



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

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## MEMO

**DATE:** January 20, 2022

**TO:** Portland Design Commission

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The purpose of this memo packet is to provide a revised draft of the West Portland Town Center (WPTC) Character Statement in response to the proposed amendments discussed at the Design Commission (DC) Work Session on December 9, 2021.

On January 27, 2022, the DC will hold a work session to review and discuss the draft revisions to the WPTC Character Statement Draft (Attachment A). Staff will review the changes made in response to the proposed amendments. These changes are summarized within the table in Attachment B and the previous draft has been included for additional context (Attachment C). The Design Commission will have the opportunity to review the amendments and propose additional changes or make a motion to recommend the revised draft statement.

If additional changes are requested, the DC will have an additional work session on February 17, 2022, to do a final review and make a recommendation.

### **PSC Schedule Updates**

On January 11, 2022, the PSC held another work session to discuss project elements related to the existing low-cost apartment sites in Subdistrict D. Additional discussions on this topic, and additional Amendments to the project plan will be covered at the next PSC Work Session on February 8.

### **Summary of Revisions**

As noted, changes to the document in response to the proposed amendments are summarized within the table in Attachment B. Aside from the more specific changes made to the broader document, staff wanted to specifically address 2 sections that changed in tone and content:

1. *Community Character Section*. Changes focused on being more place specific and intentionally aligning guidance with community feedback received over the past two years, particularly at the December 4th Focus Group.
2. *Architecture and Urban Design Section*. This section was rewritten to clarify what the area specific design responses are, and highlight the need to create a more welcoming public realm on streets like Barbur Blvd. The revised language is more place specific, focusing on how development should respond to and connect the center's three distinct geographies: central (crossroads and Barbur), North of and South of Barbur Blvd.

### **Next Steps**

After the work session on January 27, this Commission will have a final opportunity to review and discuss amendments to this revised draft character statement on February 17. See schedule details below:

- **January 27– 2<sup>nd</sup> Work Session**. Staff will review the revised WPTC Character Statement draft with DC. Staff will use any last amendments/changes to make final revisions.
- **February 8 – PSC Work Session**
- **February 17 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Work Session**. Commissioners to review final draft and make a recommendation.

We look forward to discussing this work more with you on January 27<sup>th</sup>. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

### **Links:**

[Portland Citywide Design Guidelines](#)

West Portland Town Center Plan - Proposed Draft documents – [Vol 1 – Report and Actions, Vol 2 – Code, Policy, and Map Amendments](#)

### **Attachments:**

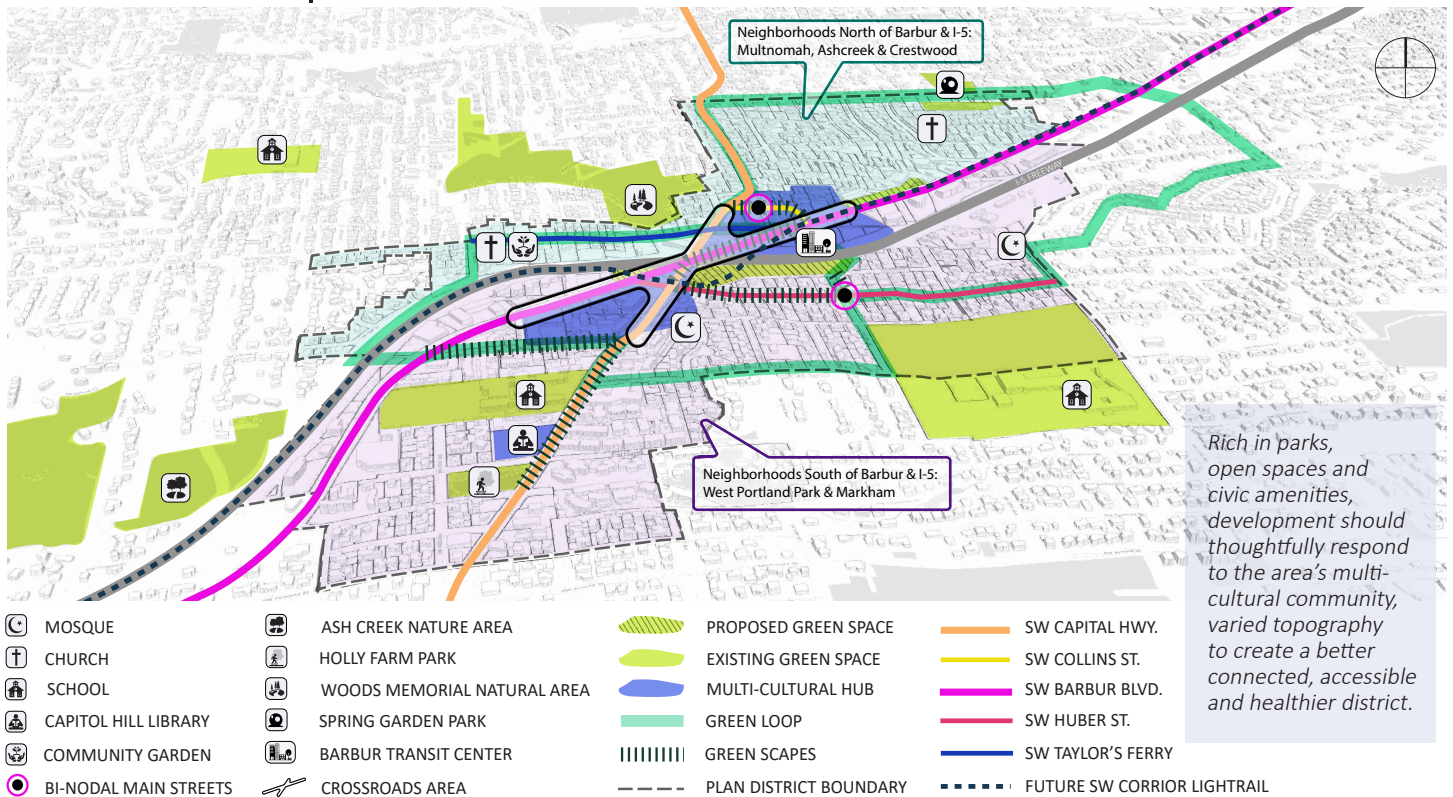
- A. WPTC Character Statement Revised Draft
- B. Table of Proposed Amendments
- C. WPTC Character Statement Proposed Draft



