboring apartment complex.<sup>2</sup>

**Community heart.** Participants expressed a strong desire to revitalize and/or redevelop the shopping center to re-create the “heart” of Benson Hill and foster a sense of community. A great majority of people liked the idea of parks and recreation at Cascade Village. There was also a desire for a grocery store or other neighborhood shops and restaurants and building community recreation center (especially for youth activities). More important than any specific concept, participants favored transforming the Cascade Village back into a community amenity, either as a commercial center, community facility, or some combination.

They have particular interest in establishing a grocery store and community recreation center (especially for youth activities) and brought up the examples of Third Place Books in Lake Forest Park and Crossroads Mall in Bellevue. They offered many ideas, including attracting people to existing businesses, creating a nucleus for small, especially ethnic, businesses, adding a pea patch and a dog park, and razing the entire site to make way for a large park (see Open House #1 Mapping Exercise Compilation in Appendix X for additional ideas).

**Dog park and community garden.** Developing a dog park and community garden are projects that are immediately doable if a community group is able to step forward to plan, build, and manage these amenities. (See the dog park and community garden proposals in Appendix X for more details.) Even as temporary uses, these could make a significant difference in the feeling of safety at Cascade Village and draw users to the site, perhaps spurring additional use and investment there. The dog park and community garden ideas were strongly supported by the property owner, inter-departmental City staff, local organizations (e.g., R.U.F.F. and Sustainable Renton), the steering committee, and other Benson Plan



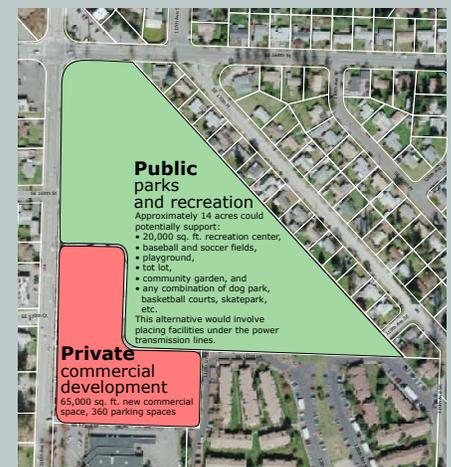
**Figure 2-19.** Dog park and community garden under the power lines behind Cascade Village

<sup>2</sup> Emerald Heights and Stonebrook apartment complexes have below average crime rates with only one 911 call per unit per month (Renton Police).

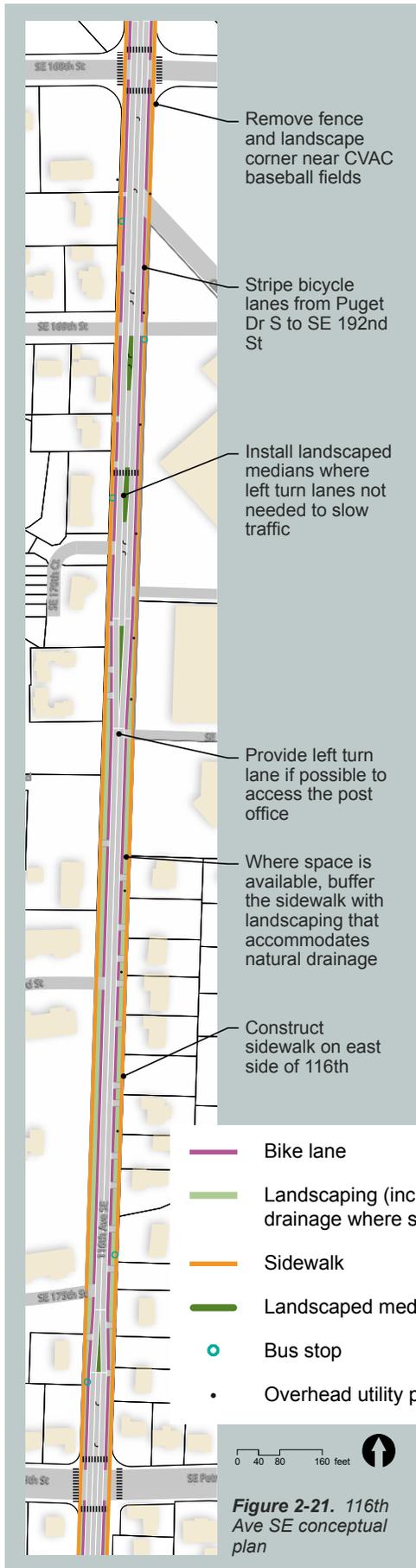
participants. Some people expressed concern over the potential proximity to homes, noise and smell, and maintenance issues that might arise for a dog park or community garden. These items would need to be carefully considered by the groups that step forward to organize these efforts.

**Large park and community center.** Community members have a strong need for park spaces and recreational activities within their neighborhood. The Parks, Recreation, and Natural Areas plan shows that the top priority among the Benson Hill community is to see a large (at least 15 acres), centrally-located, multi-purpose park, that includes programmable space, such as a community recreation center. Cascade Village offers the only large piece of land currently available in Benson Hill and at the present time it is mostly vacant. Since developing a new park and community center takes substantial City resources, this option should be considered a long term idea. It received immense support during Phase 2 outreach, with a few people expressing concerns over eliminating commercial uses from the property.

**Commercial services.** The lack of commercially-zoned properties and retail amenities within walking distance of central Benson Hill suggests that at least part of Cascade Village should continue to offer commercial spaces. Furthermore, the space at Cascade Village currently offers small business owners a valuable opportunity to establish and build their businesses. Phase 2 specifically tested the idea of a community market place in Cascade Village, and it was favorably received by the community, but not quite as popular as the other ideas for the shopping center. Concerns regarded a lack of demand for this type of market and the desire for a more permanent and drastic redevelopment of Cascade Village with new restaurants and shops or parks and recreation opportunities.



*Figure 2-20. Combination of commercial and recreational uses at Cascade Village*



**Street and Trail Network**

**116<sup>th</sup> as the central spine.** 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE is the central spine of Benson Hill, connecting neighbors to Cascade Village, Cascade and Benson Hill Elementary Schools, and several informal trail networks. “Make 116<sup>th</sup> the ‘jewel’ pathway” was ranked a top priority in both Phases of outreach, and improving this central connection would tie the community together, especially across SE Petrovitsky Road. Participants want to see a better walking and bicycling environment with nice sidewalks, street lights, landscaping, “green infrastructure [callout],” and improved transit. The City is already seeking funds to construct a “complete street” (accommodates walkers, cyclists, and motorists) on 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE.

**Trail network.** Benson Hill also has the start of a great trail network with the existing pedestrian paths along utility corridors that run through Tiffany and Cascade Parks, the informal mountain biking trails under the power lines near Philip Arnold Park, the planned Soos Creek Trail extension, and potential connections to the Cedar River Trail. A key missing link is below the powerlines that run behind Cascade Village. This path could connect Soos Creek Park and Trail, Cascade Village, Nelson Middle and Spring Glen Schools, and the existing pedestrian walk along SE 160<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Neighborhood streets.** Many streets in the Benson Hill were built to a lower standard and lack adequate and safe space for people to walk to their destinations. Throughout the planning process, participants mapped places and routes where they feel unsafe (see Walking and Bicycling Improvements map). They would like to see a complete sidewalk network with pedestrian-scale lighting on major connections to schools, parks, and commercial amenities. Along with physical space to walk and cycle, speeding traffic and unsafe intersections need to be addressed to make streets usable for all modes of travel.

**Figure 2-21.** 116th Ave SE conceptual plan

### **Crime and Safety**

Many community members perceived rising crime in the neighborhoods and expressed concern over past shoplifting at Cascade Village. Residents would like to see crime reduced in the neighborhoods and a safe environment at Cascade Village. Renton saw a drastic increase in burglaries in late 2011, and Renton Police have worked hard to reduce burglaries with the help of block watch programs.<sup>3</sup>

### **Community Facilities and Parks**

Survey and open house participants were interested in a range of community recreational facilities. They ranked a community center for youth activities as a very high priority. Addressing this through redevelopment plans for Cascade Village is one alternative, due to the size and location of the land on which the shopping center sits. Yet, advancing the improvements and priorities for the Benson Hill identified in the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Areas plan is extremely important to the community, whether or not it happens on the Cascade Village site. Benson Hill's parks and recreation facilities are below average and ranked improvements to existing parks as a high priority. Benson Hill has a few major parks and some existing amenities that are important to residents and may be threatened by a lack of funding or changing ownership.

### **Community Building and Aesthetics**

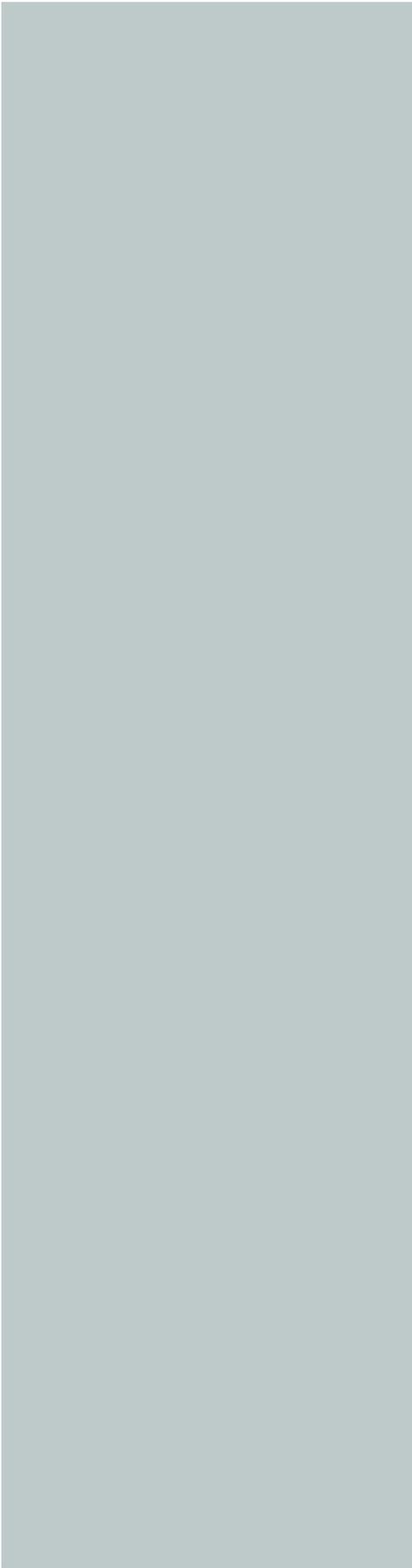
Participants wanted to see a general sense of community building through activities that bring people together. Some services were suggested to ease immigrants' transitions to a new life in Benson Hill and to address the transient population near Benson Plaza. In a physical aspect, as well, community members noted that some places—residential, commercial, and public—reflect a lack of physical maintenance or high-quality design.

