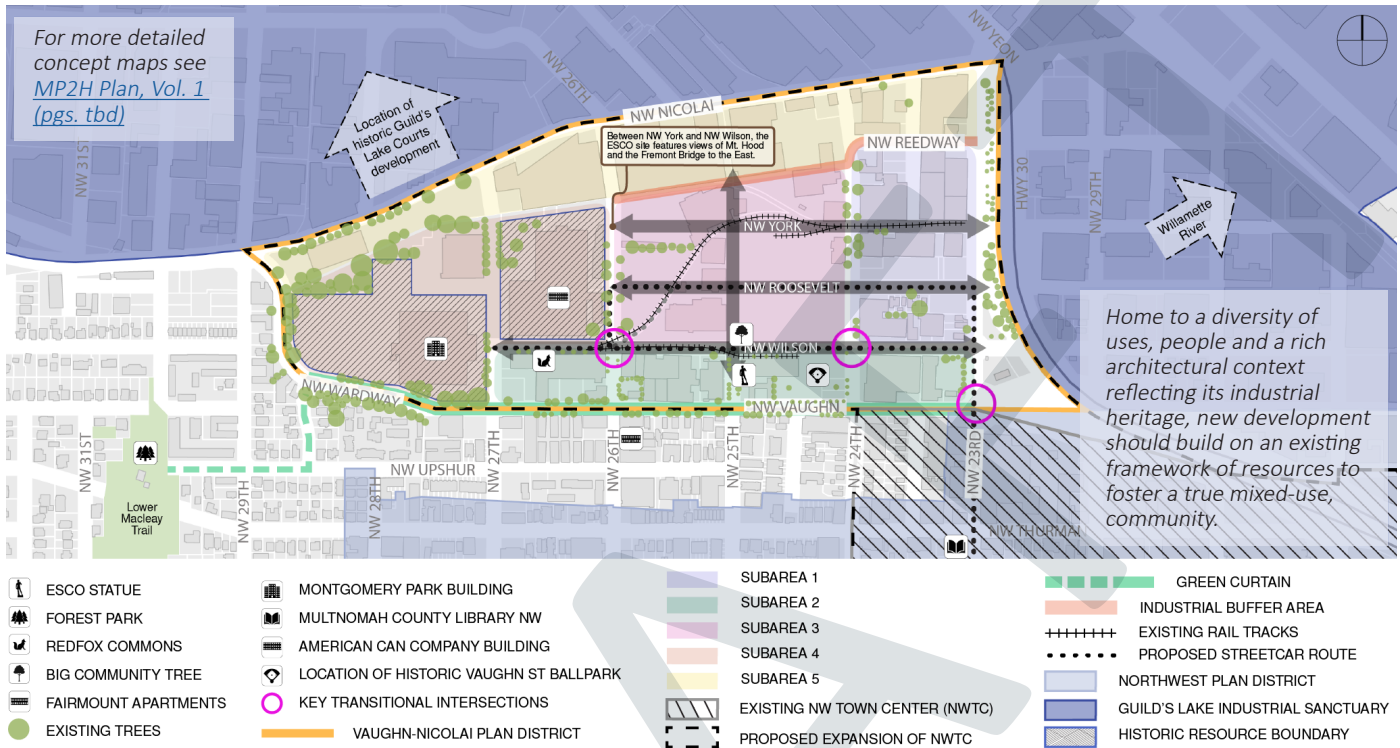


# CHARACTER STATEMENT: Montgomery Park NW Plan Area

## TOWN CENTER | CIVIC CORRIDOR



## BACKGROUND

### HISTORY & EXISTING CONDITIONS

Framed by the Guild's Lake Industrial District to the North, and the vibrant mixed-use communities of the Northwest District to the south, the Montgomery Park NW Plan Area (Montgomery Park NWPA)<sup>1</sup> is an eclectic mix of land uses and building types. The designated Vaughn Nicolai Plan District (VNPDI)<sup>1</sup>, within the expanded Northwest Town Center, has been area of continual transition and transformation. Comprised of areas with large lot sizes and building footprints, home to industrial and manufacturing uses, and areas of smaller lots with more typical lot configurations and block patterns, the district can be difficult to navigate, and offers little respite from the urban heat impact by the more intense industrial context.

