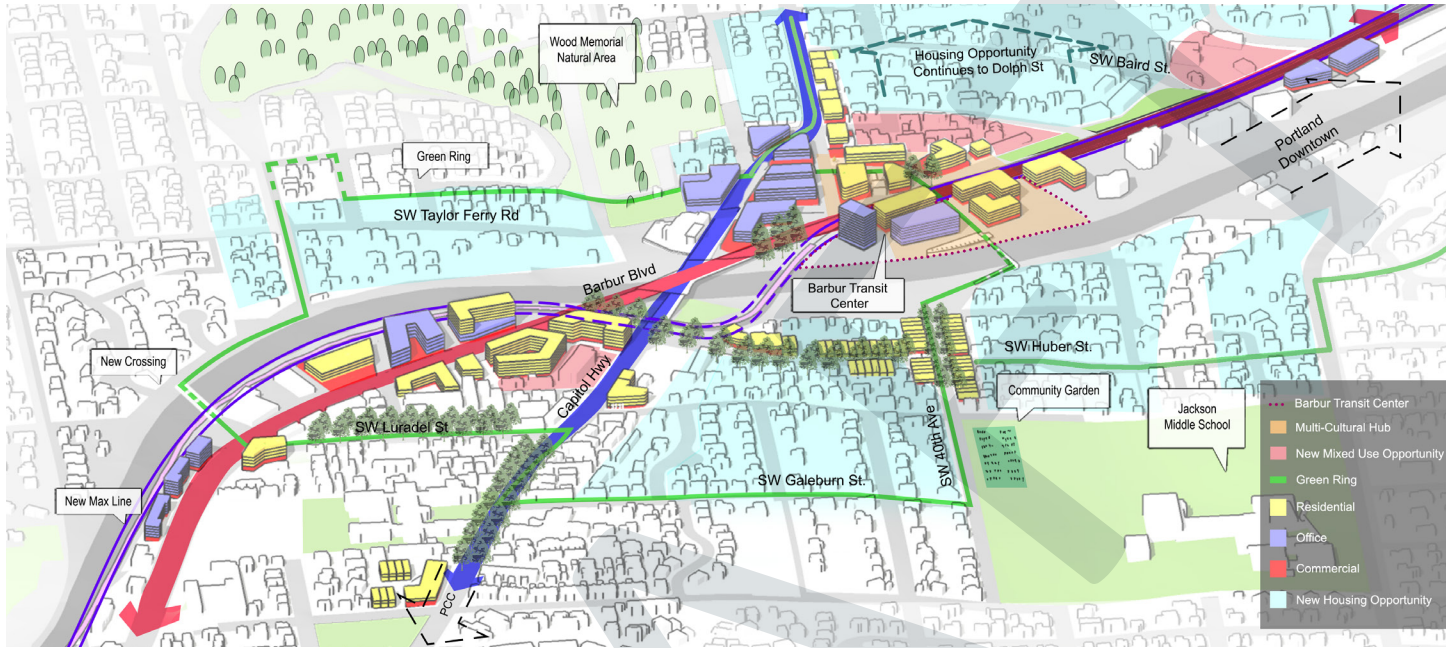


01 CHARACTER STATEMENT

WEST PORTLAND TOWN CENTER | BARBUR CIVIC CORRIDOR



BACKGROUND

HISTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

Located in outer southwest Portland, the West Portland Town Center is centered by the crossing of SW Capitol Highway and Barbур Boulevard and extends north and south of that intersection. Originally, this area was home to the northern Kalapuyan peoples and adjacent to one of the largest collections of independent villages on the nearby Tualatin Plains (modern-day Beaverton, Hillsboro, Mountaindale, Forest Grove). In 1855, the Kalapuyan Treaty was ratified, forcing the Kalapuyan peoples out, making way for even more transformation that would change the area forever. Less than 10 years later, a survey was completed for the Oregon California Railroad leading to the construction of the South Pacific railroad and eventually Barbур Blvd in 1934, after the railroad deeded land to the City of Portland.

Subdivided in the late 1890s by early European settlers, this area of small farms and woodlands was outside of Portland's city limits and gradually gave way to more suburban development patterns. Commercial activity developed along Barbур Boulevard and SW Capitol Highway including auto oriented businesses, hotels, motels, and restaurants. Later construction of Interstate 5 divided the area physically and visually, contributing to a more disconnected and uninviting place for people on foot.

Barbur remains the key arterial for southwest Portland and the character of the commercial areas have largely continued to be defined by roadway. This has resulted in site designs that prioritize automobile traffic and separate businesses with large parking lots and driveways. Commercial activity remains concentrated around the intersection of Barbур and Capitol Highway. Nearby parks and natural areas, including the Woods Memorial Natural Area, while abundant, lack safe connections for pedestrians and cyclists.

CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

Portland's Comprehensive Plan identifies West Portland as a Town Center, Barbур Boulevard as a Civic Corridor, and Capitol Highway as a Neighborhood Corridor. These designations give West Portland Town Center a key role in accommodating future development, recognizing that its terrain and system of trails and habitat areas can physically set the stage for how to shape future growth.

