

urban design assessment

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN

PORTLAND PLAN



january 2008

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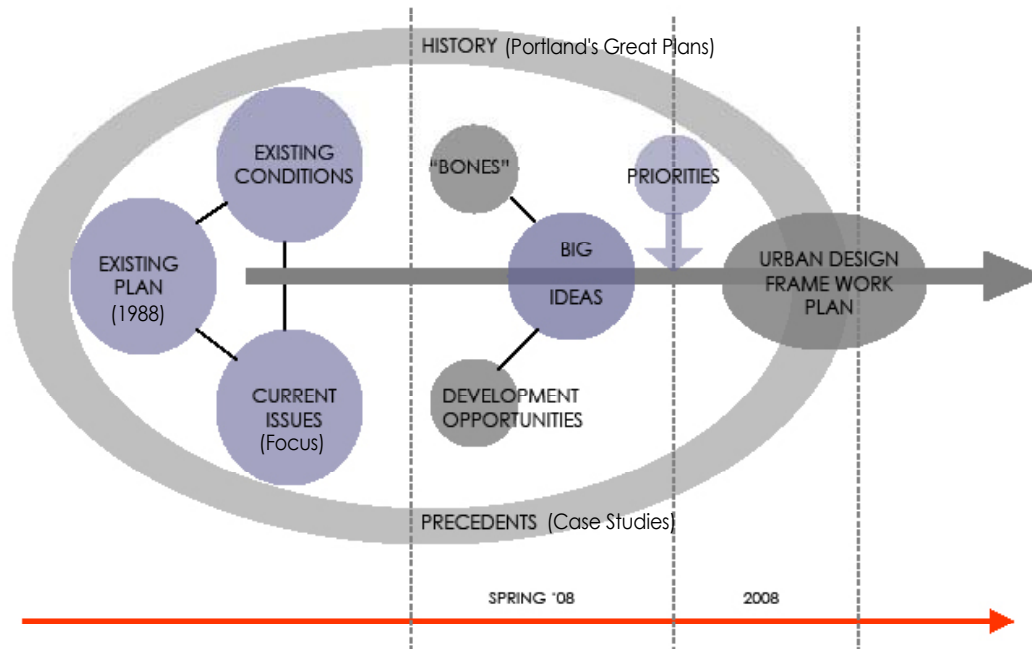
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Urban Design Framework Plan

foreword

Cities are most exciting when the old and the new co-exist in authentic ways. This assessment of Portland's Central City is prepared with the attitude that understanding the city's current conditions and its future potential are both necessary to develop a meaningful urban design framework. To capture the best of the city, such a framework should identify what aspects of it are most worth preserving, enhancing or creating. Knowing our qualitative assets and future potential is an important base upon which a new 20 year plan should be prepared.

This work contains only the early pieces leading up to a base urban design framework for Portland's Central City. It contains six seemingly discreet but connected areas of investigation. These include a history of great Portland plans, a study of relevant precedents (historical and contemporary case studies), an analysis of the current 1988 Central City Plan, existing conditions impacting urban design, an evaluation of evolving areas and finally, a discussion of three related ongoing concerns, FAR (floor area ratios), height and skyline. The first two of these investigations (history and case studies) are placed towards the end of this document to underscore their role as important background.

All of this work is also available online* and formatted to be an ongoing information resource on aspects impacting Central Portland's urban design.

Assembled by the Urban Design Group in the Bureau of Planning, this effort brings together the work of many of the Bureau of Planning's experts and those of other city bureaus. It has been advised by a Resource Group comprised of Portland's best planning and creative talents.

It is our shared hope that the work contained in these pages becomes a ready reference and resource for small and large urban design considerations in Portland's Central City.

Arun Jain
Chief Urban Designer
January, 2008

*www.portlandonline.com/planning/urbandesign

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introduction

There are number of issues around urban quality that matter as we develop plans for Portland's future. Although these issues vary across geographies, demographics and scales, their physical translations impact our perceptions, sense of well being and use of the city in part and as a whole.

The challenge before us is to recognize these variations and provide the city and its citizens with an overall attitude and approach that fosters great civic spaces in an appealing, functional and safe physical environment. Much of this synthesis can be accomplished by clear urban design ideas.

This Urban Design Assessment illustrates important considerations and issues that must be addressed in a new urban design framework diagram for Central Portland. It also establishes some additional approaches that will inform the Portland Plan Process in general and help the Central City in particular.



executive summary



urban design in Portland's Central City

The impact of good urban design in Portland's Central City is far reaching and comprehensive.

Urban design concepts, goals and actions are embedded throughout our current guiding document: the 1988 Central City Plan. Successful implementation of them has helped Portland acquire its reputation as a model city with great urban design.

Over time, the 1988 Central City Plan's initial clarity has been eroded by changes in context, inconsistent revisions to the plan's subdistricts, and new priorities. This erosion has often impacted Portland's ability to create coherent and vibrant urban places. This in turn has limited the role such places can play as economic and cultural catalysts.

A new Central Portland Plan offers a unique opportunity to re-evaluate the role of urban design in city building and enhancement.



policy context & background

Urban design issues and concerns are addressed in several places throughout the 1988 Central City Plan. The document's Concept Plan, Policy 12 (Urban Design) Map, and the Central City Plan Map all provide such direction. Policies 11 and 8 address Historic Preservation and Parks & Open Spaces respectively. At the local scale each subdistrict also has its own urban design map. All of these sources guide urban design responses at multiple levels.

This distribution of intent has helped ensure that urban design considerations are not lost in specific development efforts. Unfortunately, these multiple sources of guidance can also be confusing, resulting in a frequent loss of collective focus and distorted outcomes. This is amplified by progressive inconsistencies brought about through periodic plan amendments of smaller plan areas.



current conditions & trends

Within Central Portland there are several physical and community-enhancing issues that help frame its future urban design concerns:



development issues

- **development energy.** The 1988 Central Portland Plan did not anticipate much of the positive development energy since (e.g. the Pearl District), or the desire for more downtown density (as seen in Ankeny Plaza and Skidmore Fountain). Additionally, there are new retail and mixed use concentrations (e.g. Brewery Blocks and Stark Street), along with new location-based place making opportunities

(e.g. bridgeheads). These developments have created new areas of focus and opportunity while also challenging the city's designated retail core.

- **sufficient development capacity.** The 2007 Central Portland Development Capacity Study estimates that at current (development) absorption rates, it would take 40-60 years to exhaust its identified development capacity. The most immediate urban design implications of this study are that changes in entitlements such as height, FAR (Floor Area Ratio), and bonuses should not be driven by the perception that Portland's Central City has a shortage of developable land. There may, however, be fewer options for uses requiring large sites.
- **maximizing entitlements.** Steady increases in project development costs are compelling larger floor areas and greater height. This has resulted in many Central City developers seeking to maximize their FAR potential by purchasing FAR from properties unlikely to use it. This is testing allowable building envelopes and stressing both ground level relationships (with public spaces) and existing above ground views and solar access.
- **open space.** Continued growth and change will generate ongoing pressure to provide public open space and recreation opportunities in deficit areas. Connections that network such resources together will avoid duplication. As such assets become difficult to obtain and manage, more dynamic and responsive relationships with evolving adjacent land uses will be needed. For example, to the extent the Central City absorbs more residences, existing and new open space amenities will need to accommodate increasing demands for both active and passive recreation.
- **transportation.** Although the city has a well-established hierarchy of streets (i.e. collectors, arterials etc.), it is less clear how their design and character should vary. This often negatively impacts the social life and quality of the Central City's urban environment.
- **green city infrastructure.** Introducing nature back into the urban environment is a growing aspiration in Central Portland. Ongoing efforts should help progressively manage heat island impacts and stormwater runoff and create sustainable urban environments that extend beyond the pursuit of maximizing the number of individual LEED rated buildings.
- **community building amenities.** Portland's Central City has significant clusters of public-serving and community-building amenities such as grocery stores, libraries, schools and places of worship. Our community plans and urban design strategies should more directly consider these assets as essential ingredients that reinforce and anchor neighborhoods.

executive summary



opportunities

- **an urban design framework plan.** This framework will clearly identify which parts of the city should be protected, enhanced or created. These “bones” of the city are elements that must endure over time. Such a framework will provide a reliable base for testing development scenarios without giving up its most desirable assets. A subsequent Urban Design Plan will then best capture Portland’s public space and place aspirations.
- **emphasizing portland’s architectural identity.** The competition between cities to stay relevant and attractive is increasing. Identifying, pursuing and enhancing identity is a key to a city’s resilience. This suggests Portland could consider (in addition to Mt. Hood) a distinctive skyline, iconic buildings, or other identity-giving elements.
- **setting high standards and aspirations.** Portland’s great competitive advantage as a city has been its ability to push known planning and urban design boundaries and pursue high standards. Clarifying key urban design objectives with greater site specificity will help maintain this edge.
- **leveraging amenities.** Communities are increasingly asking that entitlements such as height and FAR be treated as tools to realize desired architectural outcomes and leverage neighborhood specific amenities.
- **encouraging environmental sustainability.** Portland is known for its “green” public and private investments. To build on this reputation, Portland should pursue Central City and district-wide “green” systems, including more integrated and contiguous habitat corridors. District-wide green infrastructure should complement LEED rated architecture.
- **better analytical tools.** As the ability to generate computer based study models become cheaper and easier, three-dimensional illustrations can highlight necessary urban design and planning trade-offs.
- **better implementation tools.** Portland should accelerate its efforts to respond dynamically to changing development conditions and potential. Charrettes (i.e. focused two - three day work sessions) have helped articulate responses to shared public and private aspirations. The informal nature of these design sessions has ensured creative and enduring urban design outcomes. Outcomes of such efforts have resulted in similar, flexible urban design and planning approaches should be considered.

challenges

- **linking policy with implementation.** Portland is not short on aspirations. Yet for its most important public spaces and places, it lacks clear short and long term implementation tools. Properly developed, these tools can better integrate the design and development of the public realm with appropriate incentives for complementary private responses.
- **short and long term strategies to concentrate limited development energy.** In a Central City with ample development capacity, realizing an active and vibrant public realm will depend on the city’s ability to concentrate and populate its more desired places and corridors. Short-term strategies that support this are important to ensure cumulative growth and vibrancy.
- **closing gaps and inconsistencies.** The composite of currently adopted subdistrict plans illustrates discontinuities along newer subdistrict boundaries, unequal levels of plan detail, and identifies areas where the plan no longer reflects what is happening on the ground. A future plan should close these gaps and incorporate better ways to minimize them.
- **greater urban design clarity and related performance criteria.** Many of the conflicts embodied in successive plans, visions and designs occur when there is poor translation between the designs that impact public places and associated city goals. A new urban design plan should clearly identify the “importance” of the city’s most significant places. Understanding the ongoing role of these “bones” will help inform how they must be designed and maintained over time.
- **integrating public and private infrastructure and community building assets.** Strategic consideration of the city’s most important public and private assets should become an explicit basis for new interventions, strategies and plans.
- **balancing community amenities.** Many of Central Portland’s districts do not have a balanced mix of “community-enhancing” anchors (e.g. community centers, schools, daycare, libraries, etc.). Providing such anchors can boost or ensure more balanced development and promote social equity. Greater urban design attention around these anchors will reinforce their associated communities.
- **refining existing street classification.** The current street classifications for Central Portland do not clarify the urban design role of the city’s transportation network and identify the segments that have the most significant place making roles.



- **integrating transportation assets with urban design.** Flexible standards that allow more creatively designed public streets will blend better with Portland's increasingly sophisticated private streets. This will help create a more integrated and seamless public realm. Enhancements to bridge design and lighting would help such public infrastructure to be recognized as iconic and distinctive urban structures. Focused development strategies that help transit station areas become unique and distinctive places will also help create urban design quality where it will be most symbiotic.
- **connected and overlapping networks.** The intersections of transportation, open space and green infrastructure as well as community amenities should be seen as unique opportunities to create great public places. Such places should either help create or capitalize the natural intersections of such networks. Such integration will ensure cumulative urban quality in a denser city. Using an increasing understanding of how people navigate and congregate in real time will greatly improve our responses.
- **connecting open spaces.** Most of Central Portland is within a three-minute walk to public open space. However many of these open spaces are not well interconnected. For example, the Eastbank Esplanade, North Park Blocks and the Classical Chinese Garden would all benefit from integration into a clear and linked open space system.
- **creating a relationship with the river.** Though Central Portland seeks to bind both sides of the river, visual and physical river access remains discontinuous. Rethinking the spatial arrangement and functions of the city including the riverfront can significantly improve this.



key questions

Good urban design can be realized in many ways. A good urban design framework can help clarify the role of Portland's Central City over the next twenty years. For example, should our desire for good urban design be expressed through a collection of place-making tools (standards and guidelines) in response to broader policy considerations, or should our refined ideas for the quality of the public realm become an important basis for the plan's formulation?