## **Phase 3 Input**

TBD

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<sup>3</sup> 98% of burglaries take place in non-block watch neighborhoods (Renton Police).



# 3. Vision

Benson Hill has a strong community foundation with its neighborhoods, schools, parks, viewpoints, trails, and commercial areas, but it has the potential to grow stronger into a well-connected, dynamic community that serves diverse populations.

The vision for Benson Hill fits within the larger Citywide vision: “Renton—The center of opportunity in the Puget Sound Region where families and businesses thrive.”

*Placeholder for one-line vision sentence from community suggestions/competition  
xxx xxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx.*

**In the year 2032, Benson Hill is...**

*socially and physically rich, with ethnically, generationally, and economically diverse residents who enjoy neighborhoods that are welcoming places to live and raise families. Beautiful views of Mount Rainier, the Cascades, the Olympics, and city skylines visually connect Benson Hill to the region and enhance the aesthetic experience. Parks, green spaces, and trails provide recreational opportunities, adding to a healthy community and ecology. Schools and public facilities serve all sectors of the community. The business environment is thriving and diverse, with daily needs served in walking distance of residents. Streets and paths are inviting for walking, biking, and riding transit and reflect pride in a well-maintained and safe community. A range of housing options meets the needs of Benson Hill’s diverse households.*

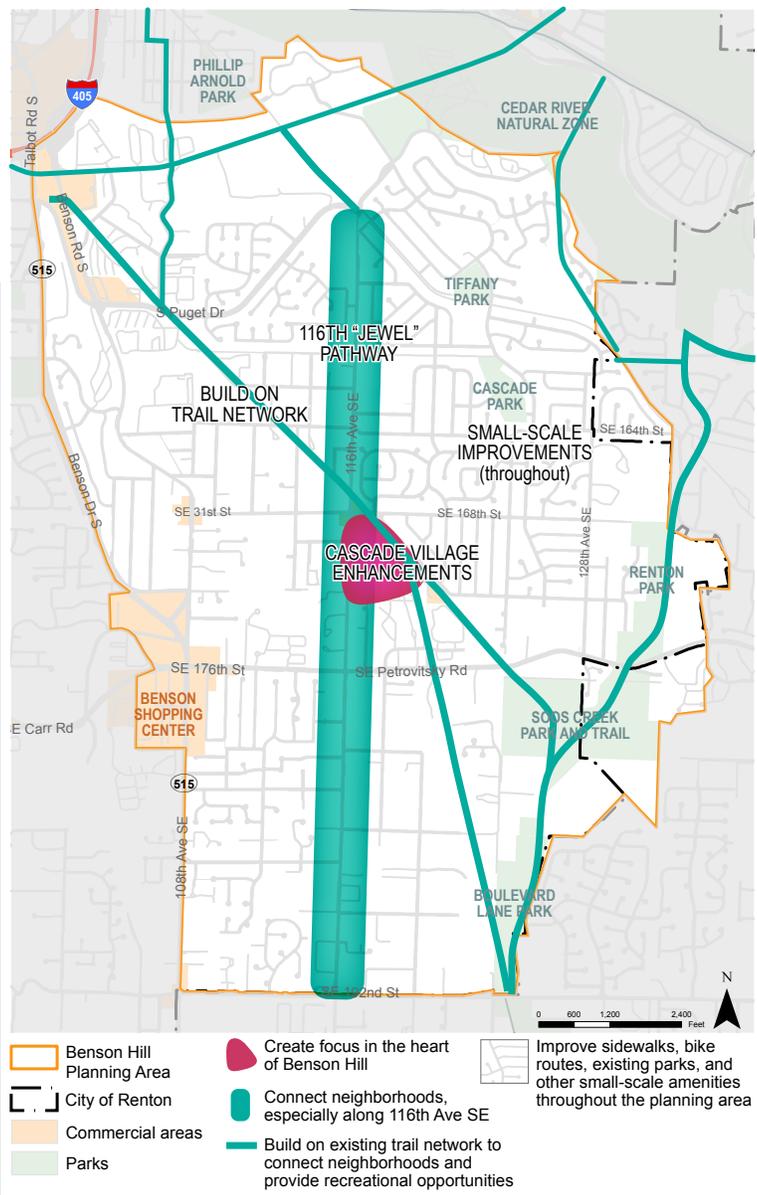
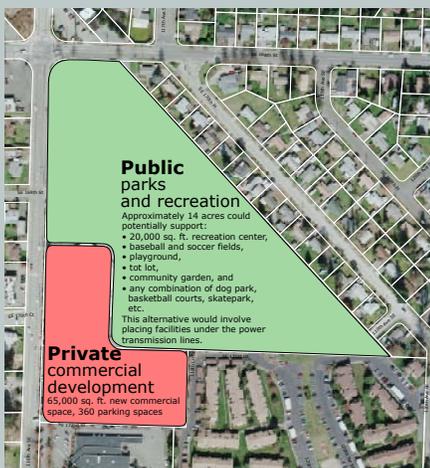


Figure 2-1. Major plan goals



**Figure 2-2.** Dog park and community garden under the power lines behind Cascade Village



**Figure 2-3.** Combination of commercial and recreational uses at Cascade Village

This plan pinpoints strategies that build on existing assets and fill gaps to make Benson Hill an outstanding community. The three recommended strategies are aimed at connecting and unifying the Benson Hill community in order to serve all members equitably and create better communication between Benson Hill and the City.

**Create focus.** Benson Hill currently lacks a “heart,” a central place where the community comes together to shop, eat, play, and gather. Although the Benson Shopping Center in southwest Benson Hill meets many of these needs, it is not easily accessible from most of the neighborhoods. Because it is purely auto oriented, it is not conducive to gathering, walking, and biking. Cascade Village, at the geographic center of Benson Hill was the heart of the community in the past, but recent vacancies have limited its ability to draw people to it.

Benson Hill can feel like a scattered set of separate neighborhoods lacking a cohesive center and space for community gathering. Residents drive far away to meet their shopping, recreational, and other needs because there is not a strong enough draw within Benson Hill. This plan suggests ways to create a focus in Benson Hill by strengthening the Cascade Village area, where healthy activity brings people together and helps businesses thrive. Recreational opportunities combined with some neighborhood commercial services, centered in Benson Hill, may create that heart.

**Improve connections.** Although individual neighborhoods may be strong on their own, there is currently little interaction or reason to connect. Utility line trails, some sidewalks, and some open areas provide an informal network that partially connects part of the Benson Hill, but the network could be improved to accommodate all geographies and populations. In particular, Petrovitsky Road is a limiting barrier that separates the Benson Hill into two segments. One of the few connection points is a pedestrian-unfriendly intersection at 116th Avenue SE that lacks sidewalks and designated bike routes. 116th Avenue SE can be the “jewel pathway” of Benson Hill, tying neighborhoods together along a walkable, bikable, “bus-able,” drivable, and beautiful spine. Focused improvements on important routes between schools, parks, and commercial areas may create a strong network of trails, pathways, and destinations that encourage neighborhood connections.

**Build community.** The final piece that would connect neighbors with each other and further Benson Hill as a great place to live is the totality of:

- Recreational parks and facilities to bring people together and encourage active living,
- A sense of safety and lack of crime to keep Benson Hill livable and vibrant, and
- A strong sense of community through improved social and civic connections.

Together, these add to an environment where people can live without fear of crime, play and exercise close to home, have access to healthy, natural environments, meet neighbors, and take part in a neighborhood that attends to and has pride in itself. Addressing these dispersed, localized issues can raise the quality of life for all residents in the area and round out the vision for Benson Hill.

The above three principles—creating focus, improving connections, and building community—are keys to addressing deficiencies and strengthening Benson Hill with meaningful and lasting improvements. These principles are broken down into five major goals, and the Plan Elements chapter details recommended actions for each.

## Benson Hill Goals

1. Create a community and commercial focus in the heart of Benson Hill.
2. Build on the existing trail system to create a functional and beautiful pedestrian and bicycle route network.
3. Improve access to and quality of parks, recreation, and natural areas in Benson Hill, especially for youth.
4. Improve the sense of safety in Benson Hill.
5. Support a strong and vibrant Benson Hill community.



## 4. Plan Elements

The following sections describe ideas and actions to maintain and improve Benson Hill's character and vitality over the next twenty years. They are generally listed in order of importance to the community, starting with the top priority. Although not every action is unanimously supported, the following were suggested by participants in the process and adhere to the guiding principles and overall vision for Benson Hill. To accomplish these actions, public, private, and non-profit entities must partner, community members must advocate for the plan elements and engage their neighbors (through a new Benson Hill Community Plan Advisory Board), and business and property owners will need to take initiative. How to implement the following strategies is further described in *Chapter 5: Action Strategy*.

