



City of Portland, Oregon
Bureau of Development Services
Land Use Services

Briefing

DISCUSSION MEMO

Date: January 14, 2021
To: Portland Design Commission
From: Benjamin Nielsen, Design / Historic Review Team
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Re: West Portland Town Center Character Statement
Briefing Memo – January 21, 2021

This memo is regarding the upcoming Briefing on January 21, 2021 for the West Portland Town Center Character Statement. The following supporting documents are available as follows:

- Memo from BPS plus three attachments (including the Character Statement), dated 01/14/2021
- BDS Comments on West Portland Town Center Character Statement, dated 12/30/2020
- Recommended Draft DOZA Citywide Design Guidelines (for reference)
(https://www.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2020/doza_volume3_recommendeddraft_citywidedg_compressed.pdf)

I. OVERVIEW

The West Portland Town Center (WPTC) Plan is centered on the intersections of SW Capitol Highway and SW Taylor's Ferry Road, including the existing Barbur Transit Center site, in southwest Portland. This area was to include a light rail station on the proposed Southwest Corridor MAX extension, which was voted down this past November. In addition to increasing development allowances through amendments to the city's Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, creating a new West Portland Multicultural Plan District, the WPTC Plan "leads with a health and racial equity lens" to help prevent displacement of existing low income residents and residents of color, many of whom are part long-established Arab and East African Muslim communities in this area.

Zoning code amendments include the expansion of the Design Overlay throughout most of the town center area. As part of this expansion, the WPTC Plan includes a new Character Statement for the district that will be used in combination with Guideline 1 from the Citywide Design Guidelines, which are proposed as part of the Design Overlay Zone Amendments (DOZA) process that still awaits City Council adoption.

II. STAFF ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDED BRIEFING DISCUSSION TOPICS

Attached to this memo is a memo from BDS to BPS outlining some issues the bureau has identified with the Discussion Draft of the WPTC Character Statement. Based off that memo, staff recommends the following topics to help facilitate your discussion:

- Additional, more-specific information about the existing communities that live within the district and the physical architectural and urban design characteristics that distinguish this district from others in Portland are needed to ensure that the best contextual design responses will be proposed.
 - Related to this, information should be provided about what the community is hoping to see with redevelopment in the area, specifically, as well as specific cultural needs that development should address.
- Some of the references in the Character Statement discuss elements of a building's program that would be difficult or impossible to regulate through Design Review, while others reference changes to massing or form that would be restricted under DOZA's revised code (FAR and building height, for example).
- Under DOZA's revised code, many, if not most redevelopment projects in this district will likely not be reviewed through discretionary Design Review, since they will also be able to use the objective Design Standards path. While the Character Statement should address all areas of the proposed WPTC Plan District covered by the Design Overlay, perhaps additional attention should be placed on specific redevelopment parcels or subdistricts that would be most likely to come under Design Review scrutiny.