Independent of a preferred approach, Portland should ponder the following key urban design concerns:

citywide civic quality and pride

To what extent can the location and adaptability of public infrastructure cumulatively contribute to enhanced city identity and public pride?

adaptive infrastructure

How can transportation and open space networks become unique opportunities in a new Central Portland Plan? How can public open space infrastructure adapt to changing surrounding land uses?

environmental integration

How can urban design assist in a more sustainable and appealing urban environment?

Are there particular strategies that may encourage natural systems to reassert themselves in urban settings (e.g. day-lighting creeks and linking urban and natural swales)?

better utilization of high value sites

Should urban design help determine the highest and best uses for Portland's most important locations? Should a deep understanding of location specific assets drive their development or market driven opportunity?

How can such awareness encourage unique and integrated strategies to develop these special locations?

district and neighborhood enhancements

What community amenities are missing in Central Portland's districts?

How can these amenities become catalysts or community anchors that ensure a high quality of life?

In what ways can these be leveraged with development?

connective tissue

What strategies will better integrate the urban design of public as well as private investments such as streets?

How can we enhance and preserve Central Portland's greatest spaces (including the Willamette River) and create appropriate networks that connect them?

better tools

What tools can the city use to respond to rapidly changing areas to ensure a synergistic relationship between developments, neighborhoods and civic amenities?

Clearly, there is much to consider. It is hoped that the pages ahead will contribute to better decisions and even greater confidence in the quality of our physical spaces and places.



mapping central portland's urban design "bones"

The essence of creating vital and great public spaces and places in any city is the ability to capitalize on the reasons why people gather. These can be inadvertent, like the convergence of transit, or deliberate, like Portland's Pioneer Square, the city's "Living Room." These places and spaces, together with the elements that connect them, constitute the "bones" of the city. When done right, such a framework can provide great confidence that despite change and growth, the most important places in the city or its very identity are not lost.



The material generated in this assessment will be distilled into a concentrated map that will identify the most important locations and related urban design elements of the central core of Portland. These elements will be the places and spaces the city should preserve, enhance and create. They can be described in terms of edges (i.e. district, river, urban, historic or movement), corridors or links (i.e. primary movement, connectors, green corridors or major axis), nodes (i.e. urban and transit plazas, bridgeheads or places of commemoration) or attractors (i.e. civic institutions, activity centers, public event spaces or iconic structures).

In order to understand future potential of Portland, an analysis of areas that are attractive because of their unique geography, demography, existing use, historical significance or particular urban form is being undertaken. Each of these locations has unique opportunities but also particular constraints. Ranking and prioritizing the places and spaces of highest value allows them to become part of the city "bones."



creating an urban design framework

The urban design framework of Portland's Central City will describe a combination of the places that must be most protected, enhanced or created. These elements will need to be bound together with a big overarching idea. Such an organizing idea will emerge from consideration of a variety of spatial arrangements and policies yet to be articulated.



Finally, there are many ways to understand a city. Regardless of the method, if a city can recognize and then carefully use its greatest and most unique assets (past, present and future), it has the best possible chance of becoming timeless and enduring. In the face of growing global uncertainty, shifting balances and global consequences, cities need every advantage possible to become safe, happy, productive and wonderful places for their citizens. It is hoped that this effort will bring Portland closer to these objectives.

This ongoing effort is available online at: www.portlandonline.com/planning/urbandesign

section A

central city today

introduction

This assessment of Portland's 1988 Central City Plan focuses on the plan's urban design elements alone. It does so by comparing the plan's original urban design intentions with the present. (A larger assessment for the Central Portland Plan incorporates the larger challenges for the Central City Plan, as well as the implications for the future of Portland.)

This study is largely driven by a sense that the context behind the original plan has changed significantly. Many of the plan's original maps are now confusing and repetitive for the issues requiring continuing attention.

The 1988 Central City Plan was adopted by Portland's City Council on March 24, 1988. The document is composed of several key elements: Plan Map and Land Use Designations; Vision Statement; and Goals and Policies. It also contains action charts, maps, and district urban design plans that accompany its policies.

Implementing the document's 13 functional policies and 8 district policies has required the adoption of an amended Central City Zoning Map and new code language for Title 33 of Portland's Zoning Code, resulting direct urban design impacts. The plan also identifies other implementing actions and includes urban design plans for each of the 8 subdistricts created in the plan.

urban design in portland's central city plan

The Central City Plan has several elements that underscore urban design. Its Concept Plan, Policy 12 Map, and the Central City Plan Map all have urban design implications. Additionally, each subdistrict has its own urban design map. All of these sources provide multiple levels of specific urban design direction.

Over time, many of the subdistricts' urban design plans have undergone amendments. These pages examine the urban design implications of these changes and their current relationship with the Central City Map. The study concludes with specific recommendations for the future.



section A1

1988 central city plan – urban design analysis

organizing concepts ('72 & '88)

1988 central city plan analysis

plan cohesions:

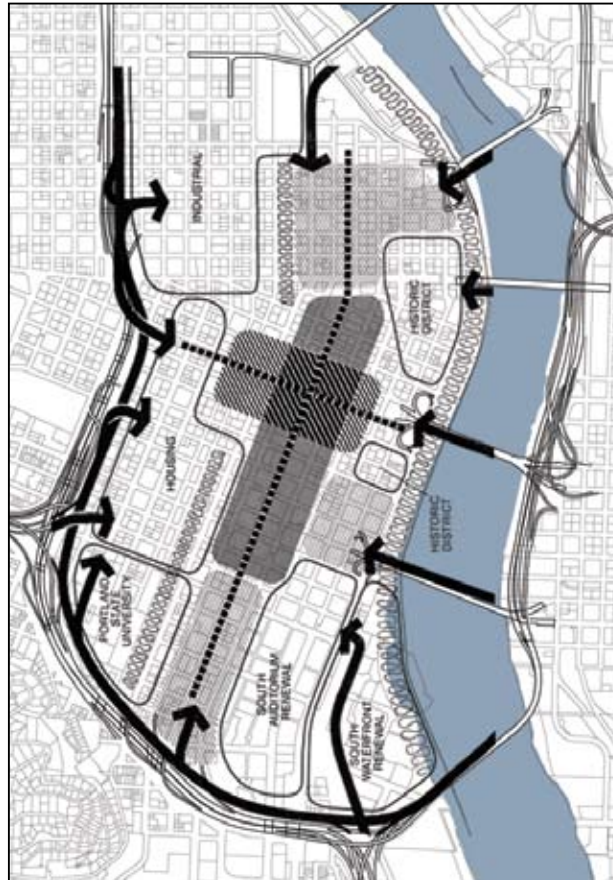
The 1972 Downtown Plan has remained a significant influence on the planning of Portland's Central City. Its original concepts are as follows:

- Encouraged high density development along north-south transit corridor
- Developed strong, compact retail core (east-west)
- Located medium-density office at major downtown access points and peripheral parking
- Included low-density mixed-uses, such as housing, offices, and community facilities
 - Identified Special Districts that include:
 - Portland Center
 - Portland State University
 - Government Center
 - Skidmore Fountain/ Old Town
 - Industrial

The 1988 Central City Plan absorbed the 1972 Downtown Plan with the following additions:

- Extended the boundaries of the 1972 Downtown Plan to both sides of the River
- Identified the River as the central focus or "binding element"
- Highlighted a series of parks and open spaces that reflect the river's importance
- Expanded the Downtown Plan's scope to include the Eastside
- Established the Lloyd Center/Coliseum District as an extension of Downtown, with the second-highest densities
- Focused on creating dense, central residential neighborhoods
- Strengthened the Martin Luther King Jr./Grand Ave. Corridor supporting nearby residents, workers and regional markets.
- Added new urban design detail, such as Policy 12 Urban Design
- Created new urban design plans for each subdistrict with implementation strategies

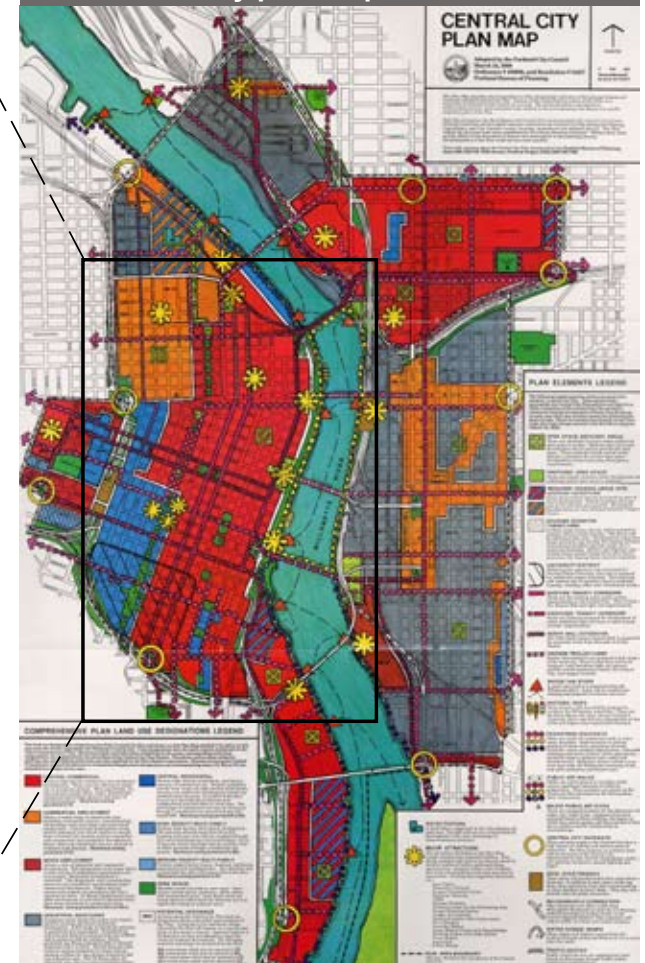
1972 downtown plan



1972 Downtown Plan highlights:

- Intersected high-density office and retail cores
- Oriented density along the Transit Mall (5th and 6th)
- Identified special districts

1988 central city plan map



Central City Plan highlights:

- Expanded the influence and detail of the 1972 Downtown Plan
- Focused on the river
- Created implementation strategies

three guiding maps

1988 central city plan analysis

observations:

too many maps.

The *Central City Plan* includes several maps containing urban design information intended to steer future growth and development. These include:

- **concept plan**

The Concept Plan establishes the intent of the *Central City Plan*. It uses a similar approach and vocabulary as the 1972 Downtown Plan. This map is the most flexible of the three, and, arguably, should be the guiding map.

- **policy 12: urban design**

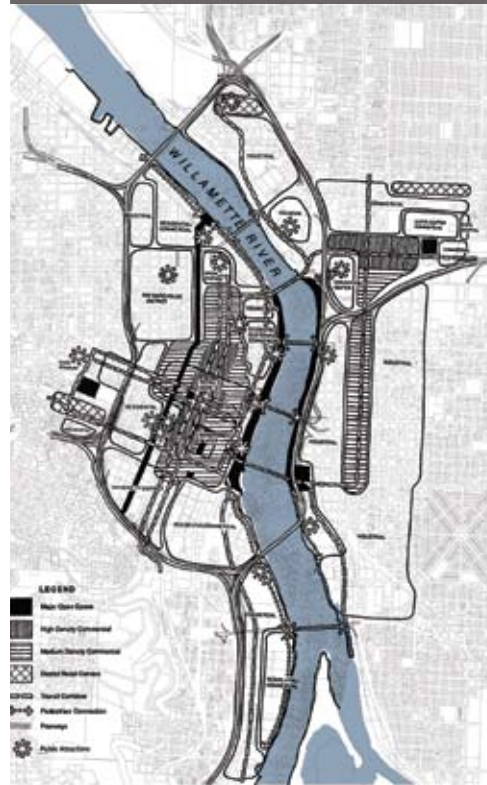
This diagram identifies specific urban design elements and provides strategies for their implementation, many of which have been completed.

