



Memo

Date: October 2, 2023
To: Planning Commissioners
From: Bill Cunningham, Senior City Planner
cc: Patricia Diefenderfer and Sandra Wood
Re: Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan

Staff Recommendation

Staff proposes that the Planning and Sustainability Commission recommend that City Council:

- Adopt this report.
- Amend the Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Framework, the Comprehensive Plan Map, the Zoning Map, and Zoning Code maps 130-1 and 130-3 as described in Part I of the Proposed Draft. The amendments implement community interest in expanding opportunities for commercial uses and housing in the plan area.

Key elements of the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan

Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Framework amendments:

1. Designate a new neighborhood center for the plan area in the vicinity of SE Flavel and SE 72nd.
2. Designate portions of SE 52nd and SE 72nd as neighborhood corridors, reflecting their intended roles in providing important transportation connections in combination with serving as the locations for commercial and multi-dwelling development.

Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map Amendments:

1. Expanded mapping of commercial/mixed use zoning (CM1 and CM2) to provide more opportunities for neighborhood businesses in an area lacking commercial services.
2. Expanded mapping of multi-dwelling zoning (RM1 and RM2) to provide opportunities for additional housing and a broader diversity of housing types than provided by current zoning. The proposed multi-dwelling and commercial zone mapping changes, which would apply to six percent of the plan area, are focused strategically in the proposed new Brentwood-Darlington neighborhood center and along major corridors such as SE 52nd and SE 72nd, so that the expanded housing opportunities are located close to commercial services and transit.



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3. Zone changes from current R5 zoning to R2.5 in the vicinity of Holgate and SE 52nd and around SE Cesar Chavez, consistent with existing Comprehensive Plan Map designations.
4. Zone changes to Open Space near Johnson Creek for a small number of properties owned by the Bureau of Environmental Services to support their intended use for floodplain and habitat restoration.
5. Note that the proposed zoning changes avoid locations with existing unregulated low-cost apartments and manufactured home parks to avoid adding to redevelopment pressures, acknowledging the important role this housing already provides for helping to meet housing needs in the area.

Recommended Transportation Projects:

Part II of the Proposed Draft, the Transportation section, includes recommendations for corridor and neighborhood greenway transportation projects to improve the ability for community members to safely and conveniently access local destinations. The Planning Commission is welcome to provide feedback on the Transportation section. However, staff is not at this time asking the Planning Commission to provide a formal recommendation on the Transportation section, as the transportation recommendations are not part of the current legislative adoption process but will come back to the Planning Commission for formal recommendation as part of a holistic package of amendments through a future Transportation System Plan (TSP) update.

The Planning Commission will have the opportunity to formally provide its recommendation on amending the Transportation System Plan (TSP), including the street classification changes and transportation projects in the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan, as part of the normal TSP update process, anticipated to begin in FY 2024-2025. The periodic TSP update provides an opportunity, citywide in scope, to batch and address any conflicts among modes or other issues arising from overlapping planning efforts in order to provide a consolidated recommendation that can be advanced to the Planning Commission and City Council. Council's adopting ordinance for the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan will direct the Bureau of Transportation to consider incorporating the Plan's recommended projects and classification changes into the next update to the TSP, providing flexibility for refinement.

Purpose and Background

Purpose

The purpose of the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan is to address land use and transportation challenges faced by community members in the Brentwood-Darlington neighborhood and nearby areas, including parts of the Woodstock, Mt. Scott-Arleta, and Lents neighborhoods within the plan area. The Plan's core focus area, Brentwood-Darlington, was not part of the City of Portland until annexation in 1986 and largely lacks basic transportation infrastructure such as sidewalks and has few commercial services. To support community interest in making it easier for people to meet their needs locally, the Plan focuses on recommendations involving three primary types of implementation tools:

- **Land use changes** to provide more neighborhood commercial and housing opportunities.



- **Future transportation projects** to enable people to safely and conveniently walk, roll, and bicycle to local destinations and to take transit to make connections locally and citywide.
- **Community stabilization approaches**, implemented through zone change approaches intended to support the continuation of the area’s existing low-cost apartments and manufactured home parks, as well as through recommendations for future implementation strategies to support housing and economic stability.

Background

- Initiated in the Spring of 2021, the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan was funded in part by a grant from the Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) Program, a joint program of the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development.
- A key reason for focusing on Brentwood-Darlington and nearby areas was to address the area’s lack of local commercial services and inadequate transportation infrastructure. The area includes streets that lack sidewalks or are unimproved, busy streets with few pedestrian crossings, poor transit service, and few neighborhood commercial services, making it difficult for people to access services without depending on driving. The Portland Plan (2012), supported by 2035 Comprehensive Plan policies, calls for fostering Portland as a place where most people live in complete neighborhoods with convenient and safe access to local services. Complete neighborhoods analyses undertaken as part of the Portland Plan and Comprehensive Plan Update identified the plan area as lacking many of the features of complete neighborhoods, both in terms of the lack of local commercial services and the lack of pedestrian, bicycle and transit infrastructure to access local destinations. The plan area, particularly areas near SE 82nd Avenue, has many lower-income and immigrant households who do not benefit from access to local services or continuous pedestrian and bicycle facilities within close proximity to their homes.
- In order to address both the land use and transportation challenges of the area, the Plan is a joint effort by the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) and the Bureau of Transportation (PBOT).
- The land use components of the Plan focus primarily on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Map and Zoning Map. No changes are proposed to Zoning Code regulations, other than Zoning Code map changes consistent with the land use map amendments.
- The proposed transportation projects include corridor and neighborhood greenway projects prioritized to help PBOT staff focus their efforts for securing funding in the next five years.

