



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

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MEMO

DATE: December 2, 2021

TO: Portland Design Commission

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SUBJECT: West Portland Town Center Character Statement and Plan Briefing

On December 9, the Design Commission (DC) will hold a work session to review and discuss the WPTC Character Statement. Staff will review testimony themes, input from an East African Community Placemaking focus group scheduled for December 4, and a proposed list of amendments. The Design Commission will have the opportunity to review the amendments and propose additional changes. BPS staff will then use these to update the Character Statement document accordingly.

The DC will have additional work sessions on January 20 and February 3, 2022, to review an updated draft, make additional amendments and recommendations.

PSC Schedule Overview and Updates

On November 9 and 30, 2021, the PSC held work sessions to discuss the WPTC Plan proposal and introduce amendments. These work sessions were informed by the testimony received through October 29, the joint hearing with Design Commission on September 28, the panel discussions that occurred on October 26 with community partner organizations and partner agencies, and staff responses to issues in a memo released on October 15 (Attachment B).

Most recently, on November 30, BPS staff presented a list of amendment topics (Attachment H) for further discussion. These topics stemmed from requests made by PSC members. Amongst the amendment topics listed, Items 2 (RM1 and RM2 Standards) and 3 ('d' overlay mapping) may be of most interest to this Commission. No formal vote has been made on either topic, although PSC Commissioners proposed that staff look at reducing the number of design standards proposed within section 33.595.275. In response, staff will be preparing formal amendments on several of the listed topics for discussion at the next PSC work session on January 11. Additional work sessions, and a possibly a hearing on proposed amendments, will be scheduled for late January and February as well.

BPS Staff will provide further updates to this Commission at the next work session on January 20.

Summary of Community Testimony on the WPTC Character Statement

In review, the PSC and DC received oral testimony about the WPTC Plan at public hearings on September 14 and 28, 2021, with a total of 10 members of the public providing oral testimony. The September 28 date was a joint hearing with the Design Commission, who will be making a recommendation on the WPTC Character Statement. The written testimony period was open through October 29. In total, 70 pieces of testimony were received on the plan, with 3 commenting on the character statement. Attached is a memo (Attachment C) summarizing the general testimony received.

The following testimony directly related to the character statement was received from **three** testifiers:

We support the plan's requirements for open space but recommend that you strengthen the Character Statement's Environment and Natural Resource section and other elements of the plan to enhance and preserve the tree canopy and viewsheds. Trees, terrain and viewsheds are key features of Crestwood Neighborhood Association's letterhead logo because of their prominence throughout the neighborhood. We have observed a significant decline in tree canopy as new development has occurred over the past few years. Trees are a tool to address climate change, preserve habitat and prevent the urban heat island effect that has been observed in other parts of Portland. We also are concerned that the tall buildings (CM2 with bonuses) near SW Capitol, SW Taylors Ferry Road and SW Barbur Blvd. will result in a loss of public viewsheds. Please create a buffer between RM1, RM2 and CM zoning next to single family residential zoning.



Full comments provided by both constituents are included with this memo as Attachments D, E and F. Written testimony on the project plan can also be viewed on the [BPS Public Testimony Reader](#).

Summary of East African Community Placemaking Focus Group Feedback

On December 4, 2021, BPS staff will convene a focus group to discuss placemaking within the town center and gather more specific content for both the plan's urban design framework and the character statement. BPS staff have worked with HAKI to ensure attendance of the focus group represents the town center's immigrant community, as well as a diversity of ages and genders.

A short summary memo of the focus group will be provided before next week's work session on December 8, 2021.

Summary of Commission Feedback

In review, the DC has had two opportunities to provide feedback on the WPTC Character Statement, at the briefing on September 2 and the joint hearing on September 28, 2021. Staff has taken the opportunity to summarize the feedback provided at both of these meetings by members of both the DC and the PSC. Below is a summary list of the themes we heard, supported by (paraphrased) comments:

1. General
 - a. *Generic Language.* Some of the character statement feels very generic. The natural resources section is quite specific, but the Community Character and Architecture & Urban Design Character sections need more work.
 - b. *PBOT Feedback and Coordination.* Pedestrian Infrastructure will be essential to the success of this area. Need to get feedback from PBOT to help add more specifics about desired pedestrian qualities and amenities.
 - c. *Distinctive Neighborhoods.* This area is an integration of many different neighborhoods, and that should be reflected in the Community Character/ A&UD sections.
 - d. *Woonerfs.* This piece of guidance feels out of place and opposite of where the district is right now. We need to start from a baseline in the guidance to development.
 - e. *Careful use of language.* Choose words and terms carefully and be sure that they are clear and informed by community vision culture. One concern that raised this topic was the use of the term woonerfs. This language seems to miss the mark



and we should look for or use language that is more tailored to the culture of this community.