- **central city plan map**

In an effort to illustrate land use concentrations, the Central City Plan Map takes some of the Policy 12 elements and adds Comprehensive Plan land use designations. The Central City Plan Map is probably the most visible, or “known” of the three.

It is unclear which of these 3 maps should be guiding central city urban design aspirations. It is difficult to determine a priority among them, and the maps offer redundant information. As the central city has evolved, these maps have lost their cohesiveness as a single, unifying document. Further, the fullest implications of urban form are not well expressed in these two-dimensional diagrams.

concept plan



The *Concept Plan* illustrates major elements of the *Central City Plan's* land use, urban form and physical features. Key components include:

- A focus on the Willamette River
- Concentrated development along transit corridors
- Retail office cores, low-density commercial areas, and industrial uses
- A clear and comprehensive park and open space system

policy 12: urban design diagram



Policy 12's primary objective is to “Enhance the Central City as a livable, walkable area which focuses on the river and captures the glitter and excitement of city living.”

The *Urban Design Diagram* associated with *Functional Policy 12* of the Central City Plan implements actions pertaining to urban design—covering a range of scales from kiosks to a boulevard system.

central city plan map



The *Central City Plan Map* describes the Comprehensive Plan land use designations and some of its principle features.

Key elements include:

- **Central City Gateways:** Entrance points to the city with a high degree of visibility and distinct sense of transition
- **Major Attractions:** Existing and proposed facilities
- **Pedestrian Walkways:** Routes for pedestrians and, in some cases, bicyclists
- **Existing and Proposed Transit Corridors:** Major public transit improvements in the Central City

subdistricts (1988 - current)

1988 central city plan analysis

observations:

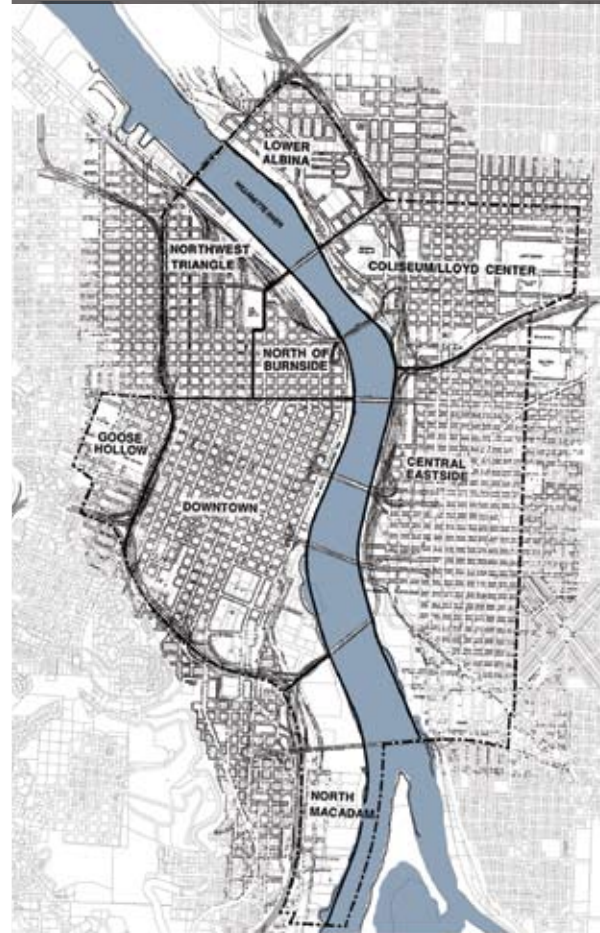
the context has changed.

The *Central City Plan* identified eight subdistricts. Over time, all of these subdistricts have experienced growth and development. Some of these districts have updated their plans. These changes have impacted the original cohesiveness of the subdistricts, their goals and policies, and their relationship with the original Concept Plan. Specifically:

- On the west side, several study areas and/or subdistrict boundaries overlap each other.
- On the east side, the original urban design plans for each district have not been updated since 1988.
- While much of the Downtown District has not been modified, the 'West End' has been included and overlaps with updated subdistrict plans.
- Since 1995, two new subareas have been created: the West End and Employment Opportunity Subarea. The Northwest Triangle Subarea was updated with the consolidation of the River District.
- The River District has emerged as a high-density, mixed-use neighborhood.
- South Waterfront is poised to offer a new education anchor (OHSU expansion) and another high-density neighborhood.

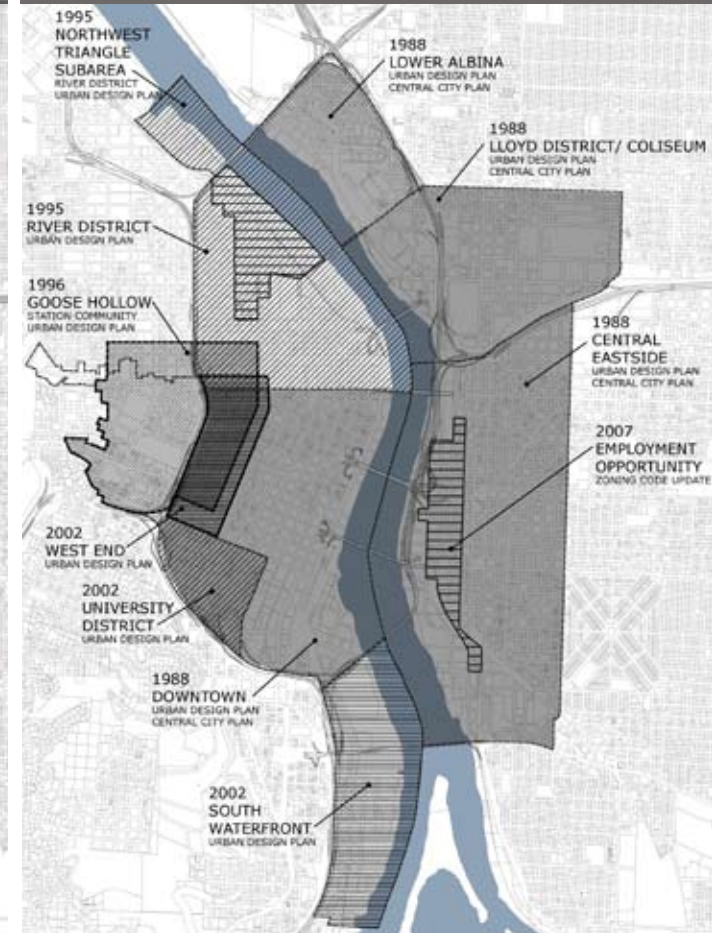
1988 <i>Central City Plan</i> original subdistricts	updated
Northwest Triangle	1995 River District Northwest Triangle Subarea
North of Burnside	
Goose Hollow	1996 Goose Hollow Station Community Urban Design Plan, 2003 NW District Plan (boundaries)
Downtown	2002 West End SubArea Plan, 2002 University District
North Macadam	2002 South Waterfront
Lower Albina	-
Coliseum/ Lloyd Center	-
Central Eastside	2006-2007 Employment Opportunity Subarea (code)

original district boundaries



The *Central City Plan* identified eight subdistricts. The boundaries generally followed previously adopted planning study boundaries, neighborhood boundaries, or other common boundaries. The original plan identified policy, objectives, and proposals for action for each subdistrict.

current district boundaries



Since the *Central City Plan*'s adoption in 1988, several districts have been updated or added. This map reflects boundaries of the areas included in currently adopted district plans. The entire east side still retains its status from 1988, while the west side has seen two updated urban design plans and three new ones.

urban design plans (1988 - current)

1988 central city plan analysis

plan cohesions:

The Plan is no longer a guiding document.

The original 1988 Central City Plan Map illustrates the goals of the Plan, combining elements of land use, transportation, and parks and open space, with large urban design gestures, such as gateways, attractions, and relationships to the river.

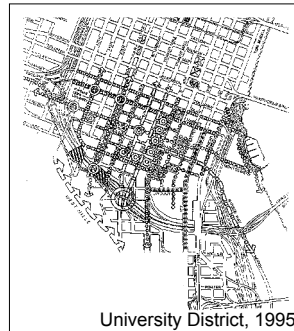
The evolution of the subdistrict plans has resulted in fragmentation of the Central City Plan where the whole is no longer greater than the sum of its parts. As subdistrict plans have been modified and added, the resolution, cohesiveness, and overall big ideas have lost their strength as a composite. When combined into one large map, the individual urban design elements of each plan do not coincide directly with each other.

gaps and inconsistencies

The Subdistrict Composite illustrates many gaps and inconsistencies, including:

- Gaps along boundary lines where subdistrict plans have been modified, such as along Burnside between the West End (2002) and the River District (1995)
- Areas where the context has changed since the plan's original adoption, such as South Waterfront and the River District
- Adoption and illustration of more complex plan elements, creating unequal levels of resolution, such as the Goose Hollow Urban Design Plan
- Areas where proposed transit needs to be updated to reflect current layout, such as the streetcar in the University District (1995) and South Waterfront (2002)

updated urban design maps



University District, 1995



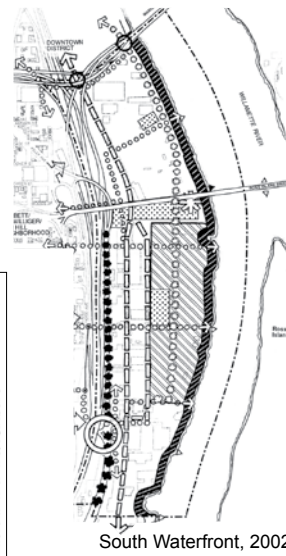
River District, 1995



West End, 2002



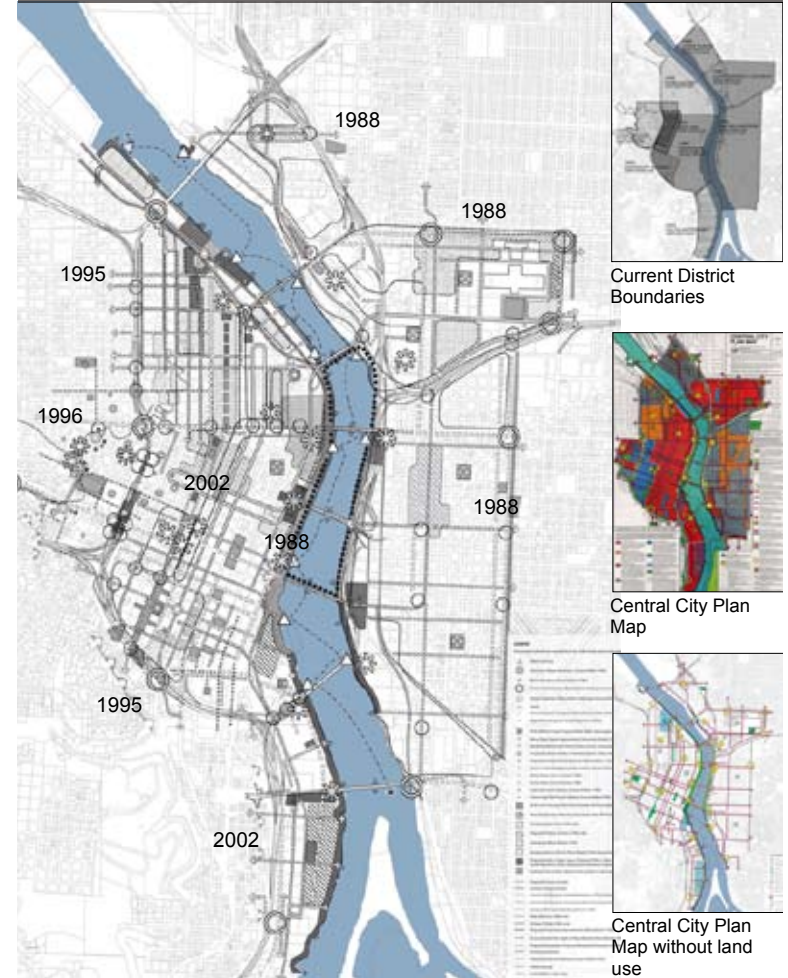
Goose Hollow, 1996



South Waterfront, 2002

These maps reflect revised or added subdistrict urban design plans. The *Central City Plan* included an urban design plan for each subdistrict. As subdistricts were updated or added, five new plans were adopted. Each revision has not been entirely consistent with adjacent subdistrict urban design plans.

subdistrict composite



This map shows a resulting composite of all adopted subdistrict urban design plans, reflecting all changes, updates, and revisions since 1988. Though these subdistrict plans were not meant to be read as a whole map, they illustrate some gaps and inconsistencies that were not intended in the *Central City Plan*.

actions

observations:

varying levels of resolution

As some of the subdistricts were modified and/or updated, their action charts were also updated, often including a higher level of complexity and a greater number of specific projects and programs. Because not all of the subdistricts have been updated, the level of resolution among actions varies greatly.

outdated actions

Each action is differentiated in the Action Map by its current status (complete, in progress, and incomplete). Most of the actions that are mapped indicate that the projects have either been completed or are in progress.

