

City of Portland Historic Landmarks Commission Design Advice Request (DAR)

Date: Monday, August 5, 2024
To: City of Portland Landmarks Commission **From:** Megan Neill, PE, Design Phase Project Manager, Multnomah County
Cc: Tim Heron, Senior City Planner
Subject: City of Portland Historic Landmarks Commission Design Advice Request for Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge

Attachments/Enclosures: Site/Vicinity Plan Map, Presentation

INTRODUCTION

As discussed at the June 10, 2024, briefing, since 2016, Multnomah County has been working to create an Earthquake Ready Burnside Bridge (EQRB). The proposed project would replace the existing Burnside Bridge with a new movable bridge in approximately the same location and length as the existing bridge. The project area is shown on the attached figure. Project benefits include:

- The Project will build the first seismically resilient vehicular crossing in downtown Portland that will be immediately usable after a major earthquake.
- The new Burnside Bridge will support emergency relief efforts, reunite families, connect people to critical services, and serve an instrumental role in a faster, more efficient economic recovery for the region and state.
- The new bridge will have 17-foot-wide bicycle and pedestrian paths on each side of the bridge. Crash-worthy barriers separating motorized vehicles from active transportation users will significantly increase safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with disabilities. Improved active transportation and transit options will support a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle.
- The Project will improve transit facilities, including upgrades to nearby bus stops and the retention of the eastbound bus-only lane. The new bridge will also be built to accommodate a future Portland Streetcar line.
- The Project will add new or improved ADA-compliant sidewalks that connect to nearby transit facilities, creating safer, more comfortable access for people with disabilities.
- Before construction begins, the Project will make permanent improvements to bicycle and pedestrian paths along detour routes.

This alternative (known as the “Replacement Long Span”) was selected because it has the fewest columns in unstable soil on the east side, has fewer columns and obstructions under the bridge in Waterfront Park, more space for bicyclists and pedestrians, the fewest impacts to natural resources, the least impact to the Burnside Skatepark, and is the least expensive among the bridge options studied.

Because the existing Burnside Bridge is a historic landmark, its removal requires a Type IV Demolition Review for which the HLC will be providing a recommendation to the City Council. At our upcoming DAR, the Project Team is seeking guidance from the HLC on the application of the approval criteria to this Project. In addition, as discussed at the briefing, we will also be sharing what we heard through the public engagement process in July. However, the focus of this DAR will not be on the design. At a separate land use review following City Council's decision on the demolition review, the HLC will consider the details of the proposed new bridge elements within the Portland Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, and the Project Team will schedule a second DAR with the HLC to discuss that Type III Historic Resource Review application.

DISCUSSION OF TYPE IV APPROVAL CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS FOR THE HLC

The approval criteria for a Type IV Demolition Review include the following:

- Portland Zoning Code section 33.846.080.C.1.a-f
- Portland Comprehensive Plan 2035
- Portland Central City 2035 (Central City Plan)

33.846.080 C. Approval criteria. *Proposals to demolish a historic resource will be approved if the review body finds that one of the following approval criteria is met:*

1. Demolition of the resource has been evaluated against and, on balance, demolition has been found to be equally or more supportive of relevant goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, and any relevant area plans, than preservation, rehabilitation, or reuse of the resource. The evaluation must consider:

- a. The resource's age, condition, historic integrity, historic significance, design or construction rarity, value to the community, and association with historically marginalized individuals or communities;*
- b. The economic consequences for the owner and the community;*
- c. The merits of demolition;*
- d. The merits of development that could replace the demolished resource, either as specifically proposed for the site or as allowed under the existing zoning;*
- e. The merits of preserving the resource, taking into consideration the purposes described in Subsection A; and*
- f. Any proposed mitigation for the demolition.*

2. – 3. [Not applicable]

Reference documents that could further support the narrative response for context and background, but not the part of the approval criteria, include:

- National Register Nomination of Burnside Bridge (2012)
- National Register Nomination for the Skidmore/ Old Town Historic District (1975)

Overall Approach to the Application

Unlike more traditional development proposals (e.g., an alteration to a building on a lot), the EQRB Project has already been the subject of extensive analysis. As a transportation project that has received

USDOT funding, the Project is subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Federal requirements protecting public or private historic sites. These regulations required Multnomah County to conduct a detailed evaluation of all feasible and prudent alternatives that avoid impacts to the historic bridge. As part of that evaluation, the County completed a wide range of technical reports on topics such as climate change, cultural resources, economic impacts, environmental justice, social/neighborhood, equity and health impacts. These project resources will also serve to address the City's Type IV approval criteria.