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



## BACKGROUND

### HISTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Portland Town Center (WPTC) is located in outer southwest Portland, 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 Muslim communities. These groups contribute to the center's multiple nationalities and lived experiences and today the area houses many of the area'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 communal and celebratory gathering, where goods were traded, and stories shared. Today, the Portland area is home to a large and thriving Indigenous community, made up of a number of 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 ramps divided the area physically, contributing to a more disconnected and uninviting place for people on foot.

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 at the intersection of Barbur and Capitol Highway, 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 both north and south of Barbur Blvd<sup>1</sup>, housing opportunities throughout the center, and a Green Ring<sup>1</sup> circulation network. Additionally, it encourages development to consider health equity outcomes, recognizing the impact both the social and physical environment 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 <sup>1</sup>)
- [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 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 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, particularly on 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



*Commercial 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, Mt. Hood vistas, steep topography, and a network of unimproved streets, while the south features 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 connections from sites on Collins St to nearby Woods Natural Area, Taylor's Ferry Plaza and BTC<sup>1</sup>.
- Providing connections on sites South of Barbur Blvd and the civic/cultural institutions along the southern portion of Capitol Hwy.
- Supporting north-south connections with a

circulation network providing physical and visual access between the bi-nodal main streets, BTC<sup>1</sup> and the MCB<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 all 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 building designs on 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 Mt. Hood views, 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.

**Attachment B. Proposed Amendments**

**Table 1.** These Comments/Amendments are a result of the Design Commission held on December 9, 2021.

Ref #	Survey Question/Topic		Comment or Requested Amendment	Proposed by	Proposed Change
1	General	a	<p><i>Generic Language.</i> The language within the Community Character and Architecture and Urban Design Character sections is generic and could apply to anywhere in Portland. Revise language to offer guidance more specific to the West Portland Town Center.</p> <p><i>Distinctive Neighborhoods.</i> This area is an integration of many different neighborhoods, and that should be reflected in the Community Character/ A&amp;UD sections.</p>	Design Commission	<p>Language within the <i>Community Character Section</i> has been revised to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be more place specific</li> <li>• Provide more detail on desired features (Incorporated feedback received at Community Focus Group on December 4).</li> </ul> <p>For example, more specifics were added to the language of the bullet on incorporating artwork into spaces, such as functional sculptures or murals of natural landscapes.</p> <p>Language within the <i>Architecture and Urban Design Character Section</i> was completely rewritten to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better describe the diverse neighborhoods and geographies of the Town Center (i.e. central (Barbur and crossroads area), North of and South of Barbur Blvd.)</li> <li>• Be more place specific.</li> <li>• More emphasis on improving connections within the center.</li> </ul> <p>For example, two new bullets have been included clarifying how development should respond along the Green Ring vs. on Green Streetscapes.</p>
		b	<p><i>PBOT Feedback and Coordination.</i> Pedestrian Infrastructure will be essential to the success of this area. Need to get feedback from PBOT to help add more specifics about desired pedestrian qualities and amenities.</p>	Design Commission	<p>Language within the character sections has been revised to align with better with transportation elements PBOT has proposed. A few examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More specific guidance for development adjacent to SW Collins St; which has plans for a future street realignment;</li> <li>• More clarification on how development should respond along the Green Ring, to align with a future concept plan.</li> <li>• More specific guidance for development along Barbur Blvd.</li> </ul>
		c	<p><i>Careful Use of Language (particularly Woonerfs).</i> Choose words and terms carefully and be sure that they are clear and informed by community vision and culture. For example, the use of the term Woonerf is one that not all cultures will be familiar with. In addition, it is out of place and out of sync with where the district is right now.</p>	Design Commission and PSC	<p>Language has been revised to be less sweeping and focus more closely on incremental changes that align with community feedback and the project plan’s urban design framework.</p>
		d	<p><i>Community Feedback.</i> More specific feedback is needed from the immigrant communities within this area.</p>	Design Commission and PSC	<p>BPS Staff held an East African Community Placemaking Focus Group on December 4, 2021. In attendance were members representing the East African immigrant community within the Town Center. The feedback received was used to strengthen language to reflect the community’s desire for multi-generational gathering and fostering of community and cultural connections.</p>

