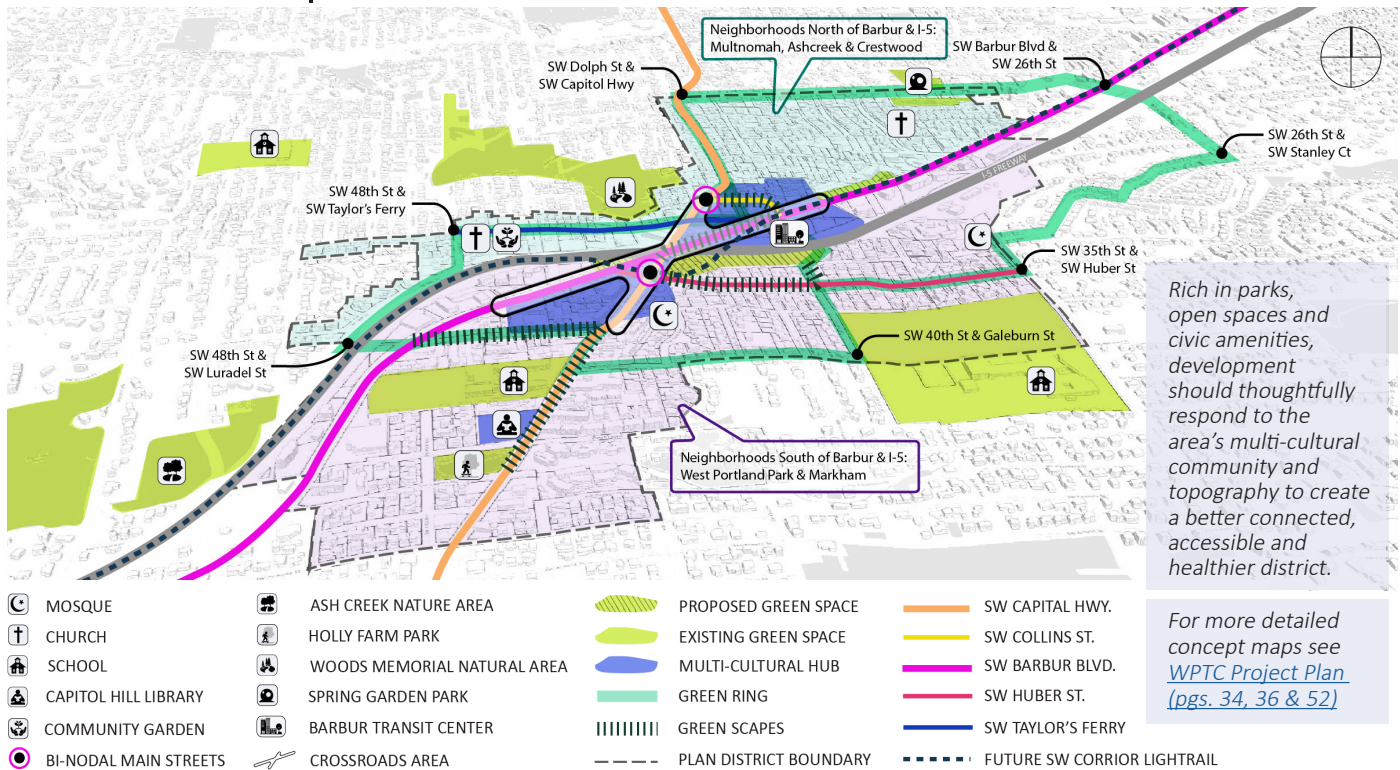


# CHARACTER STATEMENT: WEST PORTLAND & BARBUR BOULEVARD TOWN CENTER | CIVIC CORRIDOR



Rich in parks, open spaces and civic amenities, development should thoughtfully respond to the area's multi-cultural community and topography to create a better connected, accessible and healthier district.