For the actions that have not been completed, either:

- The context has changed and the project is no longer desired or feasible, or
- The project is still awaiting the right opportunity

Further assessment is required to determine the relevance of these remaining actions and/or which other implementation actions of higher priority should be considered for adoption.

action map



Each subdistrict in the *Central City Plan* includes a policy accompanied by an action chart. This chart identifies a time-frame and an implementing agency. These actions have been accumulated together in this composite map, which depicts all actions within each district plan which could be mapped.

actions

ACTION CHART						
#	PROPOSALS FOR ACTION	ADOPTED DATE	PLANNED DATE	START DATE	POSSIBLE IMPLEMENTING AGENCY	INDEX TO ACTION DETAILS
PROJECTS						
1.01	Create a connection from the Convention Center to the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.02	Provide pedestrian improvements on Union, Grand, Holladay, Burnside, 20th, 30th, and 40th streets	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	P 136
1.03	Improve connections for pedestrians in the area between the Convention Center and the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.04	Establish a trail to Burnside's South facing the Burnside's South neighborhood to the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.05	Create connections on Union, Grand, Lloyd, Walker, Broadway and 10th Street	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.06	Improve connections between downtown and downtown on the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.07	Improve the Burnside's South neighborhood trail through auto and truck traffic	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.08	Improve a development plan for the area around the Convention Center	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.09	Establish a Village Valley line linking the Lloyd Center to the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.10	Improve connections between downtown and downtown on the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.11	Improve connections between downtown and downtown on the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
1.12	Improve connections between downtown and downtown on the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	
PROGRAMS						
1.13	Study the feasibility of a downtown light rail line connecting downtown to the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	P 131
1.14	Study the feasibility of a downtown light rail line connecting downtown to the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	P 131
1.15	Study the feasibility of a downtown light rail line connecting downtown to the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	P 131
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1.19	Study the feasibility of a downtown light rail line connecting downtown to the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	P 131
1.20	Study the feasibility of a downtown light rail line connecting downtown to the downtown	1988	1990	1990	POC/Metro	P 131

Coliseum/ Lloyd Center, Adopted Actions, 1988

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Goose Hollow, Adopted Actions, 2002

The action charts of each *Central City Plan* policy were originally limited to specific actions ranging in number from 7-21. As these subdistricts were modified, the action charts became longer and more complex.

urban design elements

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT 1988 central city plan analysis

commentary:

This Urban Design Elements Map is a synthesis of common plan elements from each of the urban design plans. As some of these plans have been updated and/or modified since their original adoption in 1988, the amalgamation of these plan elements underscores several issues. These issues should be considered as a Central Portland Plan is formulated.



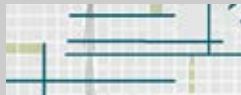
attractions:

While some designated attractions are public or civic amenities, others are not. Some attractions are not well defined and others are no longer relevant. More analysis is needed to determine the location, function, and character of future Central City attractions.



gateways:

Although numerous gateways have been identified throughout the Central City, few have been realized. It remains unclear as to what is specifically desired at many of the gateway locations, resulting in mixed urban design interpretations. The gateway system should be re-evaluated to determine the relevance of the objectives behind the system's creation.



pedestrianways/ bikeways:

Portland's pattern of small blocks is inherently very pedestrian-friendly. The abundance of streets, however, has made it difficult to channel pedestrians onto specific corridors. More clarity is needed on where the pedestrianways are, what kind of character do they have (active/passive), and what can be done to strengthen their roles. Further, the recent Goose Hollow amendment to include bikeways should be reflected throughout the Central City.



boulevards:

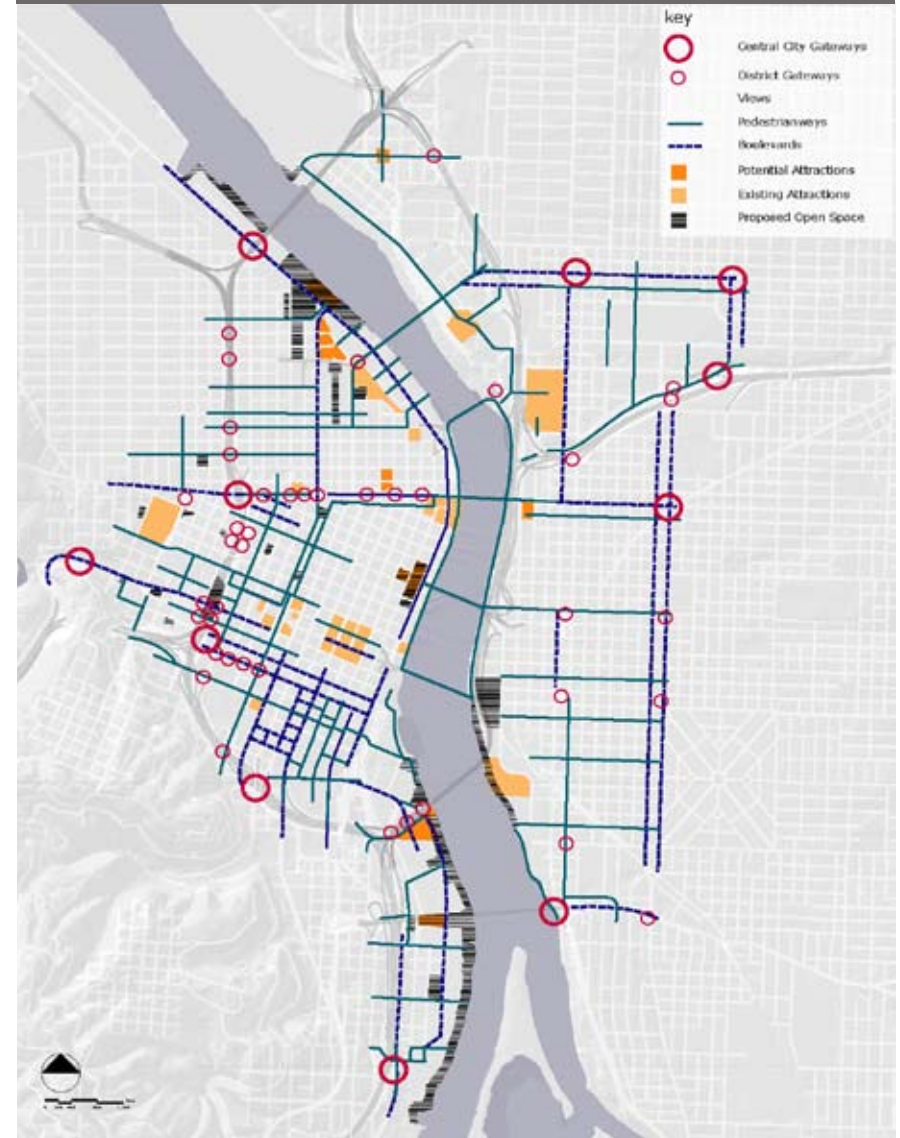
The term 'boulevard' evokes a tree-lined street with a planted median. Few exist within the Central City today. Only Burnside, Harrison, and Naito Parkway could probably qualify as boulevards, and there appears to be little impetus in creating more. Either a new definition or a new street type is needed to better integrate with the Central City's more pervasive grid of smaller streets.



proposed open space:

Overall, the west side of the river is better served by open space opportunities than the east side. Shifts in development trends have raised questions about new open space needs in the areas such as the River District, South Waterfront, and the West End. More analysis is needed to understand the Central City's current and future open space needs.

urban design elements



findings

The *Central City Plan* addresses urban design at many levels. While some urban design elements of the plan have provided clear priorities and enduring direction for the city, others have become either infeasible or irrelevant. Specifically:

In the context of an urban design assessment, a few findings push us to move forward beyond the 1988 *Central City Plan*:

- **There are too many maps.** The quantity of maps which address Central City urban design issues is confusing as priority among them is difficult to determine. The repetition of some urban design elements, and the inconsistent use of others also contribute to a sense of redundancy and too much information.
- **The context has changed.** All areas within the Central City have developed, some in a different direction or at a different pace than the plan's expectations. New centers of activity necessitate a reevaluation of connections, open space needs, and urban form.
- **Incremental modification has led to gaps and inconsistencies.** The composite of currently adopted subdistrict plans illustrates discontinuities along newer subdistrict boundaries, unequal levels of plan detail, and areas where the plan no longer reflects what is happening on the ground.
- **Levels of resolution vary.** As each subdistrict urban design map was updated, a finer-grained level of detail and actions were adopted. Because only a few subdistricts have not been updated, there is an overall lack of clarity at the big picture level.
- **Most of the actions have been completed.** Many of the programs and projects listed under each district policy have either been completed or are no longer desired or feasible. Few are still waiting for the right opportunity.
- **The Plan is no longer a guiding document.** As the plan reaches its 20-year horizon, incremental changes to the central city and to the plan itself have become confusing and contradictory, and some of the big ideas established in the plan have been accomplished while others have become uncertain.

recommendations

The *Central City Plan* has reached a pivotal moment from which we can build. The findings all point to a few key recommendations that will help guide the Central City's future.

A new Central Portland Plan might consider:

- **An Urban Form Concept** that provides greater clarity on:
 - Street Hierarchy
 - Open Space Network
 - Physical Urban Form
 - Catalytic Projects/Opportunity Sites
 - District Plans of finer resolution that correspond to a larger plan
 - 3D expressions of desired urban form
- **Broader issues that pertain to Central Portland such as:**
 - **Connection to the River.** While the 1988 plan re-established the central city boundary to include areas east of the river, the connection has not been made. District plans should reflect the River Plan's Central Reach, and more aggressive efforts should be made to access the river visually and physically.
 - **Expansion of boundaries of Central Portland.** As the assessment reconsiders the boundaries for Central Portland, opportunities arise to integrate established Portland neighborhoods. Efforts to include Central Portland's sphere of influence should focus on connections and transitions to existing Central City subdistricts.
- **Establishment of new implementation strategies.** As many of the actions listed in the *Central City Plan* have been fulfilled, a new set of actions should be established, with a clear designation of priority.

introduction

There are many ways to combine existing “layers” of built and natural systems in the Central City and understand their meaning. This part of the urban design assessment combines some of these important layers to make specific urban design points. It is important to emphasize that this commentary does not aspire to summarize the fullest implications of any of the mapping shown. Clearly each layer considered can (and should) be understood in much greater detail. This study relies on the more comprehensive Central City assessment and ongoing modeling to fully describe future Central City implications.

The selected areas highlighted for urban design considerations are:

- Development Capacity
- Open Space
- Transportation Networks
- Green City Infrastructure
- Community Amenities
- Cognitive Mapping

The purpose of this review is to provide a better understanding of the Central City's existing conditions and establish a baseline for a new Central Portland Plan. This analysis synthesizes data from natural and man-made systems in specific combinations. This helps to illustrate urban design issues related to either built form or other aspects of downtown quality. Findings from the above six areas of investigation will help instigate broader stakeholder discussion as the priorities for a new plan emerge.



section A2

existing conditions

development capacity

existing conditions

The 2007 *Central Portland Development Capacity Study* examined two important questions essential to developing a plan for the future of Portland's Central City.