Ref #	Survey Question/Topic	Comment or Requested Amendment	Proposed by	Proposed Change
2	Background	<p>a</p> <p><i>Language on Indigenous Peoples.</i> Language referencing Indigenous history and peoples is too focused on the past, with very little reference to the current Indigenous community. Additionally, given that the City is still working on a Land Acknowledgement, referencing ancestral homelands of specific Tribes is not advised and this language should be revised.</p>	BPS Staff	<p>Staff met with the City’s Tribal Relations Office, on January 6 to review the language on Indigenous history and peoples in this character statement. In response, staff revised language within the second paragraph of the background statement to read:</p> <p><i>“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 communal and celebratory gathering, where goods were traded, and stories shared. Today, the Portland area is home to a large and thriving Indigenous community, made up of a number of tribes from the Pacific Northwest region and throughout the country, though existing development has done little to provide them with inclusive and accessible spaces.”</i></p> <p>Additional Language was added within the first paragraph of the Community Character Section to encourage:  <i>“...including spaces acknowledging past and present contributions of the area’s Indigenous Communities.”</i></p> <p>Additional Language was added to encourage <i>artworks commissioned by Native Artists (4<sup>th</sup> Bullet) and artistic signage showcasing language from the Islamic and Indigenous Communities (7<sup>th</sup> Bullet).</i></p>
		<p>b</p> <p><i>Revise Intro and 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph.</i> Language within both of these paragraphs should be edited for brevity and to streamline content.</p>	BPS Staff	<p>Language within the intro paragraph was revised and reorganized to read as follows:</p> <p><i>West Portland Town Center (WPTC) is located in outer southwest Portland, 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 Muslim communities. These groups contribute to the center’s multiple nationalities and lived experiences and today the area houses many of the area’s important cultural resources serving Islamic communities.</i></p> <p>The original last sentence to the intro paragraph was moved to paragraph four, which now reads:</p> <p><i>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 at the intersection of Barbur and Capitol Highway, 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.</i></p>