In order to provide a systematic approach to the multifaceted balancing effort outlined in the approval criteria, the Project Team is proposing a three-step analysis within the narrative:

1. Describe the Project as it relates to demolition evaluation factors (a) through (f).
2. Determine which Comprehensive Plan and Central City Plan goals and related policies apply to this demolition request and how these policies relate to demolition evaluation factors (a) through (f).
3. Explain why, on balance, applicable Comprehensive Plan and Central City Plan goals and policies support the demolition and replacement of the Burnside Bridge.

Question 1: Does the HLC have any concerns or recommendations regarding this approach?

Approval Criteria - Factors

Factor a. The resource's age, condition, historic integrity, historic significance, design or construction rarity, value to the community, and association with historically marginalized individuals or communities

In response to this factor, the application narrative will summarize information about the existing bridge related to its age, condition, historic integrity, historic significance, design or construction rarity, value to the community, and association with historically marginalized individuals or communities. Much of this information has already been documented as part of the NEPA review process and we will provide it to HLC for its consideration.

Question 2: Are there specific aspects of this factor that the HLC would like to see highlighted in the application narrative? For example, are there specific associations with historically marginalized individuals or communities that should be emphasized?

Factors b. and c. The economic consequences for the owner and the community and the merits of demolition

Factors b and c are closely related. Because the owner of the bridge is Multnomah County, the economic consequences for the owner also impact the community, and the economic benefits related to emergency response and disaster recovery are important merits of the proposal. Given that, the Project Team is considering addressing them together to avoid redundancy in the application. In response to these factors, the application narrative will summarize the costs and benefits of demolition relative to the alternatives, including no action and seismically retrofitting the existing bridge.

Question 3: Are there specific aspects of these factors (b and c) that the HLC would like to see highlighted in the application narrative or are there any concerns with the proposed approach?

Factor d. The merits of development that could replace the demolished resource, either as specifically proposed for the site or as allowed under the existing zoning

In addition to seismic resilience, as noted in the introduction of this memorandum, there are many benefits associated with the proposed Project; for example, the proposed improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities are very supportive of the City's Comprehensive Plan and Central City Plan policies. The Type IV Demolition application narrative will describe the merits of the proposed bridge with a focus on function. The design details in the historic district will be the focus of a later Type III Historic Resource Review application. However, it has already been determined that the bridge design on the west side will use girders to avoid the need for any superstructures that would impact views to and from the Skidmore/Old Town national historic landmark district. This is consistent with the direction provided at the 2021 DAR.

Question 4: Are there specific aspects of factor d that the HLC would like to see highlighted in the application narrative?

Factor e. The merits of preserving the resource, taking into consideration the purposes described in Subsection A

The potential to seismically retrofit the existing bridge was studied extensively during the NEPA process and, as a part of the Type IV Demolition application, we will be providing this information to HLC for your consideration. In summary, while a seismic retrofit of the existing bridge is technically feasible, it is very challenging, costly, and will have a detrimental impact on the historic character of the existing bridge. As a result of the necessary retrofit improvements, it would not preserve the historic status of the Burnside Bridge. It would require replacing much of the eastern approach, the entire bridge deck and bridge railings, the movable span mechanical and electrical elements, the east in-water pier, the iconic masonry control towers, and possibly even the movable span leaves. In addition, major retrofitted elements include: installing new foundations with large diameter concrete shafts; encasing the two major in-water bridge piers with thick concrete jackets; and conducting major retrofit to all of the other piers, bents, and structural elements. Because of these changes, the bridge would no longer be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the Enhanced Seismic Retrofit Alternative is the only alternative that would remove the Burnside Skatepark, a National Register eligible resource.

Question 5: Are there specific aspects of this factor that the HLC would like to see highlighted in the Type IV Demolition application narrative?

Factor f. Any proposed mitigation for the demolition

Because the project is receiving federal funds, it was the subject of a NEPA review process, including a Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. The Programmatic Agreement documents the County's obligations to implement Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Because of this, mitigation for historic resource impacts has already been identified. The Programmatic Agreement includes the following Mitigation for Adverse Impact to the Burnside Bridge:

- Salvage and Reuse
 - Exploring options to salvage and reuse components of the current Burnside Bridge (examples: railings, mechanical components, etc.).
- Interpretive Displays
 - Three displays to be located on the bridge, focusing on the Burnside Bridge history and significance including social and civic importance.
- Three-Dimensional Scanning
 - A three-dimensional scan will be made available to the public.
- Video Documentation
 - Four videos showing opening and closing operations, interior of the bridge cab and processes, internal bridge machinery in operation, and demolition and construction.
- Documentation
 - Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) documentation details and requirements will be prescribed by National Park Service.
- Archival Records
 - Inventory of manuscript and photographic holdings and review of unarchived materials resulting in digitizing and making new submissions to archive records for the Burnside Bridge.
- Publication
 - Scholarly publication including history of lower Willamette River crossings addressing precontact crossings, ferries, and bridges, including historical themes and major chronological periods. The publication will also include documentation of the bridge's civic and social importance.
- Public Event
 - A half-day event for the public will celebrate and acknowledge the history of the existing bridge.
- Three-Dimensional Model
 - The model will be at a scale of 1:500, designed for public display, and fabricated of durable materials.
- Wikipedia Entry
 - Update the Wikipedia entry to include the broader social and cultural context, corrected links, and link to the Multnomah County Burnside Bridge website.
- Oregon Encyclopedia Entry
 - Develop an entry for the online Oregon Encyclopedia including the role of the Burnside Bridge and its significance.
- Book Update
 - Develop an online pamphlet focusing on the replacement of the Burnside Bridge compatible with the format of *The Big and Awesome Bridges of Portland and Vancouver* book to be available to the public and educators.

Associated Requirements in the PA (not directly Section 106 Mitigation for Adverse Impact to Bridge)

- Avoid or minimize Construction Vibratory Effects on Built Historic Resources
 - Notification to SHPO and consulting parties and prepare a Treatment Plan
- Historic features of buildings and structures preserved in situ and protected from damage

- Contractor will prepare a Protection Plan

The mitigation will be described in detail and documented in the Type IV Demolition application for the HLC's consideration.

Question 6: Are there specific aspects of the mitigation that the HLC would like to see highlighted in the Type IV Demolition application narrative (factor f)?

Goals and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan and Central City Plan

The approval criteria require consideration of the relevant goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan and relevant area plans (in this case, that includes the Central City Plan) with a finding that -- on balance -- the goals and policies have been found to be equally or more supportive of the demolition. The 2035 Comprehensive Plan (May 2023) provides a more detailed explanation of how Plan policies are weighed and balanced in decision-making, noting that:

The particular policies that matter more will change from one decision to another. There is no set formula — no particular number of “heavier” policies equals a larger set of “lighter” policies. In cases where there are competing directions embodied by different policies, City Council may choose the direction they believe best embodies the plan as a whole.

To date, the Project Team has identified more than 150 Comprehensive Plan and Central City Plan policies that are potentially applicable to the Project. These policies elaborate on the Comprehensive Plan's Guiding Principles, which include the following ones directly applicable to this EQRB Project:

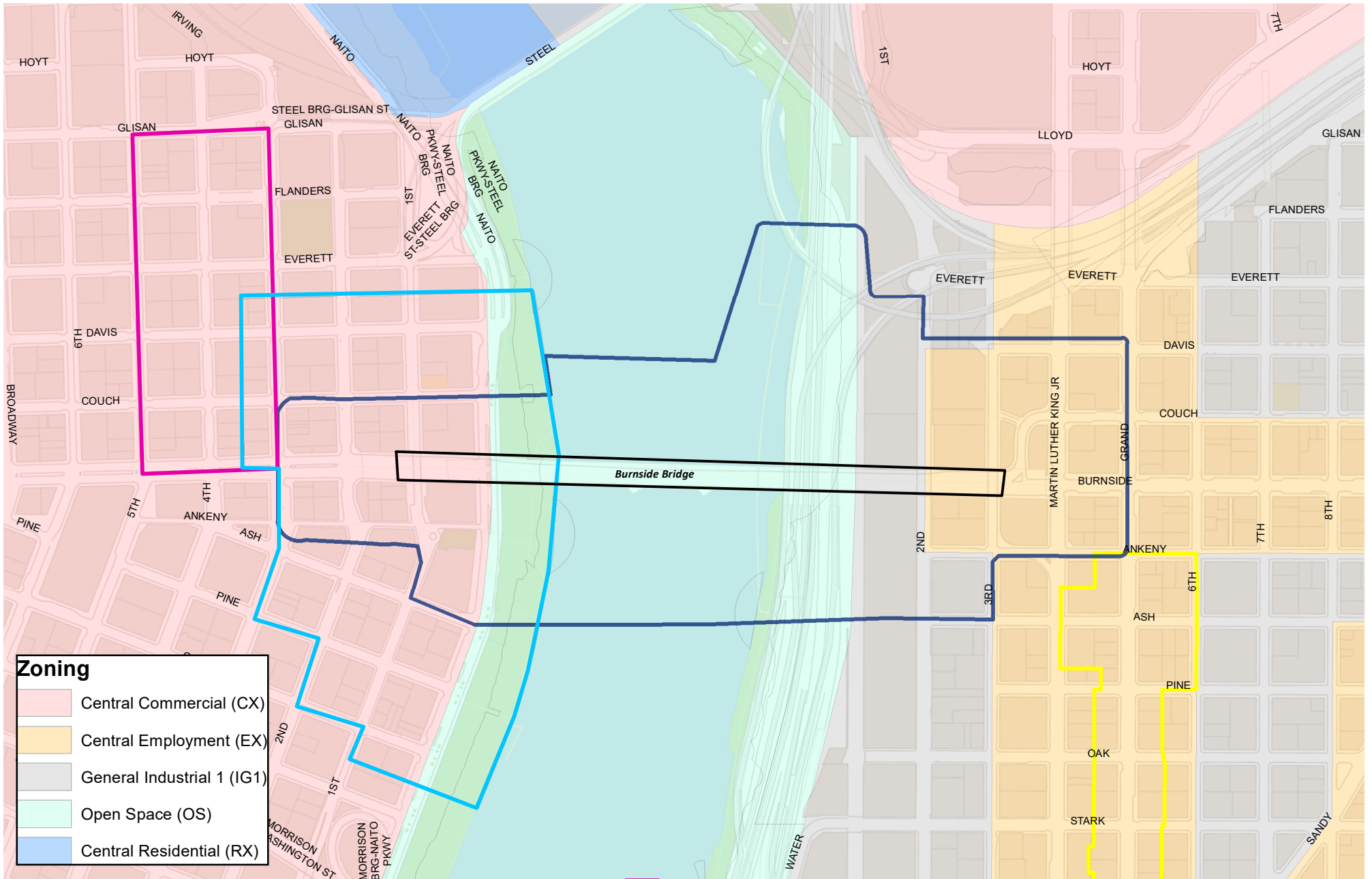
- **Economic Prosperity.** Support a low-carbon economy and foster employment growth, competitiveness and equitably distributed household prosperity.
- **Human Health.** Avoid or minimize negative health impacts and improve opportunities for Portlanders to lead healthy, active lives.
- **Environmental Health.** Weave nature into the city and foster a healthy environment that sustains people, neighborhoods, and fish and wildlife. Recognize the intrinsic value of nature and sustain the ecosystem services of Portland's air, water and land.
- **Equity.** Promote equity and environmental justice by reducing disparities, minimizing burdens, extending community benefits, increasing the amount of affordable housing, affirmatively furthering fair housing, proactively fighting displacement, and improving socio-economic opportunities for under-served and under-represented populations. Intentionally engage under-served and under-represented populations in decisions that affect them. Specifically recognize, address and prevent repetition of the injustices suffered by communities of color throughout Portland's history.
- **Resilience.** Reduce risk and improve the ability of individuals, communities, economic systems, and the natural and built environments to withstand, recover from, and adapt to changes from natural hazards, human-made disasters, climate change, and economic shifts.
 - **Invest to reduce risks** – The Comprehensive Plan, including the Citywide Systems Plan, identifies infrastructure investments to reduce risks of failure and increase the city's ability to withstand and respond to a natural disaster. Improvements are planned to protect Portland's critical infrastructure services such as drinking water, sewage

treatment and bridges. These systems are necessary to protect Portlanders' safety and security and support the region's economy. For example, infrastructure investments planned for Portland's secondary groundwater supply in outer northeast Portland enables water to be provided when the primary Bull Run system needs to be supplemented.

Based on its preliminary analysis, the Project Team has found that the EQRB project is supportive of these principles and policies. For example, improving the City's ability to recover from a major earthquake, the Project supports the principles of "Economic Prosperity," "Resilience," and "Invest to Reduce Risks." The proposed improvements to transit, bicycle, pedestrian and ADA facilities would support the principles of "Human Health," "Environmental Health," and "Equity."

The Project Team realizes how challenging it can be to synthesize this amount of information, and will provide an analysis explaining why, on balance, the Project Team believes that the applicable Comprehensive Plan and Central City Plan goals and policies support the demolition and replacement of the Burnside Bridge.

Question 7: Are there certain Comprehensive Plan or Central City Plan policies or topics that the HLC would like to see explored in more detail in the application narrative?



Zoning

- Central Commercial (CX)
- Central Employment (EX)
- General Industrial 1 (IG1)
- Open Space (OS)
- Central Residential (RX)

- Project Area
- New Chinatown / Japantown Historic District
- Skidmore / Old Town Historic District
- East Portland / Grand Avenue Historic District



EQRB
HISTORIC DISTRICTS