### Community and Economic Development

#### 1. Create a community and commercial focus in the heart of Benson Hill.

##### 1.1. Attract additional users to Cascade Village by increasing recreational opportunities.

Small, neighborhood-initiated parks (a dog park and a community garden), when partnered with a healthy business environment (Policy 1.2), can help to reinvigorate Cascade Village. This plan recommends starting with small parks, but the Parks Plan recognizes the long-term need for a

#### Plan Elements Structure:

##### 1. Goal

##### 1.1. Policy

##### 1.1.1. Implementation Strategy

Additional details:

Responsible party:

Resources: \$: \$0-\$20,000  
\$\$: \$20,000-\$80,000  
\$\$\$: \$80,000-up

Public Involvement:

Timeframe: Short-term: 1-4 years  
Mid-term: 4-10 years  
Long-term: 10-20 years



Figure 4-1. Power lines behind Cascade Village



Figure 4-2. Conceptual site plan for dog park and community garden behind Cascade Village (short-term action)

large-scale recreational complex in central and southern Benson Hill. Residents are already organizing to realize these small parks, and the parks are a natural extension of the recreational uses in place at the existing ball fields.

By quickly stimulating activity at Cascade Village, these actions can accomplish many of the goals neighbors identified: improve the sense of safety, create places where neighbors can meet each other, draw additional customers to existing businesses, encourage physically active lifestyles and healthy eating, and support small, especially ethnic, businesses. The recreational and commercial uses can synergistically build on each other, cause interactions among different people, and bring life to the heart of the Benson Hill.

### 1.1.1. Support residents in creating a neighborhood-led dog park.

Additional details: Neighborhood groups may apply for public funding to defray the costs of construction.<sup>1</sup> A core group of volunteers must be willing to construct, manage, and maintain the park. For more details, see an example Dog Park Proposal in Appendix X.

Responsible party: Neighborhoods (Resources and Events) may be able to support through their Neighborhood Grant program, Public Works, Recreation, Planning, Parks Planning and Natural Resources

Resources: \$

Public Involvement: Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Neighborhood Association, R.U.F.F., community volunteers

Timeframe: Short-term

### 1.1.2. Support residents in creating a neighborhood-led community garden.

Additional details: Community groups may apply for public funding to assist with construction costs.<sup>2</sup> Renton Public Works could provide labor and equipment to run a water line to the garden. A core group of volunteers must be willing to construct, manage, and maintain the community garden, including administration of the garden to collect fees for water usage and other expenses. For more details, see an example Community Garden Proposal in Appendix X.

Responsible party: Neighborhoods (Resources and Events) may be able to support through their Neighborhood Grant program; Public Works, Planning, Parks Planning and Natural Resource

Resources: \$

Public Involvement: Cascade Neighborhood Association; Sustainable Renton; community volunteers, local churches

Timeframe: Short-term



*Figure 4-3. Whitnall Off-Leash Dog Park under power lines in North Hollywood, CA (Source: Kia W., Yelp)*



*Figure 4-4. Community garden and Chief Sealth Trail under power lines in south Seattle*

1 Only City-recognized neighborhood associations are eligible for Neighborhood Grant Program funding. Additionally, the grant must be submitted by the neighborhood within the area in which the project is being conducted or constructed. All funding is provided as a match- neighborhoods must match or exceed their request for funding.

2 See footnote 1 above.



CASCADE VILLAGE  
Benson Hill Community Plan



Figure 4-5. Long-term redevelopment option for Cascade Village includes large recreational complex and private commercial/mixed-use buildings

### 1.1.3. Prioritize locating a large recreational park and community center at Cascade Village.

Additional details: The *Parks Plan* recognizes that central and southern Benson Hill is underserved in terms of large recreational parks and indoor community space (see *Parks Plan* maps in Existing Conditions). Continue searching for an appropriate site, with an emphasis on Cascade Village because of its large parcel size. Specific strategies include:

- Incentivize parks and recreation development through zoning (in case acquisition of land, easement agreements, or construction of park become unfeasible).
- Acquire or create agreement for use of land for recreational fields and community center.
- Explore partnerships with another agency, such as YMCA or Boys and Girls Clubs, to build, operate, and maintain a recreation center.
- Maintain the high priority of recreational fields and community center construction in the *Parks Plan*.

Responsible party: Parks Planning and Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance, Recreation, Facilities, Economic Development, Planning

Resources: \$\$\$

Public involvement: Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Vista Athletic Club, Cascade Neighborhood Association

Timeframe: Long-term

## 1.2. Encourage a healthy business environment at Cascade Village, especially by creating a welcoming atmosphere through attractive development.

The health of Cascade Village's businesses is especially important for keeping neighborhood commercial services within walking and bicycling distance, offering business incubator space for diverse uses, and creating a central meeting place in Benson Hill. Visual improvements, business retention and expansion, and quality redevelopment are key strategies to making Cascade Village the heart of Benson Hill.

### 1.2.1. Landscape the corner of SE 168<sup>th</sup> Street and 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE to create a more inviting entry to the Cascade Village area.

Additional details: Place this on the City's Capital Improvement Plan. Alternatively, neighborhood volunteers could apply for local funding to complete this improvement



**Figure 4-6.** 116th Ave SE at CVAC baseball fields before and after landscaping (Strategy 1.2.1) and street improvements (Policy 2.1)

sooner, but they would also need to have a plan for on-going maintenance. Explore inclusion of public art, natural drainage, native species, and other low-impact techniques into improvements.

Responsible party: Neighborhoods, Resources and Events could potentially supply funds for this through a Neighborhood Matching Grant.

Public involvement: Cascade Vista Athletic Club, Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Neighborhood Association, community volunteers

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term

**1.2.2. Continue supporting renovations and physical improvements efforts at Cascade Village to ensure a high-quality environment that attracts businesses and customers.**

Additional details: Work with business owners in addition to the property owner to accomplish small-scale renovations. Encourage low-impact techniques in landscaping upgrades.

Responsible party: Economic Development, Planning

Public involvement: Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Village business owners, financial institutions

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term

**1.2.3. Support existing businesses and attract new ones to Cascade Village, especially grocery-related businesses.**

Additional details: Although a typical grocery store may not be feasible, an alternative type of market may be possible. Some potential strategies include:

- Support a business association.
- Assist businesses with marketing.
- Maintain connections with property and business owners.

Responsible party: Economic Development

Public involvement: Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Village business owners, Renton Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Short-term and on-going

**1.2.4. Require some ground-floor commercial space in any redevelopment of Cascade Village and ensure a high-quality pedestrian environment through design guidelines and incentives for redevelopment.**

Additional details: Assuring high-quality design and a relationship to streets will help to keep the area safe, inviting, lively, and attractive to businesses and customers. Specifically,

- Cascade Village is zoned to support high-density mixed-use development. Redevelopment may include housing to increase the feasibility of the project and bring more activity to the center.
- Require commercial ground floors along street fronts, including internal connections.
- Apply design standards. Storefronts and residential entries, where applicable, should relate to 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and internal pedestrian connections.
- Encourage ecologically-friendly development and landscaping.

Responsible party: Planning, Economic Development

Public involvement: Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Village businesses

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Set zoning and design guidelines in the short term, but redevelopment is likely long term.

**1.2.5. Support existing business owners during construction and assist with relocation in Cascade Village when redevelopment occurs.**

Additional details: Establish a business relocation program to retain existing businesses. Require affordable business rental spaces in future development.

Responsible party: Economic Development, Planning

Public involvement: Cascade Village property owner, business owners

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Long-term, depends on redevelopment timeframe

## Multi-modal Transportation

### 2. Build on the existing trail system to create a functional and beautiful pedestrian and bicycle route network.

#### 2.1. Establish 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE as the central spine, or “jewel pathway,” of Benson Hill.

116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE is the central spine of Benson Hill, connecting neighbors to Cascade Village, Cascade and Benson Hill Elementary Schools, trails, and King County. Improving this central connection will tie Benson Hill together, especially across SE Petrovitsky Road. The following strategies suggest ways to make 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE a truly multi-modal street with nice sidewalks, street lights, landscaping, “green infrastructure,” public art, and improved transit.

##### 2.1.1. Improve 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE to provide a walkable, bikable, and environmentally-friendly way to connect to destinations.

Additional details: Complete 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE with the following:

- Within existing right-of-way, explore the feasibility of establishing bike lanes and sidewalks to support walking and biking on this central spine. A central median may be used as a pedestrian refuge where a turn lane is not needed. Work with Council Transportation Committee to prioritize any proposed street improvements with other projects throughout the city. (Project is already in the adopted 6 year TIP).
- Include ample space and amenities (e.g., seating, bike racks, and public art) for pedestrians and cyclists so that 116th becomes appropriate and comfortable for all users.
- Install pedestrian-scaled street lighting to create a safe and welcoming environment.
- Incorporate natural drainage where possible to treat rainwater in an ecologically sound way.
- Choose appropriate native species to reduce the maintenance burden and reinforce local ecology. Avoid costly irrigation systems.
- Continue seeking Complete Streets, Safe Routes to School, and other grants that may become available (CPPW, Livable Communities, Healthy/Active Living, Transportation Alternatives, etc).