Ref #	Survey Question/Topic		Comment or Requested Amendment	Proposed by	Proposed Change
3	Diagrammatic Map and Captions	a	<p><i>Revise Caption Language for Diagrammatic Map.</i> Caption language currently seems to suggest that development should respond to the area’s auto-centric conditions, which is confusing. See language underlined below for reference:</p> <p>Rich in parks, open spaces and civic amenities, <u>development should thoughtfully respond to the area’s multi-cultural community, varied topography and auto-centric conditions</u> to create a better connected, accessible and healthier district.</p>	BPS Staff	<p>Further revised language within caption as shown below. (Deleted language has been struck through.)</p> <p>Rich in parks, open spaces and civic amenities, development should thoughtfully respond to the area’s multi-cultural community and varied topography to <del>improve its auto-centric conditions</del> and create a better connected, accessible, and healthier district.</p>
		b	<p><i>Align with Urban Design Framework.</i> The current map could do a better job at showing more of the elements mentioned in the plan’s urban design framework. Mainly, highlighting the bi-nodal centers proposed off Barbur Blvd., the North and South neighborhood areas and SW Collins main street.</p>	BPS Staff	<p>The Diagram has been revised to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visual references for neighborhoods North and South of the crossroads</li> <li>• Highlight SW Collins Street</li> <li>• Indicate the bi-nodal centers off of Barbur Blvd.</li> <li>• Remove Community Garden within Jackson Middle School property (no longer happening).</li> </ul>
4	Additional Resources Section	a	<p><i>Glossary.</i> The character statement is full of specific terminology, and it would be great to have a glossary for reference, perhaps in the additional resources section. Some of the terms to include could be multi-cultural hub, green ring, green scape, etc.</p>	Design Commission	<p>A link to the WPTC Project Plan Glossary Page has been added to the Additional Resources Section. Terms that can be referenced within the Glossary have been indicated with a subscript number 1.</p>
5	Community Character Section	a	<p><i>Plaza and Open Space.</i> The bullet on plaza spaces needs to be more specific. Age friendly amenities is just universal design (good practice) and is not specific to the characteristics of the community.</p>	Design Commission	<p>Language within the bullet on public spaces was revised to be more specific by: Deleting the existing language below:</p> <p><del>Providing public spaces with age friendly amenities (low benched seating, spaces for strollers) and flexible spaces allowing for a variety of uses (vendors, markets or large informal gatherings).</del></p> <p>Then, the following language was added to focus on public spaces within the Multi-cultural Hub (MCH):</p> <p><i>Providing multi-functional plaza spaces within the MCH 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.</i></p> <p>Additional language, below, was added focusing on public spaces along SW Collins and Huber St.:</p> <p><i>Integrating intimate courtyard spaces between buildings for neighbors to engage, particularly on Collins and Huber Streets.</i></p>
		b	<p><i>Water Features.</i> Concerned that the bullet on integrating water features will result in a lot of water features that may not tie back to Islamic community. Seems like just a call for water features and a fountain could be anywhere.</p>	Design Commission	<p>Language was revised to be more specific, reflecting feedback received from community. Revised language to read:</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>

Ref #	Survey Question/Topic		Comment or Requested Amendment	Proposed by	Proposed Change
6	Architecture and Urban Design Character Section	a	<i>Generic Language.</i> These bullets are all necessary but not specific to the area and seem too generalized. Be more specific and provide some more examples of what each of these bullets means.	Design Commission	The language in this section has been rewritten to be more specific, as noted in Item 1a above.
		b	<i>Pattern Area.</i> Look at overlaying the pieces of the character section on top of the western pattern area to get more specific about what is different or specific about this area.	Design Commission	This section was rewritten to better reflect the guidance within the pattern area language of the guidelines. For example, the introduction now speaks to the specific physical attributes of the WPTC area, including its steep topography, vista points and auto-oriented development.
		c	<i>Barbur Boulevard.</i> Recommend that language in this section area focus on how to create good urban design along Barbur Blvd.	Design Commission	Language has been revised to speak to development response along Barbur Blvd. Specifically, bullet four, which reads:  <i>Creating space for people along Barbur Blvd by incorporating larger, set-back frontages with hardscaped areas, trees and weather protection.</i>
		d	<i>More Place-Specific.</i> Recommendations in this section should focus on place-specific issues of the WPTC and relate more directly to its proposed urban design framework. Bullet points two and three begin to do this, though they could be more direct in citing sites that front SW Barbur Blvd. and/or abut Interstate 5, as an example.	BDS Staff	Language has been revised to better align with the urban design framework in the project plan, as noted in Item 1a. An additional example of this can be seen in bullets one and two which guide development to connect to nearby resources from SW Collins and Huber Streets. The resources noted in these bullets (i.e. Taylor’s Ferry Plaza, Woods Memorial Natural Area, civic/cultural resources on SW Capitol Hwy.) are highlighted within the urban design framework of the project plan.
		e	<i>Revise Existing Photo.</i> Current photo for this section does not align with the existing language.	BPS Staff	The photo for this section has been updated to align with the revised text; specifically bullet four, which speaks to development along Barbur Blvd ( <i>see Item 6c above</i> ). The photo was also part of our most recent outreach efforts with community and better illustrates the response residents are hoping to see from larger development on this civic corridor.
7	Natural Resource Section	a	<i>Highlight Specific Features.</i> Expand on what the important natural features are within this area (topography/view of Mt. Hood, etc.).	Design Commission	This section has been revised to highlight specific features. For example, language within bullet three now explicitly names Mt. Hood, Woods Memorial Natural Area and the Green Ring as resources to strengthen connections to.
		b	<i>Preservation of Trees and Views.</i> Recommend that you strengthen the Character Statement’s Environment and Natural Resource section and other elements of the plan to enhance and preserve the tree canopy and viewsheds.	Public Testimony	Language has been added within bullets four and five, which encourages the preservation of trees. See revised language below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Enhancing natural resources and habitat value, to reduce heat island impacts and ease stormwater system demand, by <u>preserving and adding trees</u>, native vegetation, and open spaces on sites throughout the town center.</i></li> <li>• <i>Planting <u>and preserving</u> larger canopy trees, particularly along and near Barbur Blvd and the freeway, to offer better habitat linkages and create a “green lung” in the heart of the center.</i></li> </ul> <p>Additionally, language has been added within bullet three to address the preservation of and connection to public views:</p> <p><i>Strengthening <u>and preserving</u> connections to nature, parks and open spaces by orienting shared spaces, <u>public</u> views and pedestrian pathways to resources including such as Mt. Hood, Woods Memorial Natural Area and the Green Ring.</i></p>