Outreach and Engagement

The Lower Southeast Rising project was informed and shaped by extensive community engagement. A project advisory committee, composed of plan area residents and business representatives, met from May 2021 through July 2023, and played a key role in informing the work of project staff, discussing options, and helping to refine proposals. The Plan’s community engagement included:



- **Phase 1 – Issue identification.** In Summer 2021, over 15,000 mailers were sent to all addresses in the plan area to announce the plan and seek input via a survey, completed by over 1,500 community members. Staff undertook community stakeholder interviews and canvassed affordable housing apartments and mobile home parks to learn about issues in the area. Staff also partnered with Latino Network to hear from Latino families about needs and issues, tabled at the Lents Farmers Market, met with neighborhood and business associations, and held a bike ride through the project area. In Winter 2021 staff created a “Pin It Portland” online mapping tool, for people to identify issues and their locations, and received over 600 responses.
- **Phase 2 – Implementation Alternatives.** In Summer 2022, staff held an online open house and survey (provided in five languages) that presented and sought feedback on alternative land use scenarios and land use and transportation priorities. Over 500 responses were received, which were supplemented with input from Latino Network focus group discussions, meetings with community groups, and neighborhood walks and bike rides. This input shaped the refinement of the Plan’s proposals, which were released as the Discussion Draft Plan after months of discussion with the project advisory group and refinement.
- **Phase 3 – Discussion Draft.** Staff released the Discussion Draft for public review in May 2023 and received feedback from over 300 community members through a variety of means. This included an online open house and survey, the online Map App tool showing zone change proposals for specific properties, tabling at community events and gathering places – where staff talked to over 150 people, neighborhood and business association meetings, focus group discussions with the area’s Spanish-, Vietnamese-, and Chinese-language communities, and an online virtual event held on May 24. Staff also sent out 6,000 mailers to owners of properties being considered for zone changes and to nearby residents.
- **Phase 4 – Proposed Draft.** The Proposed Draft Plan was released for public review and the Map App was opened for testimony to the PSC on September 8, 2023. Notices of the proposed zone changes were mailed to property owners at the same time and Legislative notices were sent on September 5. Staff also announced the Proposed Draft and the October 10 Planning Commission public hearing through the project notification list (with over 1,100 subscribers), emails to community stakeholders, and via social media.
- Project documents, including summaries of public engagement, have been shared on the Lower Southeast Rising Area Plan website: <https://www.portland.gov/bps/planning/lower-se-rising>

Issues

- Based on public feedback on the Discussion Draft and earlier outreach, there is broad support for the Plan’s land use and transportation proposals, with the majority of respondents indicating support for zone changes to allow for more neighborhood businesses and housing, as well as support for the proposed corridor and neighborhood greenway projects. Concerns were raised about the details of implementation, such as the need to ensure housing affordable to lower-income people, desires to prioritize local small businesses, and some concern about the traffic and parking impacts of new development. The Plan includes a Community Stabilization section with recommendations for future implementation actions related to affordable housing and community economic development that address many of these concerns.



- While there appears to be overall support for the zone change proposals, some property owners whose properties are proposed for zone changes have expressed concern about the proposed zone changes, most frequently when the proposal is for a change from single-dwelling (R2.5 or R5) to multi-dwelling (primarily RM1) zoning. Concerns are that the zone changes will destabilize the neighborhood, or that larger-scale buildings will be built nearby that will compromise livability and impact the availability of on-street parking. Note that the majority of proposed rezones from single-dwelling zoning are to the small-scale RM1 multi-dwelling zone, which is intended to be compatible with single-dwelling areas and allows a similar scale to what is allowed in the single-dwelling R2.5 zone, while allowing greater flexibility for the numbers of units. Four-story buildings are allowed in the RM2 multi-dwelling zone, which the proposals limit to areas along major corridors and within designated mixed-use centers. Some input also included remarks that the proposals should go further in applying multi-dwelling zoning in the plan area. The staff proposals are intended to achieve a balance between expanding housing options in the area and concerns about the degree of change and additionally respond to the objective of creating opportunities for more neighborhood commercial services in the area.
- Some have raised concerns about the zone changes causing displacement of existing residents. An economic analysis undertaken as part of the project found that there is minimal risk of displacement due to the high rate of ownership in the area and the strategic and targeted nature of the proposed zone changes, which avoid locations with existing unregulated low-cost housing. The analysis also found that proposed zone changes are not likely to increase redevelopment and residential displacement, as the existing single-dwelling zoning, which allows townhouse development, is already economically feasible for redevelopment and the proposed expansion of low-rise multi-dwelling zones is not anticipated to increase the likelihood of redevelopment or displacement and will overall create the opportunity for more housing. The Economic Analysis Background Report is available on the project website: <https://www.portland.gov/bps/planning/lower-se-rising/project-documents>
- Regarding the transportation components of the Plan, the Planning Commission will likely hear testimony regarding the need for improvements on specific streets, such as traffic calming, paving, and sidewalks. PBOT staff have been considering such input throughout the planning effort and have formulated the transportation proposals based on priorities identified by the community, analysis, and budgetary considerations.

PSC Schedule (tentative)

10/10/23 Briefing and Hearing
 11/14/23 Work Session
 11/28/23 Recommendation

For more information

Project Website: www.portland.gov/bps/planning/lower-se-rising

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