For more detailed concept maps see [WPTC Project Plan \(pgs. 34, 36 & 52\)](#)

## BACKGROUND

### HISTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Portland Town Center (WPTC) is located in outer southwest Portland. It is centered by the crossing of SW Capitol Highway and Barbur Boulevard, and extends north and south of that intersection. West Portland Park, to the south, is one of the southwest's most racially diverse neighborhoods and home to long-established East African and Arab Islamic communities. These groups contribute to the center's multiple nationalities and lived experiences and today the area houses many of the region's important cultural resources serving Islamic communities.

Southwest Portland, inhabited by many Indigenous Peoples, was adjacent to one of the largest collections of villages on the nearby Tualatin Plains (modern-day Beaverton, Hillsboro, Forest Grove). The site served as a communal and celebratory gathering place, where goods were traded and stories shared. Today, the Portland area is home to a large and thriving Indigenous community, made up of several tribes from the Pacific Northwest region and throughout the country, though existing development has done little to provide them with inclusive and accessible spaces.

In the mid-1800's, the Oregon California Railroad began plans for the South Pacific Railroad through this area. That right-of-way eventually became Barbur Blvd in 1934, with commercial activity springing up along it in the years that followed. In the 1960's construction of Interstate 5 and its associated ramps divided the area physically, contributing to a more uninviting and dangerous place for people.

Barbur remains the key arterial for southwest Portland. The character of the commercial areas continues to be defined by the roadway, along with development that prioritizes automobile traffic and businesses separated by large parking lots and driveways. Commercial activity remains concentrated, yet disconnected from the rest of the Town Center, at the intersection of SW Barbur Blvd and Capitol Hwy an area known as "the crossroads". Overall, many of the area's civic and cultural resources, including parks and natural areas, lack a safe and comfortable network of pedestrian and bicycle connections.

### CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

Portland's Comprehensive Plan identifies West Portland as a Town Center, Barbur Blvd as a Civic Corridor, and Capitol Hwy. as a Neighborhood Corridor. These designations give WPTC a key role in accommodating future development, recognizing that despite the spatial divisions within "the crossroads", its terrain, system of trails and habitat areas can physically set the stage for how to shape future growth. The WPTC Plan organizes the area for growth through a bi-nodal commercial and civic center<sup>1</sup> both north and south of Barbur Blvd, various housing opportunities within the center, and a Green Ring<sup>1</sup> circulation network. The plan encourages development to consider health equity outcomes, recognizing the impact that the social and physical environments can have on creating healthy lives.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources offer more information on the history and community that define this center:

- [Southwest Community Plan Vision \(2000\)](#)
- [Barbur Concept Plan \(2013\)](#)
- [WPTC Project Plan \(2022\)](#)
- [WPTC Project Plan, Vol.1 Glossary, Pg. 33 \(2022\) \(Terms featured in Glossary are indicated with †\)](#)
- [SW Corridor Tenant Engagement Project Report \(2020\)](#)

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

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 Town Center.

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER



*This courtyard entryway creates an inclusive space allowing for colorful artwork and community connection.*

WPTC is home to ethnically, racially and economically diverse communities but lacks diverse public spaces to support their needs, including spaces that acknowledge the past and present contributions of the area's Indigenous Communities. Design of the area's architecture and public spaces should be inviting to all. Particularly, spaces within the Multi-Cultural Hub (MCH)<sup>1</sup> and Barbur Transit Center (BTC)<sup>1</sup> should be designed to reflect the community's desire for multi-generational gathering and the fostering of community and cultural connections.

A few ways to support these issues include:

- Providing multi-functional plaza spaces within the MCH<sup>1</sup> with features allowing for market stalls, sheltered gathering spaces, age and family-friendly seating, spaces for strollers and bikes, and areas for free-form play.
- Incorporating flexible community programming that provides indoor spaces for community activities or small businesses.
- Integrating intimate courtyard spaces

between buildings for neighbors to engage one another, particularly on Capitol Hwy, Collins and Huber Streets.