Ref #	Survey Question/Topic	Comment or Requested Amendment	Proposed by	Proposed Change
		<p>c                      Green Ring and Green Scape. Reference is made to the “‘Green Ring’ and ‘Green Scape’ facilities” of the WPTC’s urban design framework, through the descriptions in the plan these two features lack specific details as to what their urban and landscape design character entails. Either more detail is needed in the plan, or bullet point three should provide additional guidance beyond “building off” these elements.</p>	<p>Design Commission</p>	<p>The bulleted language below, has been added within the Architecture and Urban design section of the plan to clarify how development should respond to the Green Ring vs. Green Streetscapes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Encouraging development to orient active spaces and programming, with physical and visual access, to sites on and adjacent to the Green Ring.</i></li> <li>• <i>Utilizing landscaping, plazas or green design features to buffer pedestrians from traffic on sites adjacent to Green Scapes.</i></li> </ul> <p>Additional revisions to the definitions for these terms will be provided within the Glossary of the project plan.</p>

# A GUIDE TO THE DOCUMENT

Each character statement addresses an area's history and future desired character and has the same structural components.

## THE CHARACTER STATEMENT PAGES:

- **Title** serves to inform on statement area location and designation
- **Diagrammatic Map** serves to complement the text by diagramming an area's current and future defining features (i.e. connections, landmarks, natural resources, etc.)

### CHARACTER STATEMENT: MACADAM CIVIC CORRIDOR & RIVERFRONT NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

**BACKGROUND**

**HISTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Located between Portland's West Hills and the Willamette River, the Macadam area is shaped by its proximity to the river, abundant natural resources and the Central City. For centuries Native Americans, primarily the Kalapuya peoples, lived and thrived here. The Willamette River was a primary transportation corridor and the riverfront area that is now Willamette Park was part of a large network of wetlands and a popular camping location during the salmon runs. Native Americans also hunted and collected berries, nuts and plants along the riverfront for sustenance and medicinal and cultural purposes. These activities remain central to Native cultures, but development has degraded vital resources and adversely affected Tribal customs, wildlife habitat and watershed health. Buildings have been located too close to the river, vegetation has been removed and the use of impermeable building materials has been unchecked.

From the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, European Americans settled along the north-south S Macadam Avenue and constructed a parallel railroad line. During Portland's early growth much of the land between the Willamette River and S Macadam Avenue was occupied by industries that benefited from easy access to the river and the railroad. Commercial businesses emerged along the west side of S Macadam to support the industrial uses and residential neighborhoods developed to the west of the commercial corridor—in the hills with views of the river. As a result, the east side of S Macadam Avenue has large, irregular shaped lots and the west side has a traditional, well-connected block pattern.

Following World War II, much of the industry in the Macadam area relocated as technology improved and demand declined. Building boomed in the flat land between S Macadam Avenue and the river, as it was doing downtown and other close-in residential neighborhoods in the 1970s and 1980s former industrial sites were transformed into multi-dwelling residential buildings, commercial office spaces and small shopping centers. These large sites focused their attention on the river and very few provided east/west connections that improved the district's riverfront access.

Planning policies of the period emphasized new residential and commercial uses and encouraged auto-oriented, "campus-like" environments with many trees, deep street setbacks and public access to and along the river. This led to the creation of several significant waterfront developments, the greenway trail and Willamette Park, but it also resulted in buildings oriented toward large surface parking lots rather than the street and an unsafe, unwelcoming pedestrian environment.

**CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The 2035 Comprehensive Plan (2018) identifies the Macadam area as a Neighborhood Center and part of the River Pattern Area, and S Macadam Avenue as a Civic Corridor. These designations recognize the area's opportunities for growth, redevelopment, a safe and attractive pedestrian environment, and strong riverfront access.

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 Neighborhood Center.

**COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

The riverfront is culturally significant to the region's Tribal Nations and the local Native community, and nearby residents and visitors enjoy the nearly two miles of accessible Willamette River shoreline with an accessible greenway trail, Willamette Park, Heron Point Wetlands and the Cottonwood Bay natural area. New development should acknowledge and address the cultural, social, ecological and recreational value of the riverfront.