- f. *Community Feedback*. More specific community feedback is needed. We need to go back and review this with the area's immigrant communities. How we present and explain this work to them (community) makes all the difference.
2. Additional Resources Section
 - a. *Glossary*. The character statement is full of specific terminology, and it would be great to have a glossary for reference, perhaps in the additional resources section. Some of the terms to include could be: Multi-Cultural hub, green ring, green scape, etc.
 3. Community Character Section
 - a. *Plaza and Open Space*. Revise bullet on plaza spaces to be more specific. Age friendly amenities is just universal design (good practice) and is not specific to the characteristics of the community.
 - b. *Water Features*. Concerned that the bullet on integrating water features will result in a lot of water features that may not tie back to Islamic community. Seems like just a call for water features and fountains could be anywhere.
 4. Architecture and Urban Design Character Section
 - a. *Generic Language*. These bullets are all necessary but not specific to the area and seem too generalized. Be more specific and provide some more examples of what each of these bullets means, or what doesn't work.
 - b. *Pattern Area*. There is some nice language in the guidelines about this place, including a discussion of the western neighborhoods being defined by the west hills, etc. Look at overlaying the pieces of this character section on top of the western pattern area to get more specific about what is different about this area.
 - c. *Barbur Boulevard*. Recommend that language in this section focus on how to create good urban design along Barbur Blvd. Discuss how to respond in a positive way to these corridors running through the town center.
 5. Natural Resource Section
 - a. *Highlight Specific Features*. Could we expand on what these natural features are (i.e. topography/view of Mt. Hood)?

These comments have informed the list of proposed amendments within Attachment A.

Next Steps

After the work session on December 9, staff hopes to have a confirmed list of amendments to use in revising the current proposed draft of the character statement. Members of this



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Commission will have an opportunity to review, discuss and propose additional amendments to this revised draft character statement on January 20, 2022. See details below:

- **November 9 - PSC Work Session**
- **November 30 – PSC Work Session**
- **December 9 - DC Work Session.** Provides an opportunity for Commission members to review testimony heard on 9/28, and any other written testimony received. Staff will summarize/review testimony and community feedback heard, present draft list of amendments for review and get Commission feedback.
- **January 11 – Additional PSC Work Session(s) TBD**
- **January 20 – 2nd Work Session.** Staff will review the revised WPTC Character Statement draft with DC. Staff will use any last amendments/changes to make final revisions.
- **February 3 – 3rd Work Session.** Commissioners to review final draft and make a recommendation.

We look forward to discussing this work more with you at the coming hearing. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Links:

[Portland Citywide Design Guidelines](#)

[West Portland Town Center Plan - Proposed Draft Overview](#)

West Portland Town Center Plan - Proposed Draft documents – [Vol 1 – Report and Actions, Vol 2 – Code, Policy, and Map Amendments](#)

Attachments:

- A. Table of Proposed Amendments
- B. Memo: Response to PSC Questions on the West Portland Town Center, *October 15, 2022*
- C. Memo: Summary of Proposed Draft West Portland Town Center Plan Public Testimony for August 10 through October 29, 2021, *November 1, 2021*
- D. Marianne Fitzgerald, President of Crestwood Neighborhood Association, provided written and oral testimony in support of the project on September 14, 2021.
- E. Joseph Jenkins, Neighbor, provided written testimony in support of the project on September 15, 2021.
- F. Marianne Fitzgerald, Neighbor, provided written testimony in support of the project on September 28, 2021.
- G. Draft West Portland Town Center Character Statement & Guide to Document
- H. Memo: PSC Commissioner’s Amendment Discussion List, *November 29, 2021*

