



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

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MEMO

DATE: August 26, 2021

TO: Portland Design Commission

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SUBJECT: West Portland Town Center Character Statement and Plan Briefing

The purpose of this memorandum, and attachments, is to provide information in support of the September 2, 2021 briefing to the Design Commission on the West Portland Town Center Character Statement and Plan. The topics covered include:

- Briefing purpose and DC Role
- Review updates to West Portland Town Center Plan Project
- Review updates to Character Statement Proposal
- Next Steps

Briefing Purpose and DC Role

This briefing will focus on the West Portland Town Center Character Statement. The project is in the Proposed Draft phase, and BPS staff seeks to brief the Commission on the recently released WPTC Character Statement Proposed Draft in preparation for a future hearing, work session and related recommendations. The Commission will review, take testimony and make a recommendation to City Council on the Proposed Draft of the West Portland Town Center Character Statement. Staff will subsequently prepare a Recommended Draft of the character statement based on the Commission's recommendation.

The main purpose of this briefing is to update Commission on the changes that have been made to the WPTC Plan and Character Statement since the last briefing on January 21, 2021. It is an opportunity for the Commission to share feedback and ask questions on the document before the joint hearing with the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC) on September 28. A work session for the Commission will be scheduled after the PSC has concluded their work sessions and made their recommendation. BPS Staff hopes this will allow for a more informed deliberation and recommendation since the PSC will have concluded their part in the process.

In addition to providing general feedback on the updated draft, BPS staff hope to gather feedback from the Commission on some of the following questions/issues:

- Does the “A Guide to Document” page help clarify the intent of the character statement?
- Is the revised language format in each character section effective in communicating the desires of community and how development can be more responsive to them?
- Other additional resources that should be referenced or investigated.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, but hopefully provides some clarity on the issues BPS staff hopes might be discussed as part of the briefing.

West Portland Town Center Plan project overview

Project. West Portland Town Center Plan and West Portland Town Center Character Statement

Project Area (No Change). West Portland Town Center (WPTC) is located north and south of the intersection of Barbur Blvd, Capitol Highway and Interstate 5 - sometimes known as the “Crossroads.” Other landmarks in the area include the Barbur Transit Center and Barbur World Foods. The study area included the areas roughly between SW Dolph on the north, SW 35th on the east, SW 53rd on the west and SW Pomona on the south. It was designated as a town center in 1995 and the designation was reaffirmed in the City’s 2035 Comprehensive Plan process in 2016.

Summary of WPTC Plan Proposal Changes. The Proposed Draft of the WPTC Plan reflects changes made in response to community feedback, further discussion with partner agencies and in recognition of the failure of the regional transportation bond measure (which included funding for the SW Corridor light rail project) last fall. The later having outside impacts on important infrastructure, transit, and market dynamic factors. The most substantive changes include:

- **Updated Zoning and Comprehensive Plan Maps and a new coordinated growth strategy** – Responding to existing infrastructure challenges — including the delay of



proposed light rail line — and related community concerns, BPS staff worked with infrastructure bureau partners to develop a coordinated growth strategy for the plan’s zoning and infrastructure elements. The growth strategy proposes phased and strategic rezoning along with recommendations for a sequence of public infrastructure improvements, along with cross-bureau coordination, to guide growth over the next 2 to 3 decades. This includes two phases of rezoning (Phase 1: 0-10 YRS; Phase 2: 10-20 YRS), which will help set the stage for incremental infrastructure improvements to support the community vision.