Once home to a lush marshland and the low-lying Guild's Lake, this area was part of a larger ecosystem which contributed to the vibrancy of nearby Indigenous Villages on Sauvie Island and across the Willamette River. Significant changes to the landscape began in the late 1800's with the creation of the Guild's Lake Rail Yard and extended to filling of the lake in the 1920s to found a thriving industrial center. Today, hints of this wild landscape remain in the nearby hills of Forest Park and Balch Creek watershed, and Willamette River. Connected to this legacy is Portland's thriving Indigenous Community, though little acknowledgment of them or the natural environment remains in the district.

The area was the site of the 1905 Lewis and Clark Exposition which along with the Montgomery Park office building (1920), the American Can Company Complex (1921) and former ESCO steel site (1913), showcased for years Portland's community, industry, and innovation. This includes Portland's Black Community, who have strong ties to this area, beginning with the former Guild's Lake Courts (1940's/50's), a WWII housing development, and the Portland Rosebuds, a Negro minor league team who played one season (1946) at Vaughn Street Stadium. More recently, NW York St was named in honor of York, the enslaved man who was an essential member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. However, other recognition of the Black Community's contributions to NW Portland has been limited.

### CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK

Portland's Comprehensive Plan identifies the Montgomery Park NWPA as part of Portland's Industrial/Employment Areas and illustrates its proximity to several desirable amenities such as transportation (Streetcar), recreational areas (Forest Park) and commercial/retail (Pearl District/Central City). By creating the VNPDI, expanding the Northwest Town Center, and extending the Portland Streetcar, the MP2H Plan<sup>1</sup> leveraged this proximity to create a low-carbon mixed-use neighborhood. The Plan's goals and actions encouraged the preservation of the district's industrial heritage and allowed it to continue as a thriving employment hub while fostering a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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

- [PNW District Plan](#)
- [Guild's Lake Industrial Sanctuary Plan](#)
- [MP2H Plan, Vol.1 Glossary, Pg. TBD \(Terms featured in Glossary will be indicated with <sup>1</sup>\)](#)
- [Montgomery Park District Transportation Plan](#)
- [Preliminary Racial Equity Analysis](#)

"...celebrate proximity to Forest Park by extending trees and open space into the neighborhood. 'Green Curtain' instead of the 'Steel Curtain'..."

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



A rooftop community garden provides recreation and respite for residents.

This district is home to a diverse group of residents, businesses and institutions who take immense pride in its industrial heritage and diverse mix of uses. More diverse and accessible public spaces, that acknowledge the contributions of Portland's Black and Indigenous communities, are needed to accommodate this growing community. Future development, particularly in Subarea 1<sup>1</sup>, should honor the District's rich historic industrial character and provide spaces which allow for a true mix of uses, reflecting a history of ingenuity and innovation.

A few ways to address these issues include:

- Celebrating this diverse community with designs that allow flexibility between uses, encourage live work opportunities and maker spaces, particularly along NW Roosevelt St and NW York St.
- Integrating small, accessible and multi-

functional gathering spaces for community engagement, especially in Subareas 2<sup>1</sup> and 3<sup>1</sup> along NW Vaughn St, NW Wilson St and NW Roosevelt St

- Acknowledging and celebrating Portland's Black and Indigenous Communities in future development and spaces. Consider opportunities to recognize York on NW York Street, and to incorporate artwork commissioned by Black or Indigenous artists.
- Designing development that celebrates the area's historic industrial context. Consider views of Montgomery Park on NW Wilson St, preservation of dock conditions on NW York St or remnants of the streetcar tracks in Subarea 1 and 3.
- Incorporating spaces which provide opportunities for recreation, including playgrounds and community gardens.

## ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER



Recent development on NW Wilson St complements the area's industrial heritage through use of building forms and materials.

A century of transition has created a diverse landscape of urban forms and uses in this Center, dividing it into five distinct Subareas<sup>1</sup>. To the East, Subarea 1 provides a transition from the congestion of Hwy 30, while Subarea 2 provides a transition from the residential communities to the south. Adjacent to these is Subarea 3, which is mostly vacant and home to the former ESCO Steel site. Its size creates both a challenge, due to a lack of connectivity between NW 24th Ave and NW 26th Ave, and an opportunity with the arrival of the Portland Streetcar on NW Wilson St and NW Roosevelt St. Subarea 5<sup>1</sup>, along NW Nicolai St, is home to the area's most intense industrial uses and is an important buffer for the district. To the West, the significant historic resources in Subarea 4<sup>1</sup>, the American Can Complex and Montgomery Park, are visible throughout and beyond the district. Each subarea is rooted in rich industrial character that new development should preserve, emulate and celebrate while also creating opportunities for a vibrant, safe and resilient mixed-use center.

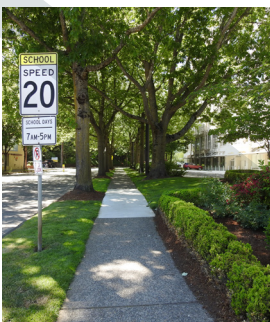
A few ways to support these issues include:

- Improving urban heat island conditions by utilizing climatically responsive design

approaches, like lighter building colors or roofing materials, within Subareas 1, 2 & 3.

- Buffering development from the noise pollution on sites near Hwy 30 and from industrial uses within Subarea 5. Consider the utilization of sound absorbing materials, landscaping and careful building orientation.
- Improving public realm conditions, along NW Wilson St and NW Roosevelt St by designing frontages to allow wider sidewalks, green or open spaces, weather protection and trees.
- Referencing the area's industrial heritage, typologies, forms and materials, with designs that feature elements of industrial character, such as brick detailing, fenestration patterns, roof forms or wood construction.
- Providing accessible, north-south connections to NW Wilson and NW Vaughn, within Subarea 3, to improve access to destinations like Montgomery Park, Forest Park and the Willamette Riverfront.
- Supporting the development of NW Wilson and Roosevelt as multi-modal streets by incorporating age and family friendly seating, spaces for strollers and bikes, and weather protection near transit stops.

## NATURAL + SCENIC RESOURCES



Large, mature trees and vegetation along the public right-of-way on NW Wardway offer links to nature and relief from heat.

At first glance, this transitioning industrial district offers no connection to nature. However, a maturing tree canopy in the western Subarea 5, an abundance of scenic views (West Hills, Mt. Hood and the Fremont Bridge), and rich natural history, provide this district with a foundational framework of natural and scenic resources.

New development should reference, preserve and build on this framework and address the benefit of and community's desire for a more verdant district. One with easy access to its own green spaces, as well as improved, and direct, connections to nearby Forest Park and the River.

A few ways to address these issues include:

- Signaling Forest Park through the preservation and planting of trees along NW Vaughn St, extending the existing tree canopy along NW Wardway St to create a "Green Curtain"<sup>1</sup> leading into the district.
- Strengthening and providing opportunities,

particularly on NW Wilson St, to connect to and reference the Willamette Riverfront.

- Reducing heat island impacts and easing stormwater system demand by preserving and adding large canopy trees, native vegetation and open spaces on sites within Subareas 1, 2 and 3.
- Designing prominent surface stormwater facilities that are functional, attractive and enhance the nearby Balch Creek Watershed.
- Incorporating connections to nature, parks and open spaces by orienting shared spaces, public views and pedestrian pathways to resources, including views of Mt. Hood and Fremont Bridge on NW 26th Ave, access to 'Big Tree' <sup>1</sup> on NW 25th and Forest Park along NW Vaughn St.
- Mitigating impacts from pollution by utilizing a vegetative buffer on sites along NW 23rd Ave and Subarea 5.