South Portland provides residents and the city with a green gateway to downtown. It's topography and proximity to the river creates three distinct geographies: 1) Northern S Macadam Avenue, 2) Southern S Macadam Avenue (South of S Broadway) and 3) the Willamette Greenway. Future development needs to respond to each area's distinct topography, scale, lot size, density, heights and uses. The northern section is dense and mid-rise, providing a transition from the high-rise South Waterfront. It is characterized by multi-family residential and office commercial buildings. In contrast, the south section exemplifies a more main street character with small-scale residential areas and businesses. This area is constrained by steep hills to the west and the river. New development here should be designed to limit scale impacts to the residential community to the west.

S Macadam Avenue, along with the train tracks, surface parking areas and large irregular lots have created east-west barriers to the river. New development should improve both the quality and quantity of public connections—both physical and visual. Strategic access points should be based on the typical Portland block pattern of 200 feet and should align with streets on the west side of S Macadam Avenue. Alignment will provide unimpeded visibility from public streets and sidewalks to the riverfront and ensure it is accessible to everyone in the district.

**ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER**

Past City policies envisioned S Macadam Avenue as a tree-lined boulevard with safe routes for both pedestrians and cars. Existing development—a mixture of river-oriented businesses, suburban-style shopping centers, office parks, and apartment buildings—does not support a public realm focused on the comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists. Future site and building design should be responsive to this vision for S Macadam Avenue and the context of the Willamette Riverfront.

On S Macadam Avenue, a few buildings from the area's industrial past have been renovated with high quality, durable materials, such as masonry or stucco. New buildings should use texture, color, scale and proportion to complement this existing fabric. Features such as ample glazing, covered entries and integrated landscaping are appropriate to this environment. When used at corner sites, they strengthen and solidify the connections across S Macadam Avenue, and down to the river.

Successful landscaping is particularly important along identified public view streets and where rights of way have limited planting areas. Along the Willamette Riverfront, existing development has traditionally used balconies, terraces and communal open spaces to promote safety and create visual interest along the greenway and river. To enrich the experience of all residents, new development should incorporate these elements along the riverfront and throughout the district, reinforcing public views to the greenway, wildlife and the river. Locate significant outdoor spaces contiguous with the greenway trail. Transition buildings away from the river setback, using step downs and step backs to erode building mass to preserve access to light and air along sidewalks and the trail and create a pleasant pedestrian experience. Design and orient buildings to facilitate east-west connections to the riverfront and promote its accessibility within the district.

**NATURAL RESOURCES + SCENIC RESOURCES**

The Macadam area's location along the Willamette River's S'ole Reach is a key factor in the continued health of endangered and threatened fish, wildlife and plants. This riverine corridor is part of the Pacific Flyway for migrating and nesting birds. Future development along the river and trails should both activate the river frontage and minimize impacts from noise and lighting on the trail and riverfront habitat. Include climatic responsive plantings to enhance wildlife habitat, soften building edges, and screen parking areas.

Natural features along the riverfront are valuable community assets, central to the cultural practices of local Tribal Communities and with lush vegetation and views of the mountains, hills, and river. Pay special attention to landscaping within the river setback and protect natural areas by preserving and planting trees along the Willamette River. Development should capitalize on this unique location by incorporating environmentally friendly building practices and techniques to preserve and protect the defining riverfront environment of the district.

Residents and visitors' value direct public access to the Willamette River from neighborhoods and businesses to the west. To strengthen this access, use landscape features to emphasize east/west connections between the greenway, the river, and the interior of the neighborhood. Scenic view streets can strengthen their visual ties to the river by becoming "green" streets. Visual connections to the Willamette and other natural features from both sides of S Macadam Avenue also portend to appreciate the area's scenic beauty. In response, building roofs and rooftops need to be carefully designed to enhance the public views. Maintaining connections ensure permeability within the district and improves air quality, health, and livability. Preserve public viewpoints close to the river and view streets that are referenced in the Macadam Plan District and the South Reach Scenic Resource Protection Plan.

## Background & Additional Resources

Provide a summary of the area's history and future policies to inform the character sections and provide a better understanding of how current conditions were created. Resources in the grey box are intended provide applicants with easier access to information, prompting more research (and outreach) during the project's development, encouraging a better understanding of how to address past harms and harness the area's most valued assets for all residents.

## Quotes

Reminder of the community voices which helped shape this document and highlights one of their main concerns.