- **Updated Zoning Code and community development actions** - Refinements to the Zoning Code proposal ranging from a new minimum density for key commercial mixed use zones areas to a town center wide front retaining wall standard. Refinements and additions to the proposed community development actions range from updated infrastructure actions (including parks) to development of a Community Energy Plan. All are intended to improve achievement of the community’s goals.
- **New plan district design standards for RM1 and RM2 sites** - Further discussions with the Design Overlay Zoning Amendment (DOZA) team led to a refinement of where the ‘d’ overlay would apply in the center. Namely removing it from lower density multi-dwelling zoned sites that were located away from the center’s core area and its busier corridors. To set the stage for and encourage new development that provides welcoming and people-centered spaces in the absence of the design overlay the Plan proposes a series of five design standards for the RM1 and RM2 sites. The standards are proposed for all RM1 and RM2 sites, with or without the design overlay, to create opportunities to create uniform positive qualities that will help shape the long-term character of the area. The proposed plan district design standards were influenced by the work of the Design Overlay Zoning Amendment (DOZA) project and the proposed standards for Chapter 33.420, Design Overlay Zone. A subset of the 33.420 standards were selected, some slightly modified, as follows:
 - Pedestrian connections and buffering features such as setbacks or landscaping for street facing ground floor residential entrances
 - Increased street facing window requirements
 - Operable windows on upper floors
 - Minimum glazing and pedestrian access standards to outdoor common areas
 - Quality façade materials

These standards are intended to support the community’s vision, which centers around:

- *Great Places with Equitable Access.* A natural and built environment that enhances environmental and community health through public amenities and has new



commercial and human services and a supply and variety of housing options for a growing ethnically and economically diverse population.

- *Strong Communities and People.* A thriving and interconnected community that contains racially and economically diverse households who are resilient in the face of displacement pressures and supported by strong social and cultural institutions and human services that benefit all residents.

The West Portland Town Center Character Statement has also been revised to include design guidance to support these goals and better articulate the area’s existing and emerging character.

Summary of Proposed Draft Character Statement

When the BPS Staff briefed the Commission in January, the Discussion Draft Character Statement had only incorporated the community feedback received at the March 2020 Open House. This draft incorporates new feedback received from the online Discussion Draft Survey conducted in Fall 2020, as well as feedback provided by bureau partners (BDS and BES).

In response, BPS staff have amended the document by:

- Creating, “A Guide to the Document”, page that will serve as a “how to” reference for all character statements. It will be located at the beginning of this appendix.
- Updating the diagrammatic map which highlights elements of the Town Center Plan as they relate to the character statement.
- Revising the background statement to include a paragraph about the existing East African and Arab Communities.
- Revising the Additional Resources section to reference city plans and sanctioned resources. Additionally, the document, “SW Corridor Tenant Engagement Project”, has been included to offer detail on the project team’s outreach with this community leading up to the discussion draft phase.
- Aligning guidance within the character sections to better align with the health equity goal of the project plan as dictated by the community.
- Revising the character statement sections to include an introduction describing the area’s current character and the community’s desired character. This is followed by a list of design solutions which were inspired by community comments. These are intended to provide more tailored (and less generic) guidance for the area; incorporating the feedback we have heard from participants so far.
- Focusing the Community Character Section on directing development to incorporate design elements which will foster a more welcoming and inclusive community, particularly on sites within the Multi-Cultural Hub.



- Focusing the Architecture and Urban Design Section on directing development to improve conditions for pedestrians, particularly in relation to heat, noise pollution and connectivity within the crossroads and on/adjacent to major arterials.
- Focusing the Natural and Scenic Resources Section on directing development to protect and enhance existing resources and encourage development to more effectively respond to existing topography and integrate parks/nature.

Next Steps.

After the September 2, 2021 briefing on the Proposed Plan and Character Statement, members of this Commission will also review written and verbal public testimony and participate in a joint public hearing with the Planning on Sustainability Commission on September 28, 2021. Design Commission work sessions to deliberate on the proposed Character Statement will be held after the PSC has made their recommendations. These work sessions have not been scheduled yet but may occur in November or December.

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

Attachments:

- A. *Draft* West Portland Town Center Character Statement
- B. *Draft* A Guide to the Document
- C. BPS Staff Responses to BDS/BES Comments, *for reference*
- D. West Portland Town Center Zoning Map (Proposed Draft), *for reference*

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](#)



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