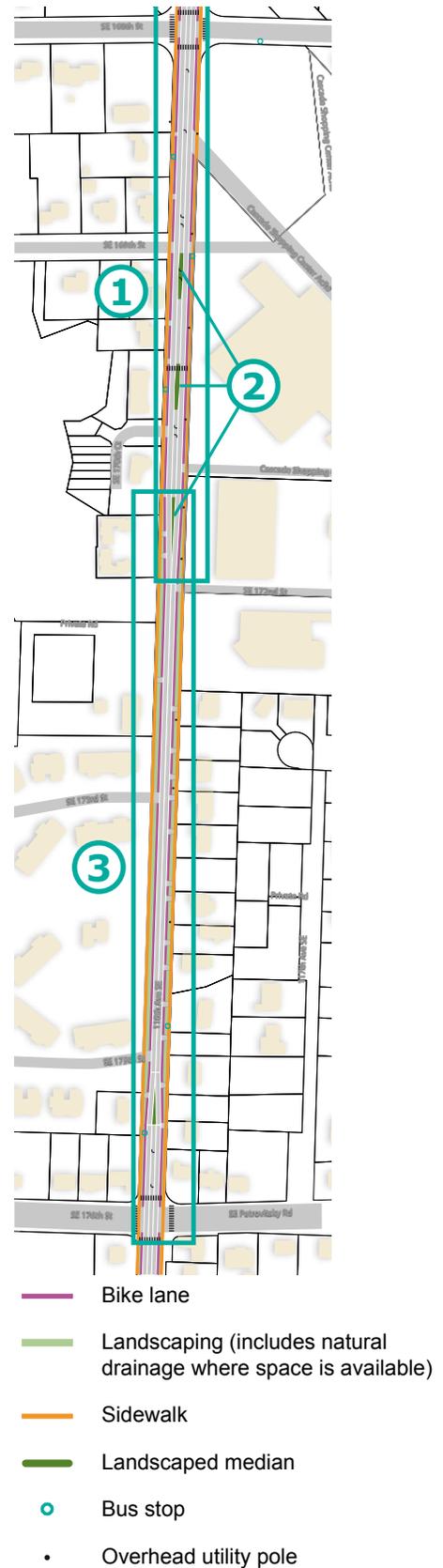
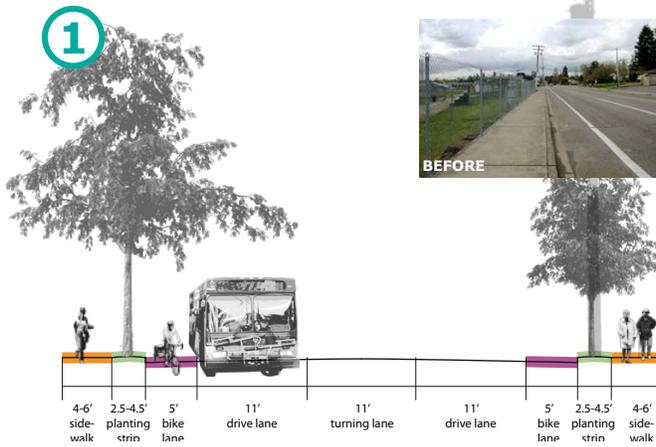


Figure 4-7. 116th Ave SE key map for cross-sections in Figure 4-8



Cross section looking north between 168th St and SE 172nd St



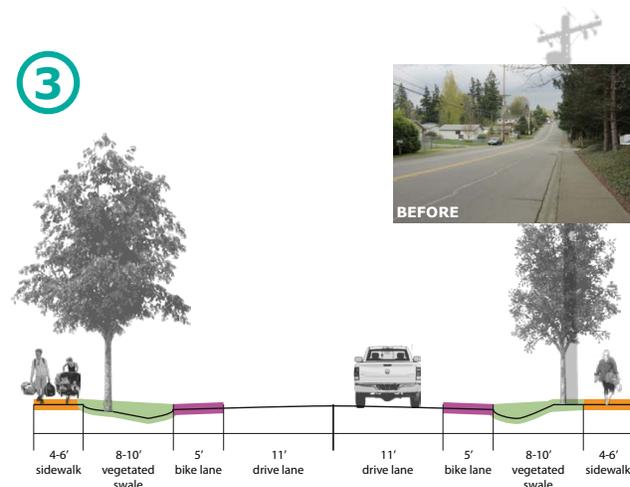
South of 168th St, looking south. Fence near CVAC baseball fields is replaced with landscaping, sidewalk is widened, bike route formalized, and street trees added.



Cross section looking north where there are medians



At Cascade Village, looking north. Bike lanes and street trees continue, sidewalk is widened with Cascade Village redevelopment, and landscaped medians alternate with a turning lane as needed.



Cross section looking north between Cascade Village and SE Petrovitsky Rd



Near Petrovitsky, looking south. Water drains into swales on both sides of the street, landscaping buffers the sidewalks, and bike lanes continue.

**Figure 4-8.** 116th Ave SE proposed improvements (cross-sections and visualizations)

Responsible party: Transportation Systems, Utility Systems, Parks (Maintenance)

Public involvement: Land owners along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, (possible LID funded)

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: Mid-term to Long-term dependent on grant funding or LID funding

**2.1.2. Require a high-quality pedestrian realm along 116th Avenue SE through design guidelines with any redevelopment of Cascade Village (also see Strategy 1.2.4).**

Additional details: Require ample sidewalk space with amenities (e.g., awnings, seating, bike racks) and an active street edge (entries facing 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE) with redevelopment.

Responsible party: Planning

Public involvement: Cascade Village property owner

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term (although development would likely happen in the long term)

**2.2. Expand the trail network to build on the existing wealth of trails in the area, increase recreational and active living opportunities, and provide safe connections for non-motorized travel.**

Benson Hill also has the start of a great trail network with the existing pedestrian paths along utility corridors and through Tiffany and Cascade Parks, the informal mountain biking trails under the power lines near Philip Arnold Park, the planned Soos Creek Trail (King County), and the Cedar River Trail (King County). A key missing link could be provided by the power lines corridor that runs behind Cascade Village. This path connects Soos Creek Park and Trail, Cascade Village, Nelson Middle and Spring Glen Schools, and the existing pedestrian walk along SE 160<sup>th</sup> Street. Other linkages, described below, would bolster the trail system to be one of the best in the region, increasing recreational and active living opportunities and providing safe connections for non-motorized travel.

**2.2.1. Complete the Soos Creek Trail and connect to existing paths.**

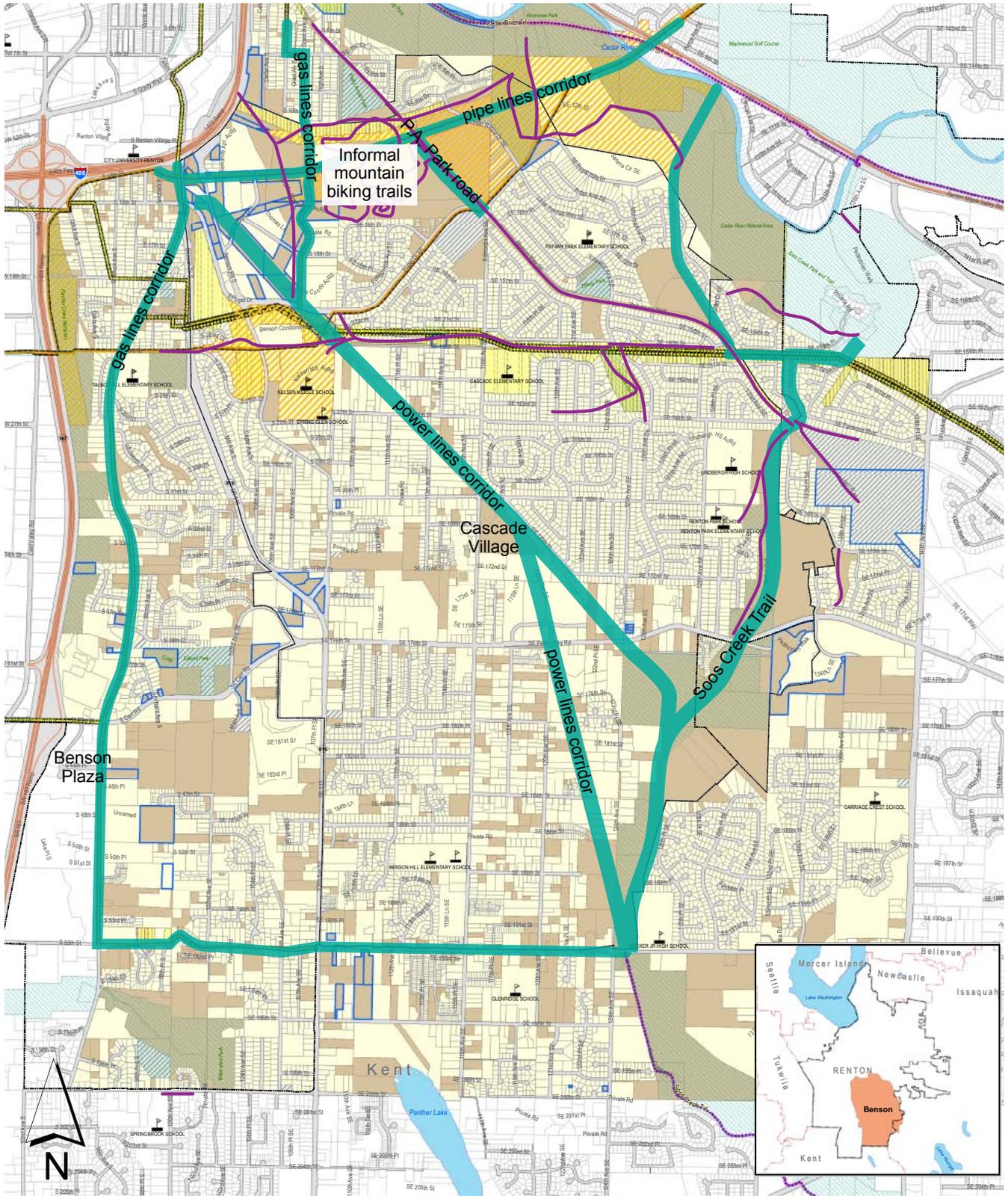
Additional details: Coordinate with and support King County Parks' Capital Improvements Project for Soos Creek Trail Phase V and VI. Incorporate and prioritize any proposed projects in the next update of the Trails and Bicycle Master Plan.