- What sites are potentially available for redevelopment?
- What is the amount and variety of development that could be built on these sites?

In order to determine the areas most likely to be available for redevelopment, the study began by removing all central city sites unlikely to develop in the foreseeable future. These included: all historic properties, parks, and industrial lands. Parcels currently using more than 20% of available FAR and/or with improvements assessed at less than 50% were also removed. Significant redevelopment sites not captured by these steps were then added, and sites less than 10,000 square feet were removed. The large map on this page shows the resulting areas most likely to redevelop.

Further calculations determined the development capacity of these sites. The results indicate that roughly 400 acres between now and the next 20 years are likely to become available for redevelopment:

At current development and absorption rates, the study determined it would take 40-60 years to exhaust the identified development capacity. It is important to note that the study did not examine how specific types of development (i.e. projects requiring land assembly such as office campuses) could be accommodated.

These findings suggest there is sufficient land to satisfy and even doubling of current development rates in the Central City for the foreseeable future.

The most immediate urban design implications of this study are that changes in height, FAR and bonuses should not be driven by the perception that Portland's Central City has a shortage of developable land. A new plan should consider:

- Long and short term incentives to help fill a greater number of under or undeveloped sites in order to realize more contiguous active streets.
- Development programs that target sites identified with unique and high value urban design attributes (location, access, prominence) to leverage the highest and best possible uses.
- Mechanisms that direct and concentrate limited development energy to help create viable and great urban places in areas that would most benefit from them.



open space

existing conditions

This set of maps includes parks and open space, significant tree canopy, topography, natural vegetation, habitat and hydrology to help illustrate and evaluate the Central City's relationship with its natural systems. A three minute walking radii around major Central City park and open space assets indicates their accessibility.

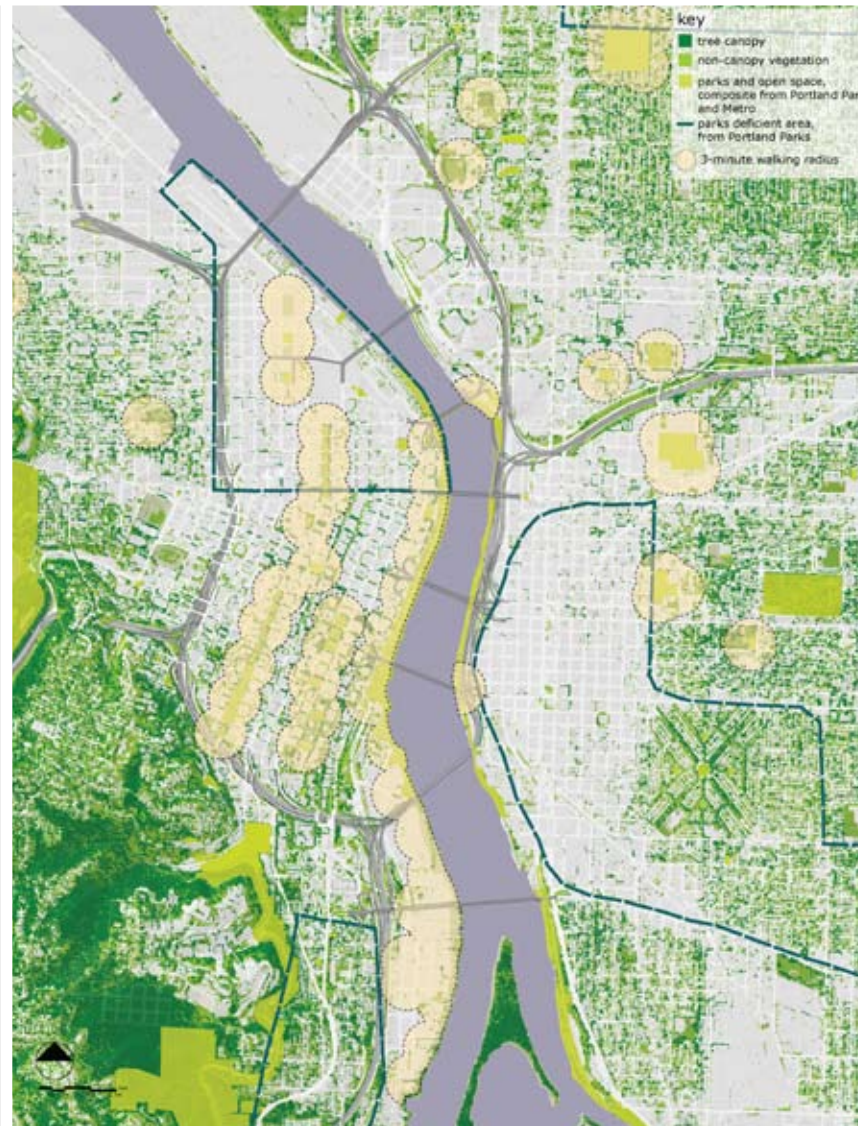
When combined, the large map on this page suggests that while much of the downtown has the advantage of good street tree cover and connections to parks, there are several areas that lack these attributes. Deficient areas include:

- The area between Central City and adjacent neighborhoods (e.g. Coliseum/ Lloyd Center, River District, Central Eastside)
- Industrial areas such as Lower Albina and the Central Eastside, where zoning has precluded the inclusion of parks and open spaces
- Goose Hollow

The three minute walking radii suggest that most of Portland's Central City does not lack proximity to open space. There are however, isolated open spaces that are not part of an interconnected network. Amenities such as the Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade, North Park Blocks and the Classical Chinese Garden would benefit from connections that integrate them with the rest of the Central City's open space system.

Ongoing open space issues are:

- Relating open spaces to accommodate changing surrounding community and neighborhood needs. For example, as the Central City absorbs more residential development, will existing open spaces designed for passive recreation be able to accommodate more active recreational needs?
- Creating strategies that improve visual and physical access to the river. Such improvements would dramatically add to the Central City's urban qualities.
- Encouraging natural systems to reassert themselves within the Central City. For example, day-lighting creeks and linking urban swales and natural drainage corridors would create better links between natural and built environments. Successful outcomes will help create a more sustainable and appealing urban environment.



existing open space elements & concerns



Parks and Open Space - Portland Parks/Metro

Park Deficient Areas - Portland Parks/Metro



Canopy



Elevation



Slopes



Vegetation



Habitat



Hydrology



Views

transportation networks

existing conditions

Transportation in the Central City has many complex dimensions that cannot be fully understood without a detailed technical explanation. To set the stage for an informed discussion, the city's Office of Transportation is undertaking a Central City Transportation Management Plan update (CCTMP). This analysis examines parking, circulation, congestion, freight and bike system issues, policies and related regulations.

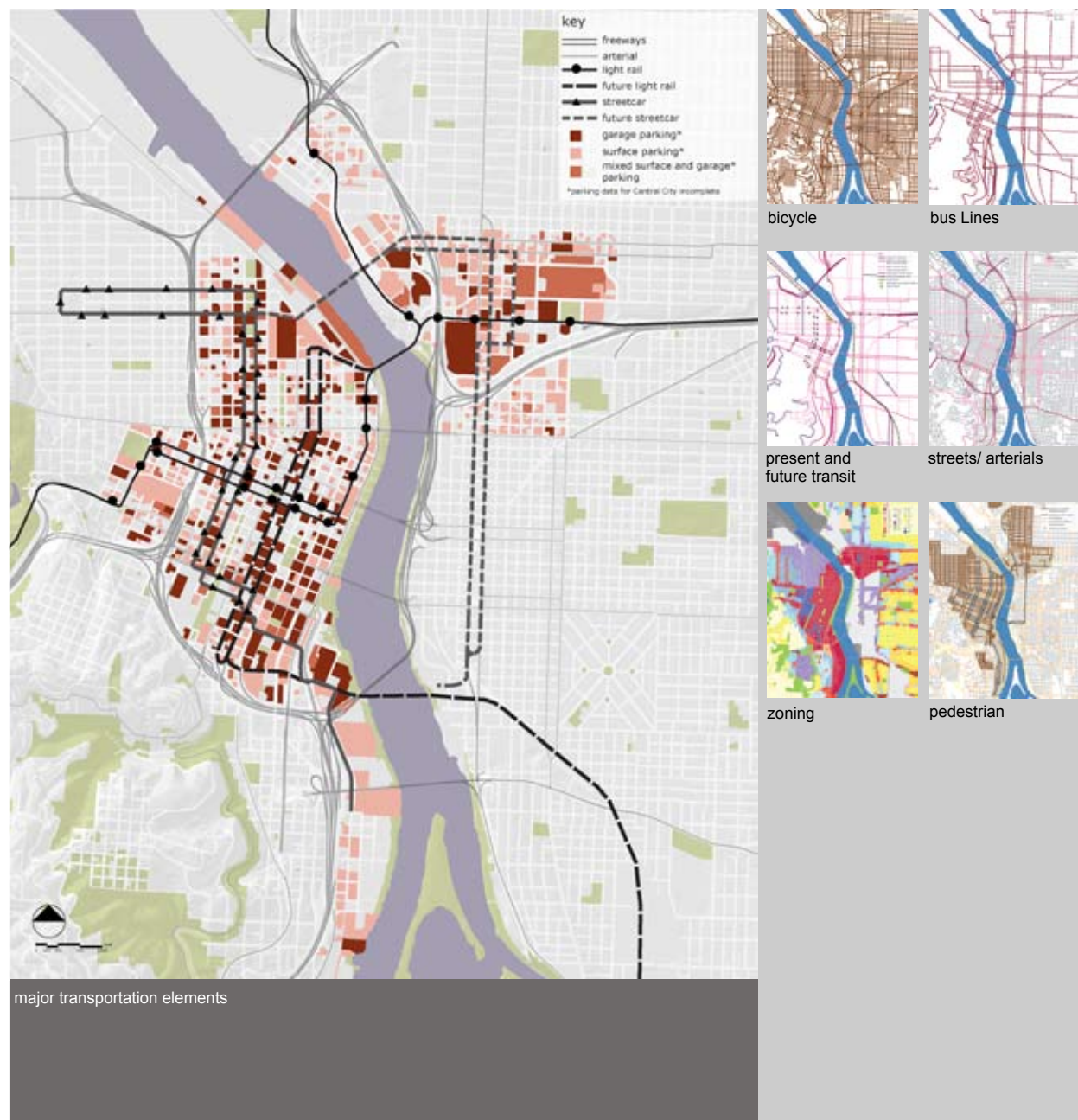
Outcomes of this study will significantly impact urban design decisions in the Central City. The full implications of preferred transportation approaches will have to be evaluated against the desire to create appropriate civic places and concentrated developments at the local, district and city wide scale.

Even before the results of this analysis are available, there are some general and particular urban design concerns that can be expressed.

The map on this page combines primary bike, pedestrian, transit (present and anticipated), arterials and major parking facilities. As can be seen on the composite map on this page, the Central City is highly networked. Areas most lacking in comparable intensity are the Central Eastside and Lower Albina.

