

A GUIDE TO THE DOCUMENT

Each character statement addresses an area's history and future desired character and has the same structural components.

THE CHARACTER STATEMENT PAGES:

- **Title** serves to inform on statement area location and designation
- **Diagrammatic Map** serves to complement the text by diagramming an area's current and future defining features (i.e. connections, landmarks, natural resources, etc.)

CHARACTER STATEMENT: MACADAM CIVIC CORRIDOR & RIVERFRONT NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

BACKGROUND

HISTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

Located between Portland's West Hills and the Willamette River, the Macadam area is shaped by its proximity to the river, abundant natural resources and the Central City. For centuries Native Americans, primarily the Kalapuya peoples, lived and thrived here. The Willamette River was a primary transportation corridor and the riverfront area that is now Willamette Park was part of a large network of wetlands and a popular camping location during the salmon runs. Native Americans also hunted and collected berries, nuts and plants along the riverfront for sustenance and medicinal and cultural purposes. These activities remain central to Native cultures, but development has degraded vital resources and adversely affected Tribal customs, wildlife habitat and watershed health. Buildings have been located too close to the river, vegetation has been removed and the use of impermeable building materials has been unchecked.

From the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, European Americans settled along the north-south S Macadam Avenue and constructed a parallel railroad line. During Portland's early growth much of the land between the Willamette River and S Macadam Avenue was occupied by industries that benefited from easy access to the river and the railroad. Commercial businesses emerged along the west side of S Macadam to support the industrial uses and residential neighborhoods developed to the west of the commercial corridor—in the hills with views of the river. As a result, the east side of S Macadam Avenue has large, irregular shaped lots and the west side has a traditional, well-connected block pattern.

Following World War II, much of the industry in the Macadam area relocated as technology improved and demand declined. Building boomed in the flat land between S Macadam Avenue and the river, as it was doing downtown and other close-in residential neighborhoods in the 1970s and 1980s former industrial sites were transformed into multi-dwelling residential buildings, commercial office spaces and small shopping centers. These large sites focused their attention on the river and very few provided east/west connections that improved the district's riverfront access.

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

CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

The 2035 Comprehensive Plan (2018) identifies the Macadam area as a Neighborhood Center and part of the River Pattern Area, and S Macadam Avenue as a Civic Corridor. These designations recognize the area's opportunities for growth, redevelopment, a safe and attractive pedestrian environment, and strong riverfront access.

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 culturally significant to the region's Tribal Nations and the local Native community, and nearby residents and visitors enjoy the nearly two miles of accessible Willamette River shoreline with an accessible greenway trail, Willamette Park, Heron Point Wetlands and the Cottonwood Bay natural area. New development should acknowledge and address the cultural, social, ecological and recreational value of the riverfront.

South Portland provides residents and the city with a green gateway to downtown. It's topography and proximity to the river creates three distinct geographies: 1) Northern S Macadam Avenue, 2) Southern S Macadam Avenue (South of S Broadway) and 3) the Willamette Greenway. Future development needs to respond to each area's distinct topography, scale, lot size, density, heights and uses. The northern section is dense and mid-rise, providing a transition from the high-rise South Waterfront. It is characterized by multi-family residential and office commercial buildings. In contrast, the south section exemplifies a more main street character with small-scale residential areas and businesses. This area is constrained by steep hills to the west, and the river. New development here should be designed to limit scale impacts to the residential community to the west.

S Macadam Avenue, along with the train tracks, surface parking areas and large irregular lots have created east-west barriers to the river. New development should improve both the quality and quantity of public connections—both physical and visual. Strategic access points should be based on the typical Portland block pattern of 200 feet and should align with streets on the west side of S Macadam Avenue. Alignment will provide unimpeded visibility from public streets and sidewalks to the riverfront and ensure it is accessible to everyone in the district.

ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER

Past City policies envisioned S Macadam Avenue 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 support a public realm focused on the comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists. Future site and building design should be responsive to this vision for S Macadam Avenue and the context of the Willamette Riverfront.

On S Macadam Avenue, a few buildings from the area's industrial past have been renovated with high quality, durable materials, such as masonry or stucco. New buildings should use texture, color, scale and proportion to complement this existing fabric. Features such as ample glazing, covered entries and integrated landscaping are appropriate to this environment. When used at corner sites, they strengthen and solidify the connections across S Macadam Avenue, and down to the river.

Successful landscaping is particularly important along identified public view streets and where rights of way have limited planting areas. Along the Willamette Riverfront, existing development has traditionally used 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, reinforcing public views to the greenway, wildlife and the river. Locate significant outdoor spaces contiguous with the greenway trail. Transition buildings away from the river setback, using step downs and step backs to erode building mass to preserve access to light and air along sidewalks and the trail and create a pleasant pedestrian experience. Design and orient buildings to facilitate east-west connections to the riverfront and promote its accessibility within the district.

NATURAL RESOURCES + SCENIC RESOURCES

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

Natural features along the riverfront are valuable community assets, central to the cultural practices of local Tribal Communities and with lush vegetation and views of the mountains, hills, and river. Pay special attention to landscaping within the river setback and protect natural areas by preserving and planting trees along the Willamette River. Development should capitalize on this unique location by incorporating environmentally friendly building practices and techniques to preserve and protect the defining riverfront environment of the district.

Residents and visitors' value direct public access to the Willamette River from neighborhoods and businesses to the west. To strengthen this access, use landscape features to emphasize east/west connections between the greenway, the river, and the interior of the neighborhood. Scenic view streets can strengthen their visual ties to the river by becoming "green" streets. Visual connections to the Willamette and other natural features from both sides of S Macadam Avenue also portend to appreciate the area's scenic beauty. In response, building roofs and rooftops need to be carefully designed to enhance the public views. Maintaining connections ensure permeability within the district and improves air quality, health, and livability. Preserve public viewpoints close to the river and view streets that are referenced in the Macadam Plan District and the South Reach Scenic Resource Protection Plan.

Background & Additional Resources

Provide a summary of the area's history and future policies to inform the character sections and provide a better understanding of how current conditions were created. Resources in the grey box are intended provide applicants with easier access to information, prompting more research (and outreach) during the project's development, encouraging a better understanding of how to address past harms and harness the area's most valued assets for all residents.

Quotes

Reminder of the community voices which helped shape this document and highlights one of their main concerns.

Photos

Supports each character section by illustrating existing context and potential design approaches.

Character Sections

Highlight an area's distinctive and unique qualities or issues. They provide ways to address them to meet Guideline 01. These approaches function as an extension of the Guidelines and are not intended to be used as a checklist of recommended solutions. Other approaches not listed may also be used.