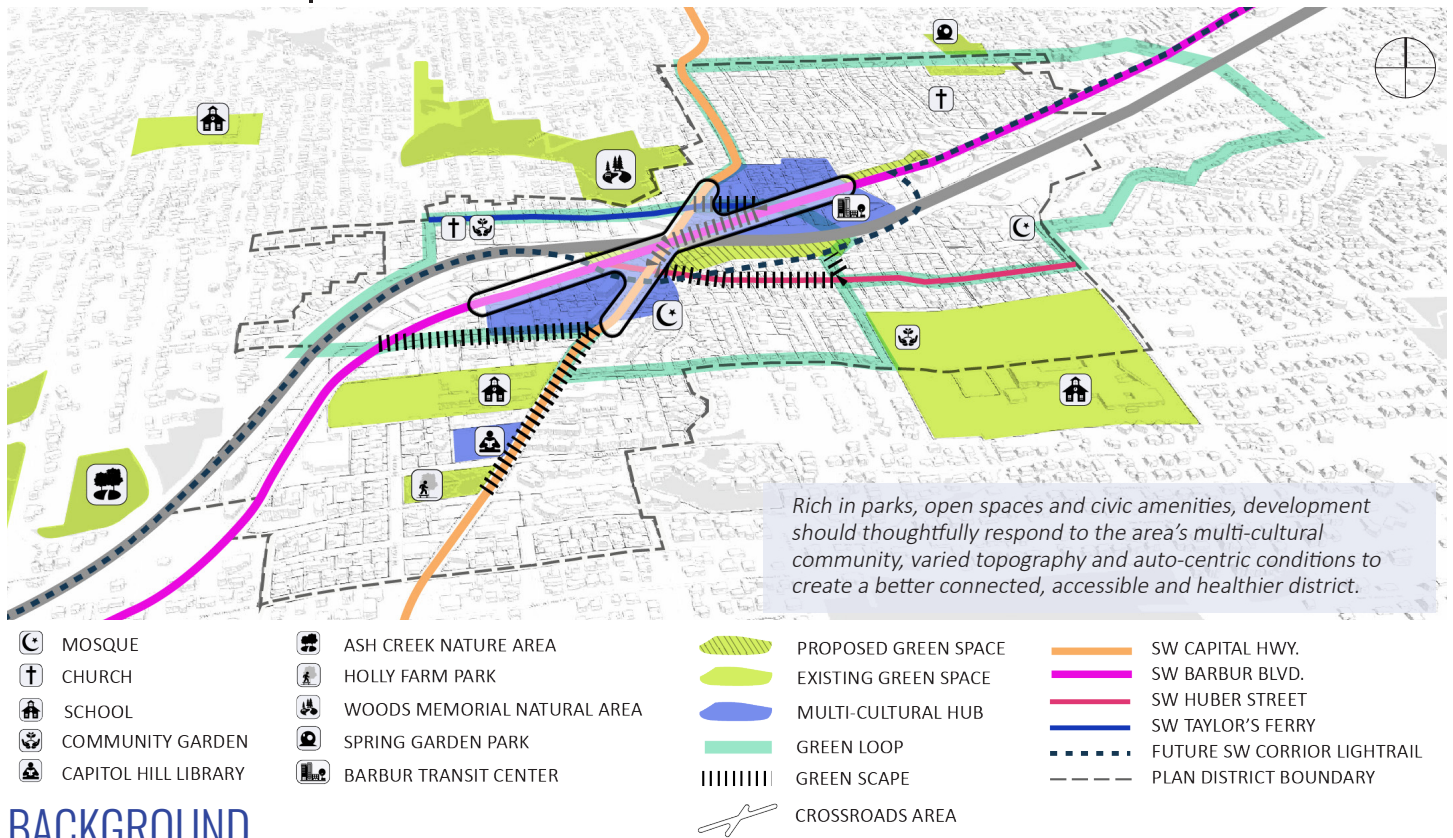
**Photos** Supports each character section by illustrating existing context and potential design approaches.

## Character Sections

Highlight an area's distinctive and unique qualities or issues. They provide ways to address them to meet Guideline 01. These approaches function as an extension of the Guidelines and are not intended to be used as a checklist of recommended solutions. Other approaches not listed may also be used.

PORTLAND CITYWIDE DESIGN GUIDELINES 1

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



## BACKGROUND

### HISTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Portland Town Center (WPTC) is home to diverse communities, nationalities and lived experiences, including long established East African and Arab Muslim communities. Located in outer southwest Portland, it is centered by the crossing of SW Capitol Highway and Barbur Boulevard, extending north and south of that intersection. South of the intersection is West Portland Park, the district's most racially diverse neighborhood and home to several important community resources that serve the Muslim and African communities in the area. Many of these resources are inaccessible by walking or biking due to the area's poor network of safe and comfortable pedestrian connections.

Originally, this area was home to the northern Kalapuyan peoples and adjacent to one of the largest collections of independent villages on the nearby Tualatin Plains (modern-day Beaverton, Hillsboro, Mountaindale, Forest Grove). When the Kalapuyan Treaty was ratified in 1855, it forced the Kalapuyan peoples out. Today there is little to no indication of this history or the presence of this community in the area.

