



## Legislative Hearing

# DISCUSSION MEMO

**Date:** July 8, 2020  
**To:** Portland Design Commission  
**From:** Hannah Bryant, Design / Historic Review Team  
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**Re:** Macadam Character Statement, July 16, 2020

Please find the following documents in TRIM: (<https://efiles.portlandoregon.gov/Record/13623342/>)

- Draft Macadam Character Statement
- BPS Staff Memo
- PSC Letter of Recommendation
- Summary of Macadam Online Survey Responses
- Survey Responses
- Emailed Testimony sent to BPS

### I. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A legislative hearing to review the River Plan / South Reach Proposed Draft proposal to repeal the Macadam Corridor Design Guidelines and instead implement the Citywide Design Guidelines in the Macadam area, along with a proposal for a Macadam Character Statement. This is the first area within Portland to receive a character statement. Structured to align with, and support, Citywide Design (DOZA) Guideline 02, this statement will guide future development on how to address issues and conditions specific to the Macadam area. A brief background description of the area's history and existing conditions will frame desired and emerging character within three sections: Community, Architecture/Urban Design and Nature.

### II. PROJECT HISTORY

The Macadam Corridor Design Guidelines were adopted in 1985. The existing Guidelines focus on physical connections and views to the Willamette River. In addition to the Guidelines, the Macadam Plan District (33.550) provides additional site design requirements in this area and most sites between Macadam Boulevard and the Willamette River are subject to Greenway Review. An emphasis on deep street setbacks, and landscaping in both the Guidelines and the Macadam Plan District has reinforced the suburban, auto-oriented built environment of this area. The existing guidelines are very specific for some sites but lack broad urban design guidance that can be generally applied throughout the district. The result is that they are challenging to apply and do not yield results consistent with community expectations.

When the River Plan/South Reach Proposed Draft was revised to include the proposal to repeal the existing design guidelines and replace them with the new DOZA Citywide Guidelines, BDS staff requested the development of a Macadam Character Statement. BDS felt that, while cumbersome to apply, the existing guidelines emphasize community values and the unique environmental conditions of this area, and that a Character Statement could provide necessary contextual guidance in the application of the new Design Guidelines.

BDS Staff have worked closely with BPS in drafting this Character Statement. A community survey (attached) yielded 41 responses. A virtual public meeting was held in June 2020.

### III. PROJECT GOALS

The Character Statement is intended to provide context-specific guidance that will inform the application of DOZA Citywide Design Guideline 02. The Character Statement is not approval criteria; however, every sentence should be useful toward the application of the Citywide Design Guideline. Concision, and clear directive guidance are the priorities for this document. Vague, or generalized suggestions are less effective tools during Design Review.

The Macadam Plan District has many large lots with extensive surface parking and low-scale commercial buildings. It is likely that some of these sites will come in for redevelopment in the future, and the site design guidance provided in this Character Statement will be an important tool in their design review.

### IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff advise you consider the following among your discussion items on July 16, 2020:

- **BACKGROUND**

- Native should be capitalized to clarify that it references Native American and not Oregon- or US- born people.
- Important to clarify that Native peoples and traditions are not only in the past, but also included in existing and future conditions.
- Ensure that the history section provides meaningful design direction for future development.

- **COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

- What are examples of 'river-responsive design?' At the June 2020 public meeting, neighbors suggested buildings step down toward the greenway trail and the river.
- BDS Staff supports the suggestion that new development should reinforce a typical 200-foot block structure and strengthen both physical and visual connections to the river. Further strengthening of this guidance may be appropriate.

- **ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER**

- Consistent with recent conversations in the DOZA Design Guideline approval, BDS and BPS support amending this title to 'Architectural and Urban Design Character.'
- Existing pedestrian linkages between the residential neighborhoods west of Macadam Boulevard and the river are limited and indirect. BDS supports emphasizing architectural treatment of buildings at the corners of these crossings to encourage and support pedestrian connections.

- **NATURAL + SCENIC RESOURCES**

- Recent Design Reviews for this area have included numerous large commercial patio spaces, with significant lighting, fronting the greenway. Additional suggestions

for how to balance desired human activation with limited lighting and noise on the greenway are desired.

- 'Natural resources' include habitat for endangered species and traditional fishing and cultural grounds for Native peoples. Including specific language in this section may help future development honor and protect these resources.

- **NEXT STEPS**

- BDS recommends approval of the Character Statement with any changes made by the Design Commission.
- While the Character Statement will provide context-specific guidance for the application of updated Design Guidelines, additional code updates are necessary to ensure that desired development typologies are feasible. Future planning projects in this area should include ODOT, as many community comments centered on the need for enhanced crossings across Macadam Boulevard and the speed of traffic through the neighborhood.
- Additionally, BDS Staff recommend that the Macadam Plan District (33.550) is revised to eliminate the Special Street Setback on Macadam Boulevard that was required to facilitate a light rail down the Macadam corridor. The Plan District standards may warrant updating to better align with the heights and densities anticipated in neighborhoods proximate to Central City.
- BPS Staff will update on next legislative steps at the July 16, 2020 hearing.