



THE BUREAU OF **PLANNING
& SUSTAINABILITY**

Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission

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July 26, 2022

Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners,

The Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) is pleased to forward the West Portland Town Center (WPTC) Plan Recommended Draft for your review and consideration for adoption. The West Portland Town Center Plan has taken a community driven, equitable community development and health forward approach to establish a vision, goals, and actions for this town center. This is the first area plan to be undertaken under the 2035 Comprehensive Plan policies; it promotes sustainable development patterns by implementing the "Centers and Corridors" concept of the Comprehensive Plan, and it centers and prioritizes policies around racial equity, health, resilience, and complete centers. The WPTC Plan sets the foundation for a diverse, resilient, and vibrant center where all people can thrive and where opportunities for additional housing, businesses, and services can be created to meet community aspirations and needs for years to come.

One of eight town centers in Portland, WPTC was designated a town center in 1995. Planning for this area was deferred for a decade due to infrastructure challenges and to coincide with the SW Corridor high-capacity transit project. Begun in 2019, the WPTC Plan process and the community have weathered the pandemic and the failure of the transportation measure that was poised to catalyze a broad swath of the SW Corridor.

While the SW Corridor Light Rail project initially elevated the need for this plan and considering ways to reduce involuntary displacement of vulnerable populations, the current delay in that investment does not alter the need to plan for growth and change in this high opportunity area. Moving forward with the Recommend Plan establishes a community vision and institutes land use regulations and protections ahead of future infrastructure investments and related market forces.

The PSC held public hearings on the Proposed Draft in September 2021, followed by eight work sessions between October 2021 and June 2022. The Commission concluded its deliberations on the proposals on June 14, 2022 and voted to recommend adoption of the Plan to City Council. The PSC supported most of the staff proposals, proposing a few amendments based on public testimony and PSC deliberations before reaching its recommendations.



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Key Components of the WPTC Plan Recommendations

The WPTC Plan is a long-range land use and equitable community development plan that outlines a vision for a healthy, connected, and resilient town center and proposes actions and tools to prepare and respond to future growth and change, as well as the diverse needs of current and future residents and businesses. The WPTC Plan includes:

- People and equity-centered visions and goals for the WPTC
- Equitable community development actions and collaborations
- A new West Portland Multicultural Plan District in the Zoning Code that supports low-cost housing preservation, new affordable housing, and other community benefits
- Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map amendments
- A coordinated infrastructure and land use growth strategy with integrated infrastructure priorities
- A WPTC Character Statement for the Citywide Design Guidelines
- Zoning Code amendments to prohibit self-service storage near light rail stations

Together these elements provide regulatory tools and aligned actions to advance the community vision for the town center and lay the groundwork for equitable development of the town center.

PSC amendments to the Proposed Plan were largely refinements to better support alignment of the new plan district regulations with improved climate resilience and health outcomes or more technical clarifications or corrections. The PSC's deliberations in considering amendments benefited greatly from the variety of voices that participated in the hearings and panel conversations. Four commissioners were also able to attend a SW Corridor Equity Coalition (SWEC) work group in February to hear and better understand the perspectives of underrepresented communities living in this area.

Issues of note

There was a large degree of support for the WPTC Plan proposals among PSC Commissioners. The PSC's deliberations included the following topics of note:

The Voice of Underrepresented Community

The PSC recognized and was impressed by the work of community-based organizations that shaped the plan and helped bring the voice of underrepresented communities in the area to the table. The input articulated the hopes and dreams of these community members and their desire to have an ongoing role in the evolution of this area. This process built trust with the community. The PSC recommended a provision that the SWEC provide an annual, or biennial, report to City Council on the progress and activities related to the Plan, and the PSC requests that City Council provide this opportunity.

A Foundation of Health and Racial Equity

The PSC is encouraged by the approach to center the needs of those most vulnerable to the impacts of change and infrastructure investments. Using a lens that considered the intertwined issues of health and racial equity, the resulting plan is grounded by the lived experience of community and the changes that will serve to best support healthier and more prosperous futures for themselves, their families, and communities. With this foundation, the plan's tools and actions support the positive health outcomes that are set in motion by provision of housing stability, access to opportunity, and a positive connection to community and place.

Need for New Anti-displacement Tools

The PSC acknowledges the destabilizing impact displacement has on people's lives, and the additional vulnerability low-income and BIPOC households face. This issue is a high priority for the community in this plan. The PSC recognizes the need to institute tools that foster housing and neighborhood stability and address the



displacement impacts that can be associated with significant land use changes and large infrastructure investments.

The Plan includes elements to increase housing opportunity and neighborhood stability, such as new zoning capacity, affordable commercial spaces, and incentives for other community benefits. It also includes zoning code provisions that are intended to preserve existing low-cost apartments in some areas, reduce redevelopment pressures, and minimize displacement.

The PSC deliberated at length on these provisions as it was the most challenging issue to reconcile. The conversation included consideration of the role of zoning as a tool to address displacement policies, the context of the SW Corridor and WPTC; past related efforts such as the SW Corridor Equitable Housing Strategy (2018); and the perspectives of community-based organizations serving BIPOC communities in the area.

The PSC supports the new tools proposed in the Plan to help address displacement pressures. While discussions raised questions and some concerns about the impact or fairness of select provisions, in the end the prevailing position was in favor of specific zoning regulations that aim to protect existing low-cost housing and address concerns around potential displacement of existing BIPOC and low-income households.

The PSC is also aware and concerned that zoning code tools are not sufficient by themselves to fully address displacement and housing affordability. The PSC urges the City Council to support funding and programming support for acquisition of existing low-cost but unregulated housing; to put organizational mechanisms in place for effective cross-bureau coordination and results; and to support ongoing inclusion of underrepresented community voices in crafting solutions and decision making.

Tangible Plan Implementation

The PSC looks forward to seeing implementation of this Plan. Implementation actions are identified in the Plan, and a number of these involve future funding and programmatic support to fulfill the community vision. The PSC urges the City Council to support the Plan's actions with funding and other resources, and particularly the following critical needs:

- Further the implementation of the SW Corridor Equitable Housing Strategy, including specifically adding City resources to a fund managed by the Network for Oregon Affordable Housing for acquisition of existing low-cost housing in the area (an action from the City Council-endorsed SW Corridor Housing Strategy that has not yet been implemented).
- Support the necessary next steps in infrastructure planning, coordination, and project design particularly for key town center transportation and stormwater projects such as the Crossroads intersection, Taylors Ferry, Huber Street, the Green Ring, and SW Collins Avenue. The PSC appreciates that BPS, Water, BES and PBOT have taken steps to fund further planning work on this point.
- Support the leveraging of remaining or future Portland or Metro housing bond funding opportunities. The PSC appreciates that the Housing Bureau supported a project in the SW Corridor in its recent February 2022 funding award.
- Further evaluation, with community involvement, of the role Tax Increment Financing could play in meeting SW Corridor Housing Strategy objectives.



In conclusion, the PSC recommends the West Portland Town Center Plan for adoption by City Council. The Recommended Plan will create more equitable access to housing and employment options in this high opportunity area; it will reshape this corner of southwest Portland and open a new chapter on how community voice can help lead in the creation of a people-centered, healthy, and vibrant place.

Finally, the PSC would like to extend its gratitude to all who contributed to the plan, including city agencies, regional partners, all who testified, and members of the SW Corridor Equity Coalition.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review of this project and for considering our recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steph Routh', written in a cursive style.

Steph Routh
Chair

