

ATTACHMENT A. REVISED MACADAM CHARACTER STATEMENT TEXT

BACKGROUND: HISTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

Located between Portland's West Hills and the Willamette River, the S Macadam area has been shaped by the river, abundant natural resources, and its proximity to the Central City. For centuries, Native Americans, primarily the Calapooya peoples, lived and thrived in this area with the Willamette River serving as a primary transportation corridor. The relatively flat riverfront area, now Willamette Park, was a part of a larger network of wetlands and a popular location for camping during the salmon runs while en route from Wapato (or Sauvie) Island on the Columbia River to the Willamette Falls at Oregon City. Native Americans also hunted and collected native berries, nuts and other plants along the riverfront for sustenance, as well as medicinal and cultural purposes. Today these cultural practices are still central to Native peoples' lifeways but development has often resulted in the degradation of resources vital to their preservation. By locating to close the river, over paving sites, or removing existing vegetation, development adversely impacts watershed health and habitat restoration.

From the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, European Americans settled this district along the north-south Macadam Avenue corridor area and a parallel railroad line. During the city's early growth, land between the Willamette River and Macadam Avenue was developed, in part, as an industrial area to take advantage of both river and land transportation. Commercial businesses emerged along the west side of Macadam to support local industry needs. Residential neighborhoods developed west of the commercial corridor, along the hillsides with views of the river. This resulted in S Macadam's west side featuring a more typical block pattern, with multiple connections, while large, irregular lot sizes dominate the landscape on the east side.

Following World War II, much of the industry in the Macadam Corridor relocated due to changing technology and demand. New development in the flatter lands between Macadam Avenue and the Willamette River followed a resurgence of development downtown and in other close-in residential neighborhoods. In the 1970s and 80s, former industrial sites were redeveloped into multi-dwelling residential and office buildings. These large sites focused primarily on their response to the river, with very few providing east/west connections, further impeding riverfront access in the district.

Planning policies of the period emphasized new commercial and residential uses, while encouraging an auto-oriented, "campus-like" environment with many trees, deep street setbacks and public access to and along the river. This led to the creation of several residential developments, the greenway trail, and Willamette Park. But it also resulted in buildings oriented toward parking lots rather than the street, large surface parking areas and an unwelcoming and unsafe pedestrian environment.

CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* (2018) identifies Macadam as a Neighborhood Center and S Macadam Avenue as a Civic Corridor. These designations recognize the area's opportunities for growth and redevelopment, which will provide a safe and attractive pedestrian environment and strengthen its riverfront access.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources offer some more background information on the history of this district.

- [Willamette Greenway Plan \(1987\)](#)

Update to River Plan/South Reach Proposed Draft Proposal, January 2020

- [Macadam Corridor Design Guidelines \(1985\)](#)
- [River Plan/South Reach Proposed Draft \(January 2020\)](#)
- [River Plan/South Reach Draft Existing Conditions Report \(May 2018\)](#)

The following sections align with and are derived from content in the Portland Citywide Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 01. They will each focus on characteristics specific to this Neighborhood Center.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The riverfront is significant for the regions' tribal nations, urban native community and others who carry out cultural practices near and on the river, such as launching canoes and fishing. Residents and visitors value the area's nearly two miles of accessible Willamette River shoreline, with an accessible greenway trail, Willamette Park, Heron Pointe Wetlands and the Cottonwood Bay natural area. Development should recognize the recreational, ecological, social and cultural values of the riverfront through onsite features and river-responsive design.

Topography and proximity to the river has led the community to recognize three very distinct geographies: 1) Northern S Macadam Avenue; 2) Southern S Macadam Avenue (south of S Boundary); and 3) the Willamette River Greenway. Terrain in the north is defined by steep topography and large lots, while the South part of the Macadam area generally flatter, extremely narrow and hemmed in by steep hills to the west and the highway and river to the east. Future development should respond to each site's distinct topography, lot size, density, heights and uses that define each geography.