Responsible party: King County Parks, Parks Planning and Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance, Transportation Systems

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: On-going



Path: H:\CED\Planning\GIS\GIS\_projects\community\_planning\_initiative\mxd\Benson\_planning\_area\Benson vacant land open and public space\_24x36\_April2012.mxd

**Community & Economic Development**

C. E. "Chip" Vincent  
Interim Administrator/Planning Director

Adriana Abramovich  
GIS Analyst



Date: 04/20/2012  
0 1,250 2,500 Feet  
1:10,000

- Benson Community Planning Area
- City Limits
- Vacant Land
- Parks
- School Site
- Parcels with improved value less than \$10,000
- Renton Trails
- Olympic Pipelines
- Parcels intersect Olympic pipeline
- High Pressure Gas
- Parcels intersect high pressure gas line
- Public Land
- Existing paths
- Proposed paths

Figure 4-9. Existing and proposed Benson Hill trails on property ownership map



**Figure 4-10.** Beacon Way S to Phillip Arnold Park

**2.2.2. When possible, acquire property or establish agreements to extend pipelines, power lines, and other utility corridor trails as consistent with the Parks, Recreation and Natural Areas Plan and/or the Bicycles and Trails Master Plan.**

Additional details: Seek grant funding for acquisition or easements and construction of recreational trails and/or safe walking/biking routes (Washington Recreation and Conservation Office Trails Grants, CPPW, Livable Communities, Healthy/Active Living, Transportation Alternatives, etc.). Require easement for trails with redevelopment. Incorporate and prioritize any proposed projects in the next update of the Trails and Bicycle Master Plan.

Responsible party: Parks Planning and Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance, Planning, , Community and Economic Development

Public involvement: Property owners on or adjacent to pipelines and power lines corridors

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: On-going

**2.2.3. Work with the utility companies who own Beacon Way S between Puget Drive S and Philip Arnold Park to explore the feasibility of paving and landscaping a path to the park from Benson Hill to amply accommodate bicycles, pedestrians, and motorists.**

Additional details: Clarify ownership of the property. If possible, prioritize this project in the Capital Improvements Plan and seek funding for multi-modal connections.

Responsible party: Transportation Systems, Parks Planning and Natural Resources

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Short-term

**2.2.4. Connect paths to the existing trails on Puget Sound Energy Property under the power lines near Phillip Arnold Park.**

Additional details: Sign existing trail heads in the natural zone with the local trail names. In the long-term as other trails develop (Strategies 2.2.2-3), incorporate connections to informal trails. Incorporate and prioritize any proposed

projects in the next update of the Trails and Bicycle Master Plan.

Responsible party: Seattle Public Utilities, Parks Planning and Natural Resources

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Mid-term

**2.2.5. Study the feasibility for a topographically level bicycle and pedestrian connection between the Grant Avenue S/S Puget Dr area to the Benson Shopping Center.**

Additional details: If feasible, incorporate into the next update of the City's Trails and Bicycle Master Plan and prioritize for funding.

Responsible party: Transportation Systems, Parks Planning and Natural Resources

Public involvement: Affected property owners, bicycle groups (e.g., Cascade Bicycle Alliance)

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: Long-term

**2.2.6. Add and improve existing pedestrian crossings over Interstate 405 and Highway 167.**

Additional details: Explore ways to better connect Benson Hill with Downtown Renton for pedestrians and cyclists by providing shortcuts where possible and connecting with new trails (Strategies 2.2.2-4). Consider lighting, artwork, path width, buffers, and so on to make the crossings feel safe and inviting. Incorporate and prioritize any proposed projects into the City's Trails and Bicycle Master Plan.

Responsible party: Transportation Systems, Planning, Parks Planning and Natural Resources

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: Long-term

### **2.3. Improve neighborhood streets to complete a network of walking routes that connect destinations and neighborhoods and are safe and inviting for all users.**

Although Benson Hill has the beginnings of a great trail network, many streets lack adequate and safe space for people to walk to their destinations. The following strategies recommend completing the sidewalk network and adding low-level, pedestrian-scale lighting on major connections to schools, parks, and commercial amenities. Along with the physical space to walk and cycle, speeding traffic and unsafe intersections must also be addressed to make streets usable for all modes of travel.

#### **2.3.1. Complete missing links in sidewalks and add pedestrian-scaled street lighting and calm traffic on routes to schools, parks, and commercial areas.**

Additional details: See Walking and Bicycling Improvements map (Figure 4-11) for location-specific improvements requested by community members. Incorporate and prioritize any proposed projects in the next update of the Trails and Bicycle Master Plan.

Responsible party: Transportation Systems

Public involvement: Affected property owners, bicycle groups (e.g., Cascade Bicycle Alliance)

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Mid-term

#### **2.3.2. Identify and prioritize high accident locations for people walking and cycling, especially near bus stops.**

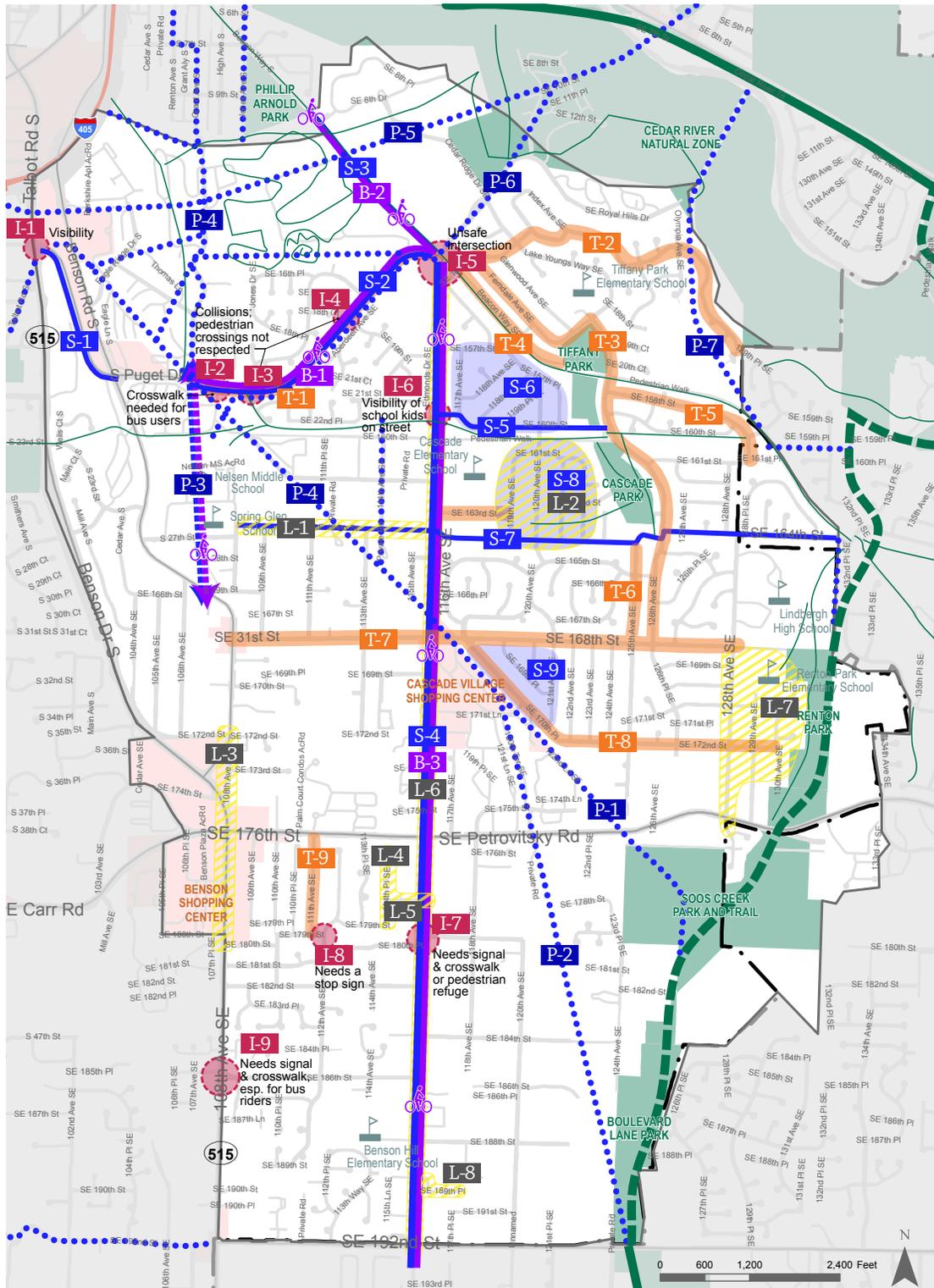
Additional details: Review Walking and Bicycling Improvements map (Figure 4-11) for location-specific improvements requested by community members. Place pertinent projects on Transportation Improvements Plan. Incorporate and prioritize any proposed projects in the next update of the Trails and Bicycle Master Plan.

Responsible party: Transportation Systems

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Short- to Long-term dependent upon scope and funding of projects



**SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS**  
 Identified by February 2012 open house, online map and surveys, and Summer 2012 neighborhood picnics participants.