As a new Central Portland Plan is formulated, ongoing transportation related urban design issues should be considered:

- A clearer, more concise street hierarchy that embraces more contemporary and specialized street types, such as private, green streets, and universal streets.
- Developing strategies to better integrate the urban design of public and private investments particularly in areas of transit concentration and underserved areas.
- More strategic approaches to enhance the user experience of east-west connections across the river. This includes enhancing the design and role of bridges to make them more seamless, experiential and iconic with their surrounding urban fabric.



green city infrastructure

existing conditions

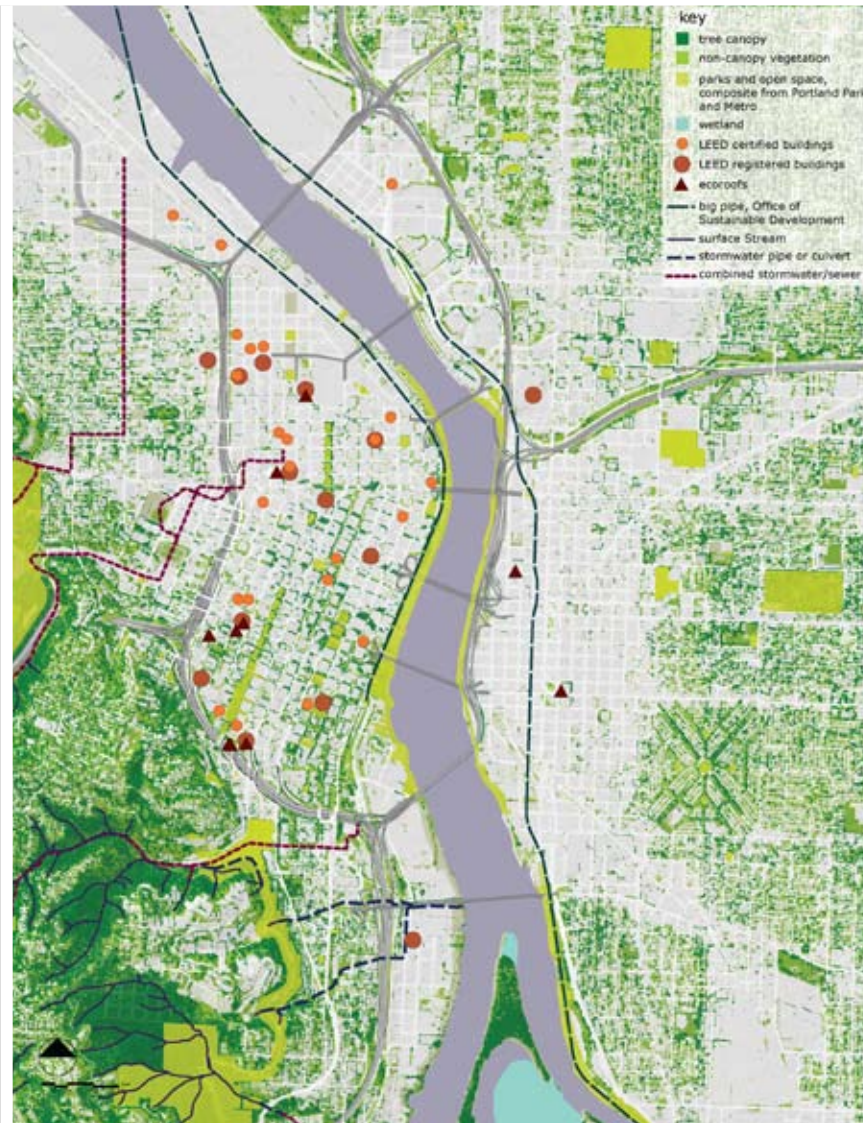
Portland is well regarded and known for its “green” public and private infrastructure investments. In order to continue and expand the progress made by existing efforts the impacts of larger Central City and district wide systemic “green” elements should be considered. The accompanying map combines tree canopy (an indicator of urban heat island effect), impervious surfaces, LEED* rated buildings, green-roofs, stormwater, habitat, vegetation and hydrology to provide a composite of current “green” infrastructure.

Although there are many complex aspects to integrated sustainable systems in the Central City, the following broad considerations will have implications on building orientation, massing, open space design and street design:

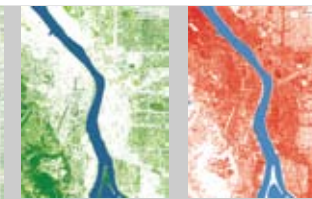
- Reducing the negative impacts of excessive reflective surfaces to improve air quality and reduce area heat loads
- Central City and district wide storm water management systems that integrate natural and man-made open space with bio-swales and pervious surfaces
- Integrating LEEDs buildings with area wide and shared infrastructure for greater, more integrated sustainable outcomes
- Better and more integrated urban (man-made) and natural open space networks to create more contiguous habitat corridors

A new Central Portland Plan should embrace Central City wide strategies rather than relying on the significant, but smaller scale incremental progress to date.

*LEED: The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings.



existing green infrastructure



canopy - LIDAR data

impervious surfaces - LIDAR data



eco-roofs



LEED buildings - certified



LEED buildings - register



hydrology



big pipe



stormwater



vegetation



habitat quality

community amenities

existing conditions

Grocery stores, libraries, schools, hospitals, places of worship, key government buildings (post offices, city hall, court buildings, police and fire stations), museums, performance halls and public art can be considered to be “community-enhancing” amenities. The map on this page shows these amenities. Their presence within a community often reveals whether a neighborhood is socially and culturally self-sustaining or if it must extend outside its boundaries for essential and recreational needs.

The anchors of any community are those that reinforce basic community needs. Typically schools that also act as community centers are generally perceived to be lacking in the Central City. Strategic placement of schools would also encourage or support more family oriented residential development.

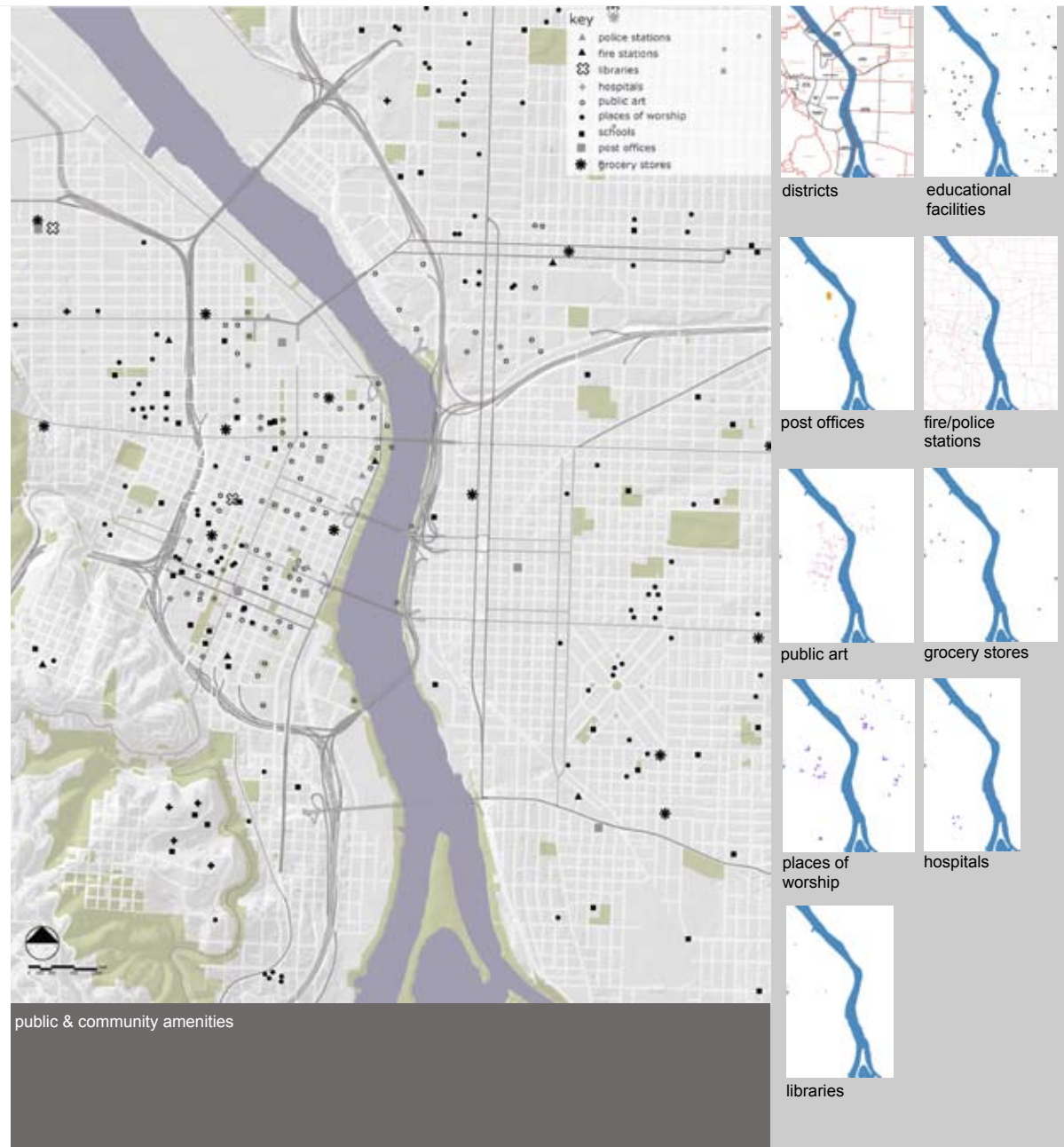
The appropriate mix of such amenities is related to prevailing and anticipated neighborhood demographics and geographic constraints. Over time, neighborhoods are able to leverage particular amenities through local initiative and a shared sense of purpose. It is, however, not uncommon for newer communities to strategically designate sites and develop selected amenities as early anchors to ensure local civic quality. For example, the role of libraries as places of virtual and group gathering continues to be refined. Similarly, museums are no longer the simple repositories of art and culture, but frequently the instigators of major cultural events. Grocery stores have also been identified as desirable, particularly at the southern end of the downtown and in the Central Eastside.

In rapidly maturing new communities like the Pearl and South Waterfront Districts, new residents are beginning to assert the need for appropriate community assets. Ongoing discussions will need to consider what appropriate venues will support community socialization and congregation in the future.

A new Central Portland Plan should consider where such amenities might be most useful; recognizing that their location and timing may make them effective catalysts for desired city, district and local quality of life.

The following urban design related issues that use community building amenities should be explored in a new plan:

- Strategic placement of schools, libraries, and grocery stores in existing areas lacking such amenities and in emerging communities such as the South Waterfront and Pearl District
- Closer examination of new and more efficient synergies that will help share amenities in keeping with new ways of learning and interacting – resulting in smaller, more “urban” models and designs
- Leveraging the location of new community amenities.



cognitive mapping

Each of us perceives the same environment differently. What we see and remember is based upon our personal interests and choice of the urban references that help us orient ourselves.

There are many ways to capture how a city is perceived. Although no one method will capture the entire diversity of Portland's most memorable or most commonly shared urban experiences, a general map of predominant preferences can be developed. Such a map can help us create better matches between the perceived boundaries of districts and their actual planning areas. Such a map can also help prioritize which urban areas function as important points of congregation or public interest.

The two attached cognitive maps demonstrate separate attempts to capture how people use the city and recognize its key features qualitatively rather than quantitatively. The first was generated as a quick internal exercise by the Bureau of Planning staff (2004); the second map was developed by architecture students at the University of Oregon's Portland Urban Architecture Program (2007). Students reinforced their findings through interviews, critically examining a variety of promotional maps and searching for local and city-wide popular places.