- Incorporating art on sites along Barbur Blvd, on pedestrian and bikeways and within the MCH<sup>1</sup> and other open spaces. Features to consider include functional sculptures, landscape murals or artworks commissioned by Native Artists.
- Integrating water features recognizing the Islamic community, offering reprieve from the heat and serving young children and families. Consider including shallow reflective pools or waterfalls with seating, and interactive and functional water features, like splashpads and drinking fountains.
- Considering designs that emulate (not imitate) the vernacular reflective of the current multi-cultural communities.
- Utilizing multi-lingual signage as both a wayfinding measure and art to showcase diverse cultures such as the area's Islamic and Indigenous communities.

## ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER



*Storefront utilizes a set-back frontage to extend the public realm, providing hardscaped areas, seating and large operable doors.*

A "crossroads" of major arterials has created an unwelcoming intersection and pedestrian environment in the Town Center, dividing it into three distinct geographies: central (Barbur and crossroads area), North of and South of Barbur Blvd. Neighborhoods North of Barbur, are defined by a large natural area, views to Mt. Hood, steep topography, and a network of unimproved streets, while the South of Barbur neighborhoods feature a rich network of diverse communities, civic and cultural institutions. Although distinct, each area is transitioning away from auto-oriented development and new development should respond by creating opportunities for a better connected, resilient and people-centered public realm.

A few ways to support these issues include:

- Providing accessible connections from sites on Collins St to nearby Woods Natural Area, Taylor's Ferry Plaza and BTC<sup>1</sup>.
- Providing accessible connections on sites South of Barbur Blvd to the civic/cultural institutions along and nearby Capitol Hwy.
- Supporting north-south connections with a

circulation network providing physical and visual access between the bi-nodal main streets<sup>1</sup>, BTC<sup>1</sup> and the MCH<sup>1</sup>.

- Creating space for people along Barbur Blvd by incorporating larger, set-back frontages with hardscaped areas, trees and weather protection.
- Incorporating wide, flexible openings at the ground floor level of buildings along Barbur Blvd, Capitol Hwy, Collins and Huber Streets.
- Improving conditions caused by noise pollution, on sites adjacent to Barbur Blvd and I-5 by utilizing sound absorbing materials, and orienting buildings towards views or public spaces.
- Incorporating features, such as balconies, porches or terraces, within buildings on Capitol Hwy, Collins and Huber Streets.
- Encouraging active spaces and programming, with physical and visual access, to sites on and adjacent to the Green Ring<sup>1</sup>.
- Utilizing landscaping, plazas or green design features to buffer pedestrians from traffic on sites adjacent to Green Scapes<sup>1</sup>.

## NATURAL + SCENIC RESOURCES



*Multnomah Village uncovered and restored Tryon Creek headwaters, supporting natural habitat and functions.*

Along with its varied topography, abundant tree canopy and significant woodland remnants, the Town Center has many parks and open spaces; however, connections to these places are often not accessible or intuitive. New development should address the desire of community to, "weave in parks and nature into development" and "integrate buildings with topography", to improve health equity outcomes for it's most vulnerable communities.

A few ways to support these issues include:

- Responding to changing grades and steep topography with stepped or layered siting of buildings.
- Incorporating abundant vegetation to provide a buffer from the noise and pollutants along main corridors like Barbur Blvd, Capital Hwy and the Green Scapes<sup>1</sup>.
- Strengthening and preserving connections to

nature, parks and open spaces by orienting shared spaces, public views and pedestrian pathways to resources, including views of Mt. Hood on Collins St and access to the Woods Memorial Natural Area and the Green Ring<sup>1</sup>.

- Enhancing natural resources and habitat value, to reduce heat island impacts and ease stormwater system demand, by preserving and adding trees, native vegetation, and open spaces on sites throughout the town center.
- Planting and preserving larger canopy trees, particularly along and near Barbur Blvd and the freeway, to offer better habitat linkages and create a "green lung"<sup>1</sup> in the heart of the center.
- Designing prominent surface stormwater facilities that are functional, attractive and enhance the Tryon and Fanno creek watersheds.