S-4 Add/improve sidewalks	B-2 Add/improve bike routes	P-2 Add paths along utility corridors	T-7 Calm traffic
S-6 General areas identified for sidewalk improvements	B-3 Add/improve bike routes	P-3 Add a new path	I-7 Improve intersection
L-2 Add/improve human-scale street lights	L-6 Add/improve human-scale street lights		

Benson Hill Planning Area  
 City of Renton  
 Commercial areas  
 Parks  
 Existing pedestrian paths  
 Existing regional trail  
 Planned regional trail

BENSON HILL COMMUNITY PLAN

## Walking and Bicycling Improvements

Figure 4-11. Walking and bicycling improvements map



**Figure 4-12.** Large residential area needs better pedestrian connections to Benson Plaza shopping center



**Figure 4-13.** Walking paths through parking lots would make walking safer and more inviting

### 2.3.3. Continue improving the pedestrian environment around the Benson Shopping Center.

Additional details: Work with property owners to provide or improve walkways through parking areas and ensure pedestrian connections between lots. For example, providing walking paths in strategic locations (e.g., along 109<sup>th</sup> Ave SE near the Jiffy Lube and at SE 179<sup>th</sup> Place near Arby's) would increase pedestrian access to commercial areas. When possible, buffer the sidewalks on 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and SE Carr Road/SE 176<sup>th</sup> Street from traffic with street trees and landscaping. Require buffered sidewalks with redevelopment. (Also see Strategies 5.3.1 and 1.2.4 regarding design guidelines to accomplish an urban form more conducive to walking.)

Responsible party: Planning

Public involvement: Property and business owners

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: Ongoing-terms

### 2.3.4. Repair and maintain SE 164<sup>th</sup> Street sidewalks.

Additional details: Prioritize SE 164<sup>th</sup> Street maintenance because of its importance as a walking route to multiple schools. Utilize a horticulturist to address the tree roots that are breaking the sidewalks. If replacing or adding street trees, choose tree species whose roots are not prone to surfacing.

Responsible party: Maintenance Services, Parks

Public involvement: Property owners along SE 164<sup>th</sup> Street

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: Short-term

## 2.4. Improve access to and usability of transit.

A key component to attracting and keeping people in Benson Hill and reducing Benson Hill's environmental footprint is quality transit service. The transit experience, from residence to bus stop to arrival at destination, should be pleasant, as quick as possible, and easy. In turn, a dense population is needed to support transit services, so housing at Cascade Village (Strategy 1.2.4) and near the 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and SE Petrovitsky Road intersection (Strategy 3.2.1) is important.

### 2.4.1. Work with King County Metro to identify appropriate bus shelter locations and install when feasible.

Additional details: Coordinate with 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE improvements (Strategy 2.1.1).

Responsible party: Transportation Systems, King County Metro

Public involvement: Benson Hill bus riders

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term

## 2.5. Improve the driving experience in Benson Hill to be safer and more user-friendly.

The following strategies support a multi-modal transportation network and take steps toward safer streets.

### 2.5.1. Simplify SE Carr Road/SE 176<sup>th</sup> Street/SE Petrovitsky Road to a single name.

Additional details: Consider renaming S 178<sup>th</sup> Street, S 180<sup>th</sup> Street, SW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, SE Carr Road, and SE 176<sup>th</sup> Street as S and SE Petrovitsky Road.

Responsible party: Community and Economic Development

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: Short-term

## Parks, Recreation, and Natural Areas

### 3. Improve access to and quality of parks, recreation, and natural areas in Benson Hill, especially for youth.

#### 3.1. Focus efforts on rejuvenating existing parks and recreation facilities.

Both the *Parks Plan* and this planning process underscored the strong need for maintaining and upgrading existing parks facilities, especially to provide healthy recreational activities for youth and families.

##### 3.1.1. Continue parks maintenance of existing facilities.

Additional details:

Responsible party: Facilities, Parks Planning and Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Ongoing

##### 3.1.2. Work with the community to seek solutions for providing youth and community programming.

Additional details: Continue the existing community programs and the coordination with the YMCA at Teasdale and Tiffany Park facilities. Seek additional opportunities as needed.

Responsible party: Recreation, Facilities

Public involvement: Neighborhood Associations, community clubs

Resources: \$

Timeframe: On-going

### 3.1.3. Remove fences at Cascade Park entry to allow parking adjacent to the park and to increase “eyes on the park.”

Additional details: Remove fence from the southeast entrance from 126<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. Consider removing the blockade on the western entry at SE 162<sup>nd</sup> Street and opening lines of sight by removing some trees. Purchase houses on either side of the parking areas, consistent with the Parks, Recreation, and Natural Areas plan. Provide a safe and fun space for all ages at the Park.

Responsible party: Parks

Public involvement: Cascade neighborhood

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term

## 3.2. Seek opportunities to increase parks and recreational spaces in Benson Hill, especially to serve the neighborhoods south of Petrovitsky Road.

As discussed in Implementation Strategy 1.1.3., the greatest recreational opportunity and need is for a large park that serves central and southern Benson Hill. The most likely location for this is at Cascade Village. Another opportunity exists in northern Kent, which could be a biking distance recreational amenity for Benson Hill residents.

### 3.2.1. Upzone the southwest corner of SE Petrovitsky Road and 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue S to increase feasibility of redevelopment, and require a park as a condition of development.

Additional details: Park should be built to adopted City standards. Apply CPTED design guidelines to the park design, and require accessibility to the park from the adjacent neighborhood (Figure 4-15).

Responsible party: Planning, Economic Development

Public involvement: Property owners

Resources: \$

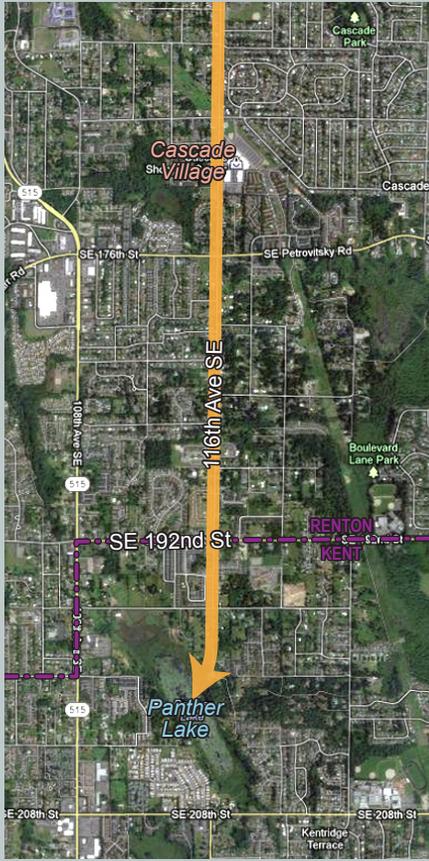
Timeframe: Short-term



Figure 4-14. Fences prevent parking and trees and fences block views, making the park feel less safe



Figure 4-15. Example of residential and park development at the southeast corner of SE Petrovitsky Rd and 116th Ave SE



**Figure 4-16.** 116th Ave SE connection to Panther Lake in Kent

### 3.2.2. Work with Kent to continue the 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE improvements to Panther Lake and provide a recreational setting there.

Additional details: Improve 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE up to the Renton boundary at 192<sup>nd</sup> Street (Strategy 2.1.1) and encourage Kent to continue the improvements to Panther Lake and Hopkins Open Space. Kent's *Park and Open Space Plan* (2010) calls for improved linkages to Panther Lake and public waterfront access on the lake. Kent has also received Conservation Futures funds to acquire property around Panther Lake. When public access is provided, sign the 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE route to Panther Lake, especially for bicycles. Work with Kent to secure funding for future improvements as Panther Lake would provide recreational opportunities to underserved areas in both Renton and Kent.

Responsible party: City of Kent, King County, Parks Planning and Natural Resources

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term

## Strong, Livable, and Safe Community

### 4. Improve the sense of safety in Benson Hill.

#### 4.1. Continue partnering with Police to decrease and prevent crime in Benson Hill.

Renton saw a drastic increase in burglaries in late 2011, and Renton Police have worked hard to reduce burglaries with the help of block watch programs.<sup>3</sup> Continuing on this path is integral to keeping Benson Hill safe from crime.

##### 4.1.1. Continue forging connections between Renton Police and neighborhood residents, particularly to support block watch efforts to reduce burglaries and improve the perception of the neighborhoods.

Additional details: Continue Police representation at neighborhood picnics and other local events. Continue providing information on block watch programs.

Responsible party: Police; Neighborhood, Resources and Events

Public involvement: Neighborhood Associations, new Community Council, block watch groups

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short- and ongoing-terms

##### 4.1.2. Consider locating a local police office at Cascade Village to discourage crime in the area and connect locals to Renton Police more easily.

Additional details: If possible, locate a small, temporary police office in Cascade Village while economic activity remains relatively low. With redevelopment, the police office will likely no longer be necessary. Manage the office in a way that fosters relationships between community members and police.

Responsible party: Police

Public involvement: Cascade Village property owner

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Short-term

<sup>3</sup> 98% of burglaries take place in non-block watch neighborhoods (Renton Police).

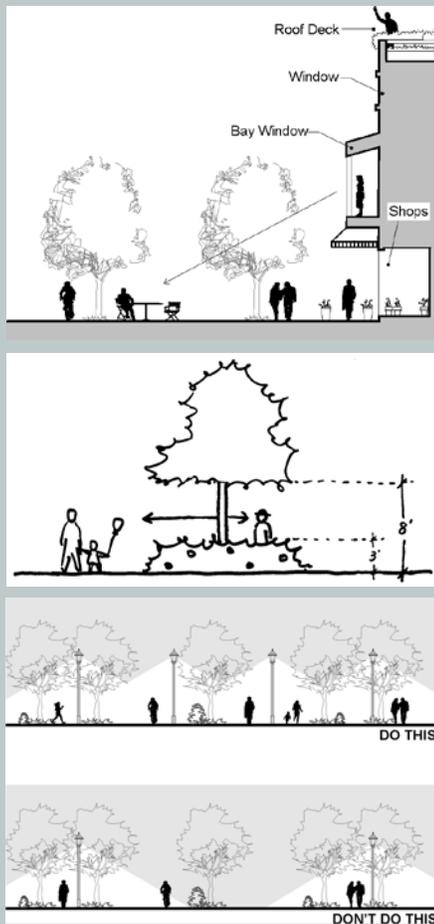


Figure 4-17. Example surveillance and lighting CPTED principles

## 4.2. Encourage development types that hinder criminal activities.

Cascade Village's current layout is not ideal for preventing crime. Lack of usable connecting streets, activity, and lines of sight make it feel empty and unsafe. Any redevelopment there or in other commercial areas should include more people and design that is not conducive to crime.