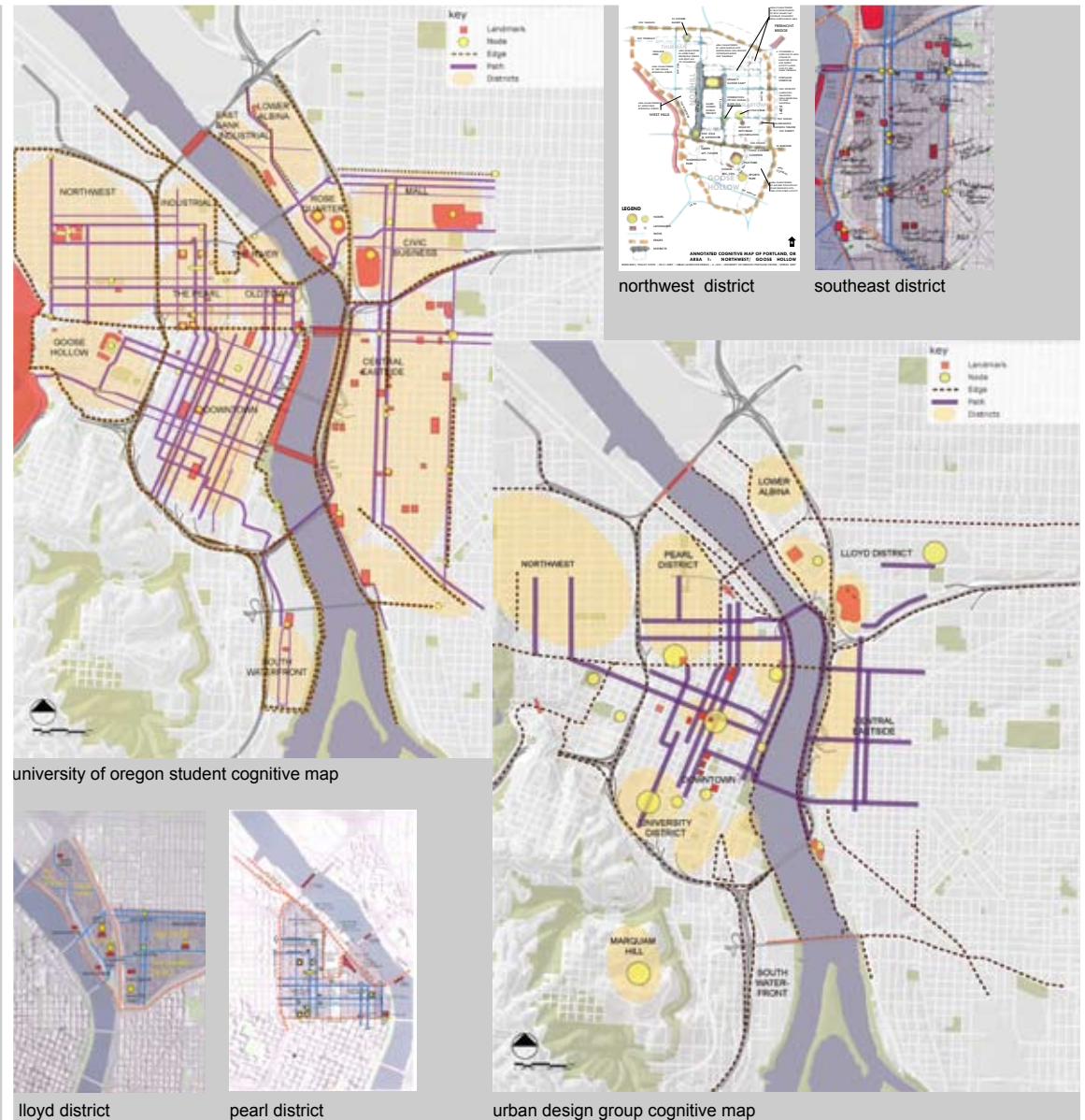
Both maps deliberately used well known cognitive mapping vocabulary established by Kevin Lynch (Landmarks, Nodes, Edges, Paths and Districts). Key findings suggest:

- Perceived district boundaries are not completely consistent with current planning boundaries
- Landmarks or places of reference include less prominent, but popular urban places of visual reference and gathering
- There is a hierarchy of "nodes" or places of transition. Some are local, others are of citywide scale significance. Each should be recognized as a unique urban design opportunity
- There is a difference between places of transition (edges) and those of gathering (nodes, landmarks)

These and related findings have the following particular urban design implications:

- The importance and design of public places should acknowledge distinctions between places of gathering and those of transition.
- Articulated and "designed" environments (i.e. streets, plazas, and corridors) do not always generate the importance and level of use or activity for which they were intended.

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT existing conditions



findings

There are many ways in which various layers of information can be combined to understand Portland's built and natural environment. When properly prioritized and graphically clear, these combinations present particular qualitative views of Portland not otherwise seen through traditional mapping of quantitative data alone.

The findings from the "bundles" of information layers shown in these pages are:

- **urban design & development capacity:** The urban design impacts of anticipated growth rates in the central city are significant. The abundance of capacity and limited absorption rates (i.e. sites, entitlements and infrastructure) suggests the need for deliberate place-making strategies. These strategies should either effectively concentrate limited development energy to reinforce important places or become catalysts for accelerated development.
- **urban design & open space:** There are some locations in the Central City that would benefit from new open space amenities. However, an equally important challenge is to create better relationships between existing public open space and evolving adjacent land uses. To the extent the Central City absorbs more residences; passive open space will need to accommodate increasing demands for active recreation.
- **urban design & transportation networks:** In a city with a small block size (200'x200'), a large number of intersections and large paved street surface area, streets should be considered part of Portland's public open space system. The absence of clear street hierarchies limits the ability of the Central City's urban environment to remain visually and functionally clear. Poor urban distinctiveness and legibility blur the ability to realize active streets, limited economic and social energy should be focused where it is most desirable.
- **urban design & green city infrastructure:** Introducing nature back into the urban environment will remain an ongoing challenge. Limited, but focused opportunities will help manage heat island impacts, stormwater runoff and better create sustainable urban environments that extend beyond the pursuit of maximizing the number of individual LEED rated buildings.
- **urban design & community amenities:** Portland's Central City has significant clusters of public serving and community building amenities. These amenities have not been collectively assessed and actively considered as a basis for planning and urban design. Emerging Central City communities should more actively consider them as anchors and enduring assets.
- **urban design & cognitive mapping:** How we see our urban environment, use it, navigate it, and share it varies considerably based upon our individual mental map of it. Rarely does formal planning and urban design record or acknowledge this explicitly. A deeper understanding of how Portland's Central City is used (based upon recorded perception) will help focus priority areas and enhance appropriate planning and design responses.

recommendations

Portland is known for its high quality public environment. This quality is, however, continually challenged by its anemic growth. This growth rate constrains the extent to which greater integration and higher urban design aspirations can be realized. This in turn impacts Portland's longer term ability to build upon its fine assets, remain competitive, and provide an increasing quality of life a to its citizens.

Independent of growth, Portland's attitude towards open space, transportation, and green infrastructure and community assets will influence and be influenced by shared urban design attitudes.

The following recommendations should be considered in a new Central Portland Plan:

- **Integration public and private infrastructure and community building assets.** As the city becomes potentially denser, integrated networks that connect public, semi-public and private open space assets will need to better leverage harder to find resources. Developing and maintaining these resources will also remain a challenge. The most important of these public and private assets should become an explicit basis for new interventions, strategies and plans.
- **Integrate transportation assets with urban design.** Portland is experiencing an increasing number of creatively designed private streets. In turn public street standards that allow greater creativity will help realize a more integrated and seamless public realm. Enhancing the design, lighting and function of bridges would also allow public transportation infrastructure to contribute to the iconic and distinctive elements of the Central City. Finally, focused development strategies that help transit station areas become unique and distinctive places will create urban design quality where it will be most symbiotic with surrounding development.
- **Short and long term strategies to focus limited development energy.** In an environment with ample development capacity, an active and vibrant public realm will depend largely on the city's ability to concentrate and populate its more desired places and corridors. Short term strategies are all the more significant to ensure continued vibrancy.
- **Connective networks.** Open space, green infrastructure and community amenities should be explicitly recognized and used as a deliberate basis to create places and community anchors. As Portland's Central City becomes denser, integration of those amenities will ensure cumulative urban quality. Using an increasing understanding of "real time" usage of Portland's Central City will greatly help.

introduction

A city's development cannot wait while its plans for the future are formulated. Many of Portland's important Central City areas continue to actively evolve. This change ranges from private development to public agencies keen on seeing progress consistent with prevailing Central City Plan policies and goals.

While there are many such ongoing efforts, the projects, plans and visions highlighted in these pages focus only on the efforts that have or will have the broadest impacts on the central city. This selection varies from projects that are either in planning or construction to recent or pending development proposals, studies and visions for key downtown areas.

Depending upon particular interests and desired outcomes, the initiating entity and "audience" for each effort (and location) also vary. As this mapping will show, there are many overlaps, often uncoordinated. While there is no implied hierarchy to any of the projects shown, these overlaps help underscore the Central City's ongoing development challenges.

The following pages cluster the above efforts by geographic concentration and also reflect associated place-making concerns. These geographic clusters are:

- River District (Pearl)
- Ankeny Plaza and Old Town
- Park Avenue
- Downtown
- South Waterfront
- Convention Center and Lloyd District
- Central Eastside

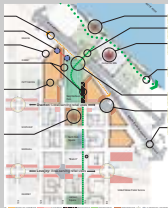
It should be noted that each plan shown takes into account their associated Subdistrict Plans. These Subdistrict Plans are therefore not shown. A separate urban design analysis of these plans is done in this assessment's analysis of the 1988 Central City Plan.



section A3

evolving areas

river district (pearl)



- 1. project:** North of Lovejoy Urban Design Framework, 2004
Initiated by: Portland Bureau of Planning
Prepared by: Urban Design Group, Bureau of Planning

In late 2004, the Bureau of Planning's Urban Design Group arranged and coordinated an urban design charrette to evaluate emerging opportunities in the Pearl District east of NW 12th Avenue to create appropriate urban design responses. The result was a draft urban design framework from which ongoing and future projects could continue. Focus was placed on: creating better physical relationships with the river, long term shared community assets, and providing better opportunities for development diversity.



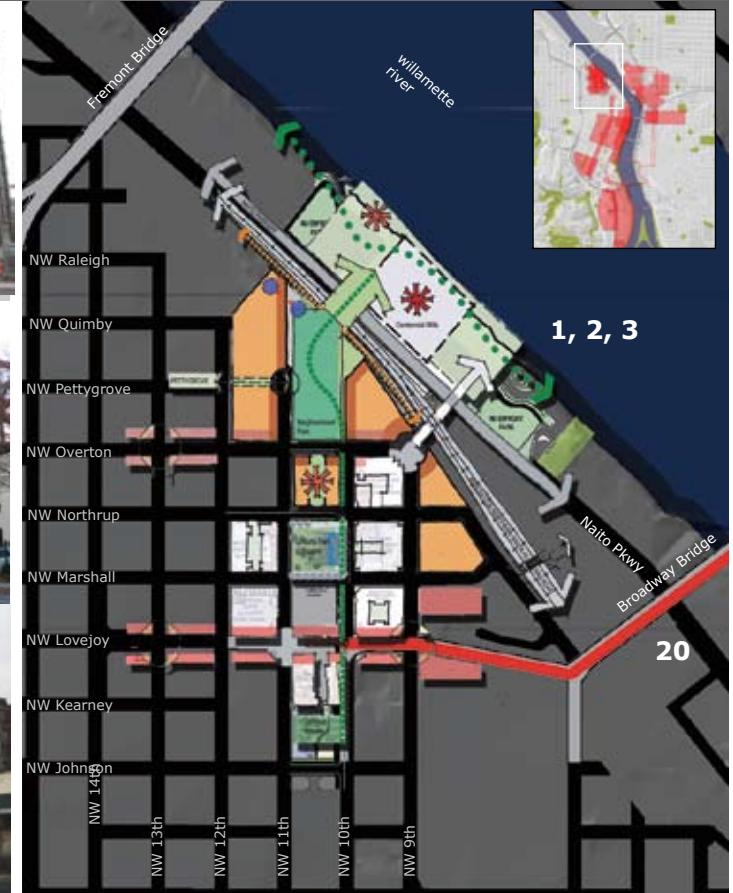
- 2. project:** Hoyt Street Properties Master Plan, 2006
Initiated by: Hoyt Street Properties
Prepared by: Spencer & Kupper with Boora Architects

In response to the Bureau of Planning's Urban Design Charrette, in 2006, Spencer & Kupper with Boora Architects developed a master plan for Hoyt Street Properties' remaining undeveloped Pearl District land. The plan considers many of the city's overall objectives and incorporates several aspirations from 1999/2000 River District Parks Plan (Peter Walker) and the City's 2004 North of Lovejoy Urban Design Framework.



- 3. project:** Centennial Mills Framework Plan, 2006
Initiated by: Bureau of Planning and Portland Development Commission
Prepared by: SERA Architects, Mayer/Reed, KPFF

A historic mill once in danger of being demolished, Centennial Mills is now a publicly-owned complex of buildings and the focus of considerable redevelopment interest. This framework plan identifies five redevelopment objectives to help realize adaptive reuse of the complex and ensure good integration with the River District. These are: creating a signature open space, capturing history, embracing sustainability, strengthening connections, and defining a community focal point.



urban design and development issues

There are several complementary and competing ideas for this rapidly changing part of Portland's Central City. The area's continued ability to absorb development capacity needs to be reconciled with its infrastructure limits as well as the desire for an appropriate mix of community amenities. Informed by the above studies, these broader development issues are currently being addressed.

Ongoing urban design challenges include: integrating appropriate development and open space relationships with the Willamette River; balancing urban architecture with appropriate distributions of bulk (massing), density and use; and finally, ensuring adequate urban and social infrastructure to serve current, aspirational and emerging needs.