Less than 10 years after the treaty, the Oregon California Railroad began plans for the South Pacific Railroad. This eventually became Barbur Boulevard in 1934, and commercial activity began developing along it and SW Capitol Highway. Later construction of Interstate 5 divided the area physically and visually, contributing to a more disconnected and uninviting place for people on foot.

Barbur remains the key arterial for southwest Portland and the character of the commercial areas continues to be defined by the roadway. This has resulted in designs that prioritize automobile traffic and separate businesses with large parking lots and driveways. Commercial activity remains concentrated around the intersection of Barbur and Capitol Highway, an area known as the crossroads. Nearby parks and natural areas, (i.e Woods Memorial Natural Area) while abundant, lack safe connections for pedestrians and cyclists.

### CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

Portland's Comprehensive Plan identifies West Portland as a Town Center, Barbur Boulevard as a Civic Corridor, and Capitol Highway as a Neighborhood Corridor. These designations give WTPC a key role in accommodating future development, recognizing that its terrain and system of trails and habitat areas can physically set the stage for how to shape future growth. Additionally, the plan directs future development to consider health equity outcomes at the intersection of social and physical elements of place, recognizing that opportunities for healthy lives are directly impacted by both social and physical surroundings and systems.

## 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)
- West Portland Plan (2022)
- 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.*

West Portland Town Center is home to ethnically, racially and economically diverse communities but does not offer enough diverse public spaces to support them. Design of the area’s architecture and public spaces should reflect the community’s pride in its multi-cultural and multi-generational identity, particularly within the future Multi-Cultural Hub.

A few ways to address these issues include:

- Providing public spaces with age friendly amenities (low benched seating, spaces for strollers) and flexible spaces allowing for a variety of uses (vendors, markets or large informal gatherings).
- Incorporating art on sites adjacent to high traffic corridors (SW Barbur Blvd.), pedestrian and bikeways (green scape

and ring) and open spaces, to highlight the area’s indigenous history and current multi-ethnic communities.

- Integrating water features within the design of sites. Often found in Islamic gardens and public spaces, these would recognize the area’s Islamic communities while also offer a reprieve from the impact of the area’s urban heat island.
- Considering designs that emulate (not imitate) the vernacular reflective of the current multi-cultural communities.
- Fostering inclusion with the use of multi-lingual signage.
- Improving the quality and quantity of connections to local institutions (i.e. Markham Elementary) which are valued as landmarks by the community.

## ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER



*Multnomah Station steps back and up to create a prominent, covered entry with seating, at curved corner site.*

An abundance of large roadways, surface parking, narrow sidewalks, inactive facades and little to no protection from the elements, has created a harsh and unwelcoming pedestrian experience within the Town Center. As the area transitions away from auto-oriented development, and addresses issues of health equity, architecture and urban design should respond by creating an inclusive and comfortable public realm for people, particularly on sites within the crossroads area.

A few ways to address these issues include:

- Providing opportunities for stopping and waiting on sites adjacent to transit stops and stations by designing safe, well-lit areas with accessible seating, leaning rails and weather protection.

- Encouraging pedestrian activity along major arterials by providing space adjacent to the sidewalk for businesses to utilize (café seating, produce markets, vendors), views into active spaces, covered areas and recessed entries with seating to foster interaction.
- Improving conditions caused by noise and pollution by utilizing sound absorbing materials, and orienting buildings towards views or public spaces to reduce impacts to residential units.
- Effectively managing negative impacts from massing on adjacent properties.
- Supporting the creation of an informal circulation network with accessible connections on larger sites within the town center.

## NATURAL RESOURCES + SCENIC RESOURCES



*Multnomah Village uncovered and restored Tryon Creek headwaters, while supporting the area’s 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 nor 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 address these issues include:

- Responding to changing grades with stepped or layered siting of buildings.
- Incorporating abundant vegetation to provide people a buffer from the noise and pollutants along main traffic corridors.
- Strengthening visual and physical connections to nature, parks and open

spaces by orienting shared spaces, views and pedestrian pathways to these resources, and by building off the Green Ring and Green Scape facilities.

- Enhancing natural resources and habitat value by adding trees, native vegetation, and open spaces, while also reducing heat island impacts and easing stormwater system demand.
- Planting larger canopy trees, particularly along and near Barbur Boulevard and the freeway, to offer better habitat linkages, provide greater shade and create a “green lung” in the heart of the center.
- Designing prominent surface stormwater facilities that are functional, attractive and improve the ecological health of the Tryon and Fanno watersheds, mitigating the impacts of water runoff and pollution.