### 4.2.1. Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in commercial and mixed use design guidelines, particularly for Cascade Village.

Additional details: To discourage crime and create an attractive place for businesses, apply CPTED design guidelines and carefully review redevelopment proposals for Cascade Village and Benson Plaza commercial areas. Similarly, adjust zoning if necessary to increase residential "eyes" on commercial and open areas by locating decks, porches, and/or windows to provide views into those areas. Ensure that redevelopment has streets that connect through so that there is a healthy level of activity on them.

Responsible party: Planning, Police

Public involvement: affected property owners, business owners

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term

## 5. Support a strong and vibrant Benson Hill Community.

### 5.1. Foster a sense of community.

Benson Hill has the start of strong neighborhoods where local activities bring people together. Creating a focus at Cascade Village (Goal 1) and improving recreational facilities (Goal 3) will help to foster a sense of community. The actions below will also create opportunities to build community.

#### 5.1.1. Create a Benson Hill Community Plan Advisory Board to take ownership of this plan, advocate for its implementation, and adjust actions and priorities as needed over time.

Additional details: See the Advisory Council section in the Action Strategy on page X.

Responsible party: Planning

Public involvement: Neighborhood Associations

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term

#### 5.1.2. Encourage removal of the fence between Cascade Village and Emerald Heights Apartments.

Additional details: The fence physically and symbolically divides the community, but exists because of concerns over shop-lifting at Cascade Village. However, as Cascade Village becomes safer, it may no longer be needed for its original purpose. Coordinate with Renton Police and Cascade Village to ensure continued safety (Goal 4). See Goal 1's strategies for other opportunities to increase activity and a sense of safety at the shopping center.

Responsible party: (located on private property)

Public involvement: Cascade Village property owner, Emerald Heights Apartments owner

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term



*Figure 4-18. Fence between Cascade Village and apartments divides community; closed street also deters higher levels of street use*

## **5.2. Build capacity of local residents.**

A skilled, healthy, and happy population makes a strong workforce and good neighbors. The following strategies address ways to build the capacity and access to opportunity of Benson Hill permanent and transient residents.

### **5.2.1. Provide skills training and support for immigrants at schools or a community center to welcome new residents and foster a sense of community across diverse neighbors.**

Additional details: If Cascade Village redevelops with a community center (Strategy 1.1.3), ensure that the community center is designed to support skills training.

Responsible party: Human Services, Renton Schools, Economic Development, Planning, Renton Technical College

Public involvement: Local immigrant services organizations (e.g., Somali Youth and Family Club)

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Ongoing

### **5.2.2. Provide services and strategize a long-term solution for panhandlers at the SE Carr Road/SE 176<sup>th</sup> Street and 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE intersection and Fred Meyer parking lot entrances.**

Additional details: Providing services to the transient population may increase the sense of safety in Benson Hill.

Responsible party: Human Services, Police

Public involvement: TBD

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Short-term

### **5.2.3. Consider power and high-speed internet infrastructure improvements. Investigate undergrounding powerlines with Puget Sound Energy.**

Additional details: Undergrounding powerlines could be possible, but would require residents to create a special district to tax themselves for the cost of undergrounding.

Responsible party: Utility Systems

Public involvement: Affected Neighborhood Associations

Resources: \$\$\$

Timeframe: Long-term

### 5.3. Cultivate a sense of pride in Benson Hill by improving the overall aesthetics.

Some of Benson Hill's places—residential, commercial, and public—reflect a lack of physical maintenance or high-quality design. Remediating this and setting up a system for maintaining a standard of quality is important to cultivating a sense of pride in Benson Hill. This in turn keeps property values high and reinforces the sense of a vibrant community.

#### 5.3.1. Apply design guidelines to Cascade Village and Benson Plaza shopping areas.

Additional details: Goal 1, especially Strategy 1.2.4, provides strategies for creating a community focus in Cascade Village, and applying design guidelines to both Cascade Village and Benson Plaza would provide a long-term aesthetic benefit. Include CPTED principles (Strategy 4.2.1).

Responsible party: Planning

Public involvement: Property owners

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short-term

#### 5.3.2. Institute a neighborhood cleanup program to maintain property values and spur a sense of community pride.

Additional details: Support the neighborhood associations in organizing work events and provide funding if needed for physical improvements through the Neighborhood Program. The work events increase community-building opportunities while the cleanup improves the perception and pride in the area. The neighborhood cleanup program should address the following:

- Cleanup the vacant lot used for Bruins storage at 116th Avenue SE and SE 168th Street. Celebrate the Cascades view with landscaping and signage.
- Institute a neighborhood system for graffiti cleanup and prevention.
- Institute a yearly spring cleanup.

Responsible party: Neighborhoods, Resources and Events

Public involvement: neighborhood associations and community members



*Figure 4-19. Storage area on northwest corner of 116th Ave SE and SE 168th St*



*Figure 4-20. Opportunity to upgrade 108th Ave SE and SE Carr Rd/SE 176th St pedestrian environment and visual appearance to create a more inviting entry into Benson Hill*

Resources: \$

Timeframe: Short and ongoing terms

**5.3.3. Beautify the intersection of 108<sup>th</sup> Ave SE and SE Carr Road/SE 176<sup>th</sup> Street**

Additional details: Provide landscaping and pedestrian lights to create a welcoming gateway into Benson Hill (coordinate with Strategy 2.3.3). Work with property owners and perhaps assist with funding to update business signs. Support the formation of a Business or Local Improvement District (BID/LID) to fund improvements. Explore the potential for public art.

Responsible party: Economic Development, Planning

Public involvement: Property owners

Resources: \$\$

Timeframe: Mid-term

## 5. Action Strategy

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Benson Hill has the potential to build on its strengths with a series of community improvements identified in *Chapter 4: Plan Elements* would improve Benson Hill. In particular, Benson Hill needs a central focus with civic facilities, greater cohesion and connectivity between neighborhoods, transportation access for all populations, and community services and improvements tailored to Benson Hill’s unique residents.

### Implementation Table

The following table lists the actions suggested in the Plan Elements section, assigns them a time-frame based on public input and a logical order of events, and identifies responsible parties and partners.



*Figure 5-1. View to Cascade Mountains from Cascade Village*

Strategy	Who	\$	Key Stakeholders	Time-Frame
<b>Community and Economic Development</b>				
1.1.1. Support residents in creating a neighborhood-led dog park.	Neighborhoods (Resources and Events) may be able to support through their Neighborhood Grant program, Public Works, Recreation, Planning, Parks Planning and Natural Resources	\$	Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Neighborhood Association, R.U.F.F., community volunteers	Short-term
1.1.2. Support residents in creating a neighborhood-led community garden.	Neighborhoods (Resources and Events) may be able to support through their Neighborhood Grant program; Public Works, Planning, Parks Planning and Natural Resource	\$	Cascade Neighborhood Association; Sustainable Renton; community volunteers, local churches	Short-term
1.1.3. Prioritize locating a large recreational park and community center at Cascade Village.	Parks Planning and Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance, Recreation, Facilities, Economic Development, Planning	\$\$\$	Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Vista Athletic Club, Cascade Neighborhood Association	Long-term
1.2.1. Landscape the corner of SE 168th Street and 116th Avenue SE to create a more inviting entry to the Cascade Village area.	Neighborhoods, Resources and Events could potentially supply funds for this through a Neighborhood Matching Grant.	\$	Cascade Vista Athletic Club, Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Neighborhood Association, community volunteers	Short-term
1.2.2. Continue supporting renovations and physical improvements efforts at Cascade Village to ensure a high-quality environment that attracts businesses and customers.	Economic Development, Planning	\$	Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Village business owners, financial institutions	Short-term
1.2.3. Support existing businesses and attract new ones to Cascade Village, especially grocery-related businesses.	Economic Development	\$\$	Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Village business owners, Renton Chamber of Commerce, Small Business Development Center	Short-term and on-going
1.2.4. Require some ground-floor commercial space in any redevelopment of Cascade Village and ensure a high-quality pedestrian environment through design guidelines and incentives for redevelopment.	Planning, Economic Development	\$	Cascade Village property owner, Cascade Village businesses	Set zoning and design guidelines in the short term, but redevelopment is likely long term.
1.2.5. Support existing business owners during construction and assist with relocation in Cascade Village when redevelopment occurs.	Economic Development, Planning	\$\$	Cascade Village property owner, business owners	Long-term, depends on redevelopment timeframe