The West Portland Town Center Plan directs future development to consider health equity outcomes at the intersection of social and physical elements of place. Opportunities for healthy lives are directly impacted by both social and physical surroundings and systems. The town center can strengthen equitable health outcomes by promoting opportunities for social interaction and supporting public spaces and streets that are welcoming and safe. These spaces can be further improved by universally designing them for people of all ages and abilities. This also applies to creating connections to nearby natural areas and fostering a built environment that incorporates restorative elements of nature.

West Portland Town Center lies at the conjunction of Portland's Central City and an extension of the suburbs further south and it can benefit from its location and connectivity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

- Southwest Community Plan vision (2000)
- Barbур Concept Plan (2013)
- Barbур Boulevard (1997)
- Kalapuya Peoples (2018)
- Kalapuya Treaty of 1855 (2019)
- Tualitan Peoples (2019)

"...Mitigate impacts and bridge the divide caused by I-5 and Barbур to reconnect neighborhoods and improve the environment..."

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

“create opportunities for inter-generational designs/spaces”



Courtyard entryway creates an inclusive space allowing for community connection.

West Portland Town Center is home to diverse communities, nationalities and lived experiences, including long established East African and Arab Muslim communities. Building designs and programming should build on social and intergenerational connections that support local community character and cohesion. Development should promote community connections through the creation of shared public spaces such as plazas or market-places that are welcoming to the public realm of the street.

Active ground floors and gathering spaces, culturally inclusive and significant artwork should reflect the town center’s racial and ethnic diversity. New development should respond to the community’s pride in its

multi-cultural identity and desire to reflect its community members with multilingual and multi-generational architectural design and spaces. Intergenerational and intercultural spaces are particularly valuable in strengthening community resilience.

Community members have expressed the desire for convenient and safe access to healthy and culturally specific food options such as Halal and Kosher foods, which are currently limited. Providing small and culturally specific businesses will create allow for more socio-economic opportunities and diversity, further strengthening the role of West Portland Town Center as a welcoming multi-cultural destination in the region.

ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN

“build WOONERFS to keep the streets calm”



Development steps back and up to create a prominent entry at curved corner of site.

West Portland Town Center is an area in transition from an auto-oriented, lower-scale development to a future where building heights and density are supported by high capacity transit. Special attention should be given to height and scale transitions to surrounding development. Design elements such as façade articulation and breaks, step-downs or step-backs, landscaping and open spaces can help integrate new development.

West Portland Town Center’s large roadways and abundance of surface parking creates a disconnect from buildings and ground floors to its public realm. Transit access along streets and sidewalks is challenging and feels unsafe due to car-oriented site design and infrastructure. The urban design of sites along busy arterials should allow

space for stopping and waiting, encouraging pedestrian- and transit-responsive design. The incorporation of building design elements like deep canopies, walk-up windows and dedicated space for seating can help activate the public realm and also foster interaction between community members. Spaces should incorporate shelter from rain and integrate landscaping to mitigate the heat island impact in this urban center.

Within larger sites, new development should provide accessible on-site pedestrian connections to encourage safe pedestrian activity and should include culturally inclusive design features (i.e. open spaces with lines of sight). These connections support an informal circulation network within the town center and to surrounding parks and natural areas.

NATURAL RESOURCES + SCENIC RESOURCES

“weave parks and nature into development”



Multnomah village uncovered and restored Tryon Creek headwaters, providing a connection to the area’s natural landscape.

West Portland Town Center has varied topography, with some significant remnants of woodlands and abundant tree canopy. The significant undulation of Barbur’s topography is echoed but more pronounced in the surrounding northern and southern blocks. This both presents challenges and opportunities. Development that responds to changing grades with a layered siting of buildings and stories – rather than large retaining walls – and abundant vegetation can make the surrounding streets feel calmer and removed from the main traffic corridors, creating a more welcoming public realm.

The area includes many parks and open spaces, but connections to these places are often not accessible nor intuitive. Development should seek opportunities to strengthen these connections by building off the Green Ring and Green Scape, allowing for visual connections from the built environment to nature. With sensitive natural resources and limited options for expanding the roadway, community members have expressed their desire to, “weave in parks and

nature into development”, “integrate buildings with topography” and “make sites with steep topography more accessible”.

Tree canopy in the neighborhood is above the citywide average. Development should improve this resource through the addition of trees and open spaces to reduce heat island impacts, ease stormwater system demand, filter noise and other pollutants. The addition of larger canopy trees, particularly along Barbur Boulevard and the freeway would offer better habitat linkages, provide greater shade and contribute towards the creation of a “green lung” in the heart of the center.

To strengthen and help connect habitat areas in and around the town center, development should incorporate native plantings. Creating prominent street-facing surface stormwater facilities should be both functional and attractive, while improving the ecological health of the Tryon and Fanno watersheds, mitigating the effect of runoff water, and supporting visual connections to nature in the town center.