Throughout the area, Macadam Avenue, the train tracks, surface parking areas and large irregular lot sizes have created east-west barriers to the river. Future development should work to improve the both quality and quantity of physical and visual access within these areas. Strategically site access points to follow the typical Portland block pattern of 200 feet and strengthen the alignment with streets on the west side of S Macadam. This alignment should provide unimpeded access to the riverfront and ensure its accessibility to everyone in the district, not just those who live adjacent to it.

ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER

Past City policies envisioned S Macadam as a tree-lined boulevard with safe routes for both pedestrians and cars. Existing development — a mixture of river-oriented businesses, suburban-style shopping centers, office parks and apartment buildings — does not necessarily support a public realm focused on the comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists over cars. Future site and building design should be responsive to this vision for S Macadam and the context of the Willamette Riverfront. Development should also maximize opportunities for growth, while utilizing color, texture, scale and proportion to complement adjacent context.

On Macadam Avenue, a few buildings from the area's industrial past have been renovated to feature high quality, durable materials, such as masonry or stucco. New buildings should build off this existing fabric by utilizing design features such as ample glazing, covered entries, integrated landscaping or inviting pedestrian and bicycle pathways to soften the harsh environment along this busy corridor. Most especially, these features should be incorporated on corner locations that can strengthen the connections across Macadam Avenue and down to the river.

Along the Willamette Riverfront, existing development has traditionally featured balconies, terraces and communal open spaces to promote safety and create visual interest along the greenway and river. To

enrich the experience of all residents, new development should incorporate these elements along the riverfront, and throughout the district, allowing views to the greenway, wildlife and the river. Locate significant outdoor spaces to be contiguous with the greenway trail. Erode building mass along the riverfront and greenway using step downs, and step backs, to preserve access to light and air. Thoughtfully design and orient buildings to facilitate east-west connections to the riverfront, promoting its accessibility within the district.

NATURAL + SCENIC RESOURCES CHARACTER

Macadam's location along the Willamette River's South Reach is a key factor in the continued health of local endangered and threatened fish, wildlife and rare plants. This riverine corridor is part of the Pacific Flyway for migrating and nesting birds. Future development along the river and trails should activate the river frontage, while minimizing noise and lighting impacts on the trail and riverfront habitat. Development should include native and climatic responsive plantings to enhance wildlife habitat, soften building edges and screen parking areas.

Natural features here and along the riverfront are valuable community assets, and central to the cultural practices of local Tribal Communities, with lush vegetation and views of the mountains, hills and river. Any new development needs to protect natural areas by preserving and planting trees along the Willamette River. Future development should capitalize on the unique geographic location of this district by incorporating environmentally friendly building practices, and techniques to help preserve and protect the riverfront environment that defines this district.

Residents and visitors' value direct access to the Willamette River from neighborhoods and businesses to the west. To strengthen this access, use landscaping as features to provide a sense of connection between the greenway, river and the interior of the neighborhood, emphasizing east/west connections toward the river. Visual connections to the Willamette and other features from both sides of Macadam Avenue allow Portlanders to appreciate the area's scenic beauty. Given the steep topography of the district, rooftops of buildings need to be carefully designed to enhance views. Maintaining these connections ensures permeability within the district, which helps with air quality, improving overall health and livability. This includes preservation of public viewpoints close to the river and view streets, as referenced in the Macadam Plan District and the South Reach Scenic Resource Protection Plan.

IMAGE CAPTIONS

Image 1.

Development should respond to the varied topography and built environment of the district, particularly along Macadam Avenue, which varies from a boulevard (northern end) to main street (southern end) in character.

Photo Image 2. *Communal open space along greenway at Heron Point Wetlands.*

Photo Image 3. *Adaptive reuse of the old Water Tower building as a commercial business center.*

Photo Image 4. *Step back of buildings from the greenway to allow for view looking south along Willamette Riverfront.*