Strategy	Who	\$	Key Stakeholders	Time-Frame
<b>Multi-Modal Transportation</b>				
2.1.1. Improve 116th Avenue SE to provide a walkable, bikable, and environmentally-friendly way to connect to destinations.	Transportation Systems, Utility Systems, Parks (Maintenance)	\$\$\$	Land owners along 116 <sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, (possible LID funded)	Mid-term to Long-term dependent on grant funding or LID funding
2.1.2. Require a high-quality pedestrian realm along 116th Avenue SE through design guidelines with any redevelopment of Cascade Village (also see Strategy 1.2.4).	Planning	\$	Cascade Village property owner	Short-term (although development would likely happen in the long term)
2.2.1. Complete the Soos Creek Trail and connect to existing paths.	King County Parks, Parks Planning and Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance, Transportation Systems	\$\$\$	TBD	On-going
2.2.2. When possible, acquire property or establish agreements to extend pipelines, power lines, and other utility corridor trails as consistent with the Parks, Recreation and Natural Areas Plan and/or the Bicycles and Trails Master Plan.	Parks Planning and Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance, Planning, , Community and Economic Development	\$\$\$	Property owners on or adjacent to pipelines and power lines corridors	On-going
2.2.3. Work with the utility companies who own Beacon Way S between Puget Drive S and Philip Arnold Park to explore the feasibility of paving and landscaping a path to the park from Benson Hill to amply accommodate bicycles, pedestrians, and motorists.	Transportation Systems, Parks Planning and Natural Resources	\$\$	TBD	Short-term
2.2.4. Connect paths to the existing trails on Puget Sound Energy Property under the power lines near Phillip Arnold Park.	Seattle Public Utilities, Parks Planning and Natural Resources	\$	TBD	Mid-term
2.2.5. Study the feasibility for a topographically level bicycle and pedestrian connection between the Grant Avenue S/S Puget Dr area to the Benson Shopping Center.	Transportation Systems, Parks Planning and Natural Resources	\$\$\$	Affected property owners, bicycle groups (e.g., Cascade Bicycle Alliance)	Long-term
2.2.6. Add and improve existing pedestrian crossings over Interstate 405 and Highway 167.	Transportation Systems, Planning, Parks Planning and Natural Resources	\$\$\$	TBD	Long-term
2.3.1. Complete missing links in sidewalks and add pedestrian-scaled street lighting and calm traffic on routes to schools, parks, and commercial areas.	Transportation Systems	\$\$	Affected property owners, bicycle groups (e.g., Cascade Bicycle Alliance)	Mid-term
2.3.2. Identify and prioritize high accident locations for people walking and cycling, especially near bus stops.	Transportation Systems	\$\$	TBD	Short- to Long-term dependent upon scope and funding of projects
2.3.3. Continue improving the pedestrian environment around the Benson Shopping Center.	Planning	\$\$\$	Property and business owners	Ongoing-terms
2.3.4. Repair and maintain SE 164th Street sidewalks.	Maintenance Services, Parks	\$\$\$	Property owners along SE 164 <sup>th</sup> Street	Short-term

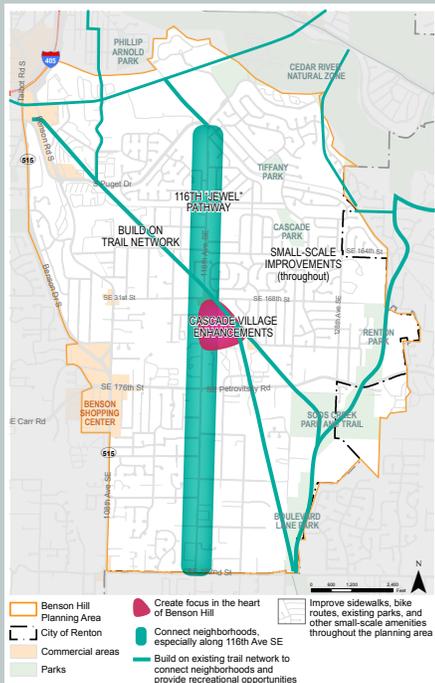
Strategy	Who	\$	Key Stakeholders	Time-Frame
2.4.1. Work with King County Metro to identify appropriate bus shelter locations and install when feasible.	Transportation Systems, King County Metro	\$	Benson Hill bus riders	Short-term
2.4.2. Improve transit time for bus routes to Seattle from Benson Hill.	King County Metro, Transportation Systems	\$\$	Benson Hill bus riders	Long-term
2.5.1. Simplify SE Carr Road/SE 176th Street/ SE Petrovitsky Road to a single name.	Community and Economic Development	\$\$\$	TBD	Short-term
<b>Parks, Recreation, and Natural Spaces</b>				
3.1.1. Continue parks maintenance of existing facilities.	Facilities, Parks Planning and Natural Resources, Parks Maintenance	\$\$	TBD	Ongoing
3.1.2. Work with the community to seek solutions for providing youth and community programming.	Recreation, Facilities	\$	Neighborhood Associations, community clubs	On-going
3.1.3. Remove fences at Cascade Park entry to allow parking adjacent to the park and to increase "eyes on the park."	Parks	\$	Cascade neighborhood	Short-term
3.2.1. Upzone the southwest corner of SE Petrovitsky Road and 116th Avenue S to increase feasibility of redevelopment, and require a park as a condition of development.	Planning, Economic Development	\$	Property owners	Short-term
3.2.2. Work with Kent to continue the 116th Avenue SE improvements to Panther Lake and provide a recreational setting there.	City of Kent, King County, Parks Planning and Natural Resources	\$	TBD	Short-term
<b>Strong, Livable, and Safe Neighborhoods</b>				
4.1.1. Continue forging connections between Renton Police and neighborhood residents, particularly to support block watch efforts to reduce burglaries and improve the perception of the neighborhoods.	Police; Neighborhood, Resources and Events	\$	Neighborhood Associations, new Community Council, block watch groups	Short- and ongoing-terms
4.1.2. Consider locating a local police office at Cascade Village to discourage crime in the area and connect locals to Renton Police more easily.	Police	\$\$	Cascade Village property owner	Short-term
4.2.1. Incorporate Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in commercial and mixed use design guidelines, particularly for Cascade Village.	Planning, Police	\$	affected property owners, business owners	Short-term
5.1.1. Create a Benson Hill Community Plan Advisory Board to take ownership of this plan, advocate for its implementation, and adjust actions and priorities as needed over time.	Planning	\$	Neighborhood Associations	Short-term
5.1.2. Encourage removal of the fence between Cascade Village and Emerald Heights Apartments.	(located on private property)	\$	Cascade Village property owner, Emerald Heights Apartments owner	Short-term

Strategy	Who	\$	Key Stakeholders	Time-Frame
5.2.1. Provide skills training and support for immigrants at schools or a community center to welcome new residents and foster a sense of community across diverse neighbors.	Human Services, Renton Schools, Economic Development, Planning, Renton Technical College	\$\$	Local immigrant services organizations (e.g., Somali Youth and Family Club)	Ongoing
5.2.2. Provide services and strategize a long-term solution for panhandlers at the SE Carr Road/SE 176th Street and 108th Avenue SE intersection and Fred Meyer parking lot entrances.	Human Services, Police	\$\$	TBD	Short-term
5.2.3. Consider power and high-speed internet infrastructure improvements. Investigate undergrounding powerlines with Puget Sound Energy.	Utility Systems	\$\$\$	Affected Neighborhood Associations	Long-term
5.3.1. Apply design guidelines to Cascade Village and Benson Plaza shopping areas.	Planning	\$	Property owners	Short-term
5.3.2. Institute a neighborhood cleanup program to maintain property values and spur a sense of community pride.	Neighborhoods, Resources and Events	\$	neighborhood associations and community members	Short and ongoing terms
5.3.3. Beautify the intersection of 108th Ave SE and SE Carr Road/SE 176th Street	Economic Development, Planning	\$\$	Property owners	Mid-term

## Benson Hill Community Plan Advisory Board

As the City adopts this plan and begins implementation, it will be important for Benson Hill community members to remain involved and advocate for strategic items. Ownership of the plan will be placed with a new Benson Hill Community Plan Advisory Board (Advisory Board) to represent the interests of Benson Hill's diverse residents and businesses. The Advisory Board can track and advocate for individual projects using the Implementation Table above.

The Advisory Board establishes a formal conduit for communication between Benson Hill neighbors and the City. Although individual Neighborhood Associations have a connection to the City through the Neighborhood Program, there is not currently one group who can speak for the entire Benson Hill area and directly connect with City decision-makers. With the creation of an Advisory Board, existing Neighborhood Associations and non-associated neighborhoods can bring their concerns and endorsements to the Advisory Board to be represented at the City. As with other City boards and commissions, members will be appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council.



**Figure 5-2.** Major improvements recommended in this plan (see Chapter 3: Vision for a full description)

## Conclusion

The implementation table above provides a condensed list of actions for the City and community members to track over time. While many of the strategies laid out in this plan may take 20 years or longer to implement, and require resources that do not currently exist, the plan lays the framework for City and community actions to create a vibrant, safe, livable, and healthy Benson Hill.

This plan calls for a number of improvements, and a clear and prioritized action strategy with the backing of community members will make them doable. In the **short term**, key components to realizing Benson Hill’s vision are:

- Formally recognize a Benson Hill Community Plan Advisory Board to harbor and advocate for plan elements,
- Enhance Cascade Village with small actions (including a review of its zoning),
- Begin design for the 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE improvements,
- Expand the trail and sidewalk network, and
- Provide traffic calming on neighborhood streets.

These should be prioritized in the City’s funding strategies. Other smaller improvements may be done over time as funding is available.

In the **long term**, maintaining Benson Hill as a great neighborhood for families is highly dependent on obtaining a community center and a large recreational facility in the area. This is included in the long-term approach for Cascade Village as it requires more funds than the City can currently offer. As soon as this becomes feasible, it should become a top priority for Renton to match the level of service in Benson Hill with that in other neighborhoods.

With a new Benson Hill Community Plan Advisory Board acting as a unifying and representative body for the various neighborhoods, Benson Hill residents and businesses can expect a clearer communication channel with government decision-making. This coalition of neighborhoods can address inequities in resources available to Benson Hill as a whole and within its geographic regions by advocating for this plan. Over time, the Advisory Board may need to update the plan to address changing conditions and neighborhood goals. In the meantime, the collaborative effort that created this plan will continue through the Advisory Council-City connection, and as Benson Hill grows and changes, this plan clarifies a community-supported route forward.