Other Influencing Plans: North Pearl District Plan (late 2007, PDC, Planning), Peter Walker Master Plan (2001), Fields Park Masterplan and Design (late 2007).

ankeny plaza & old town

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

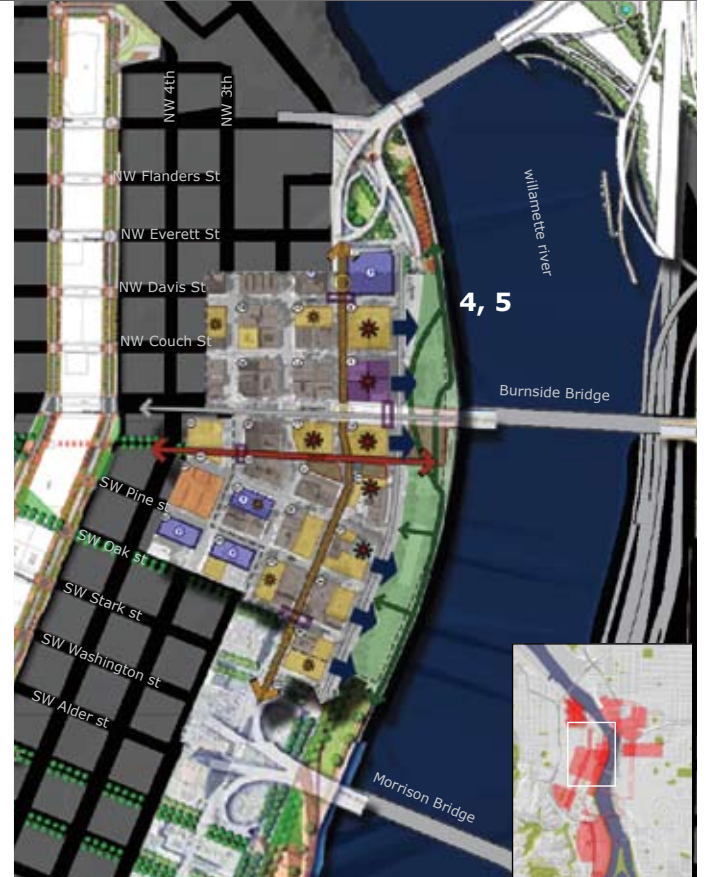
evolving areas

current projects



- 4. project:** West Burnside-Couch Couplet, 2002, 2007
 Initiated by: Portland Department of Transportation,
 Prepared by: Portland Department of Transportation & Lloyd Lindley

The Burnside/Couch Transportation and Urban Design Plan document elaborates a shared desire to “Humanize Burnside.” It identifies four design principles that a final design should address: recognize and enhance Burnside’s diverse character; support and encourage a mix of businesses and uses; eliminate Burnside as a barrier; and recognize Burnside as a multi-modal transportation corridor. The plan aims to accomplish this by creating a couplet (pair of one way streets) that would shift existing west-bound traffic on Burnside to Couch Street between 2nd and 15th/16th Avenues. This move is intended to facilitate traffic flow, pedestrian movement and edge improvements on Burnside while also creating more on-street parking and street trees. On Couch, vehicular traffic and visibility would increase. The project is currently undergoing preliminary engineering feasibility studies that include adding streetcar lines on both streets. This Urban Design Plan also applies to the Central Eastside (#20 in this review).



- 5. project:** Ankeny-Burnside Development Framework, 2006
 Initiated by: Portland Development Commission & Bureau of Planning
 Prepared by: MIG

The Ankeny/Burnside Development Framework helps define an urban design vision, development strategy and implementation actions for this historic district. It focuses on capitalizing and infilling underutilized properties and public spaces in and around historic Ankeny Plaza. This framework was developed while rapidly changing development realities altered the project’s original assumptions. The most positive of these development influences has been the relocation of the University of Oregon’s Portland Architecture Program and the decision by Mercy Corps to develop its new headquarters within the study area. These developments were greatly facilitated by the Saturday Market’s decision to reconfigure its layout and extend across to Waterfront Park. This in turn has accelerated the redesign of the park’s impacted sections.

Note: See also #10 Tom McCall Waterfront Park Master Plan Update (2003) in the Downtown section of this review.

urban design and development issues

- Active development interests, aided in part by public redevelopment funds on the appropriate balance between historic architecture and contemporary design responses.
- The ability to match affordable and mid-market housing aspirations in this area with prevailing development realities poses ongoing challenges.
- The persistent desire for this area remains the creation of a mix of diverse and vibrant uses that create a popular public place without loss of historic heritage and character. All related outcomes need to be compatible with improvements to the area’s public infrastructure, including circulation.

Other Influencing Plans: Waterfront Development Opportunities Study (2003), Waterfront Park Master Plan (2003), Old Town/Chinatown Visions Development Plan (2003 Update), North Broadway Urban Design Master Plan (2002), Naito Properties Master Plan (Late 2007), Skidmore Height Design Guidelines (late 2007).

park avenue

evolving areas

current projects



- 6. project:** Park Ave Vision, 2004
Initiated by: Bureau of Planning, Portland Development Commission (PDC), Port and Parks and Recreation, (PPR) Portland Department of Transportation (PDOT)
Prepared by: Urban Design Group, Bureau of Planning

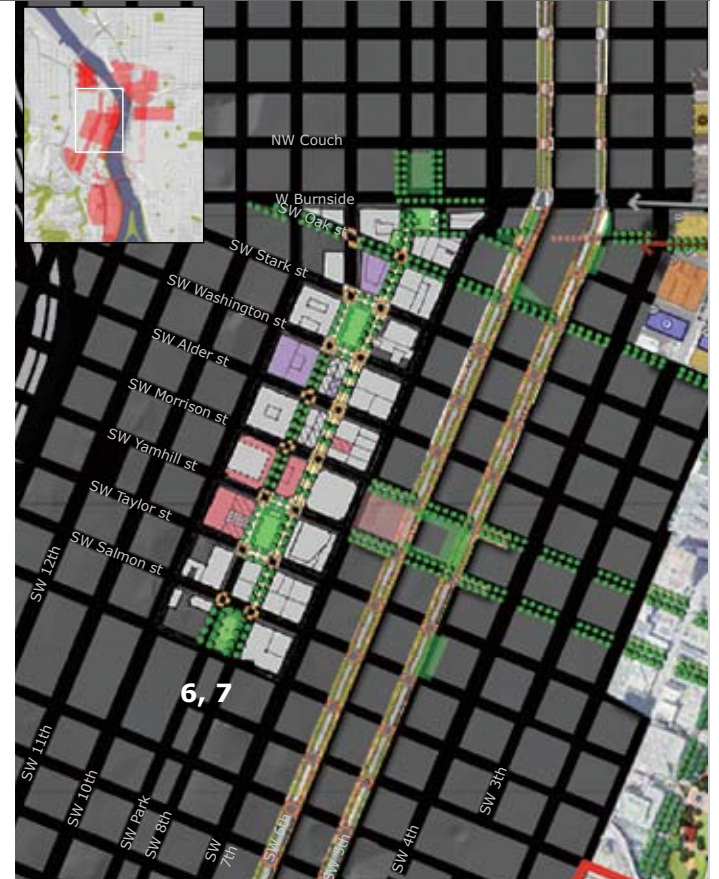
Portland has struggled to find an appropriate approach to make whole the unrealized desire for a contiguous mid-town park block system. The current need for a viable urban design concept was spurred by a decade old civic-minded attempt to recover park land by demolishing existing structures (some historic). Seeking to avoid this dilemma and embrace the best aspects of the many studies that followed, the Urban Design Group prepared the Park Avenue Vision in 2004.

A key element of this urban design vision is the reliance on active and enhanced streets between the North and South Park blocks (Park Avenue and 9th) as the “open” or public space that binds them. These connections would be further enhanced by the development of a new park (between Taylor & Yamhill) and the restoration of O’Bryant Square as unique “bookends” to enrich public experience. Retaining historic character, scale and nuanced architecture while encouraging the street level to concentrate cafes and related active uses will also help create a special public experience. This vision has provided the basis for the 3 Downtown Parks Project (PPR) which has been developing associated park and street designs.



- 7. project:** 3 Downtown Parks, 2007
Initiated by: Portland Parks and Recreation
Prepared by: Laurie Olin, Mayer/Reed, ZGF

In order to implement the Park Avenue Vision, Portland Parks and Recreation engaged a team of design consultants to develop detailed ideas for the three parks between the north and south Park Blocks (the new South Park Block 5, O’Bryant Square, and Ankeny Park). Construction of South Park Block 5 is expected to take place in 2007-08, following completion of an underground parking structure below. The project will also include schematic plans for the renovation of O’Bryant and Ankeny Parks and clear urban design recommendations for connecting Park Avenue and 9th Avenue.



urban design and development issues

Connecting the North and South Park Blocks is a major improvement that will ensure the longer-term vibrancy of Portland’s downtown core. In direct or partial response to current Park Avenue planning and design efforts under way, a number of new development projects are being planned and proposed on adjacent blocks. These projects will have significant impacts on the adjacent retail core including Pioneer Square

Other Influencing Plans: *West End Plan (2002), Downtown Retail Strategy (2002 & 2007 Update)*

current projects



- 8. project:** Transit Mall Urban Design Analysis and Vision, 2004
Initiated by: Bureau of Planning (for TriMet, Portland Department of Transportation and Shields Obletz Johnsen)
Prepared by: Urban Design Group, Bureau of Planning

Portland's Transit Mall has long been considered nationally as one of the more successful civic examples of a transit spine. Until recently a high intensity bus mall, the Transit Mall is being retrofitted to add light rail.

This urban design vision was prepared by the Bureau of Planning's Urban Design Group to provide the background analysis and a vision to address contemporary needs. Its purpose is to remain a useful reference and resilient basis for future decisions. The vision offers two main concepts. The first, "Urban Rooms" identifies the surrounding urban character around each of seven station areas. The second, "Station as Place" urges each transit station area to become a place with its own urban identity.

- 9. project:** Portland State University District Vision (ongoing)
Initiated by: Portland State University
Prepared by: Portland State University

One of the main purposes of a future Campus Plan for Portland State University is to establish a coherent physical plan that express its long and short term strategic development priorities. It will also examine broader district related housing and economic development issues. Still evolving, this vision establishes the basis for a campus layout that will accommodate the projected academic, research and campus living needs of the University. It will also inform necessary facilities implementation plans to meet future infrastructure needs.



- 10. project:** Tom McCall Waterfront Park Master Plan Update, 2003
Initiated by: Portland Parks and Recreation
Prepared by: EDAW, Lango Hansen Landscape Architects

This Master Plan for Waterfront Park updated the original Downtown Waterfront Park Master Plan prepared by the Wolff Zimmer Gunsul Frasca (WZGF) Partnership in 1975. It divided the park into distinct segments while retaining its ability to accommodate large events and festivals. The master plan also proposed increasing the amount of durable/ harder surface (still pervious), while creating new opportunities to view the river and strengthen connections to it across Naito Parkway. The first impacts of this Master Plan are being seen in the Ankeny Plaza and Old Town area. (See Ankeny Plaza & Old Town.)



urban design and development issues

All of the above projects are large scale efforts that will maintain and expand the vitality and role of downtown. The introduction of light rail on the Transit Mall will add intensity and further concentrate downtown transit related activity. The Transit Mall's extension south through Portland State University underscores the importance of this urban campus' need to integrate with its surrounding downtown environment.

Finally, Tom McCall Waterfront Park is the most prominent north-south tie spanning the entire length of the downtown along the Willamette River. Its east-west connections with the downtown street grid and blocks need continued urban design attention to assure a maturing physical relationship between the downtown and the river.

Other Influencing Plans: West End Plan (2002), Downtown Retail Strategy (2002 & 2007 Update), Harbor Drive (PDC)

south waterfront

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

evolving areas

current projects



- 11. project:** South Portland Circulation Study, 2000-2001
Initiated by: Portland Department of Transportation
Prepared by: Stastny-Brun Architects

The primary objective of the South Portland Circulation Study was to separate regional from local traffic by removing the Ross Island Bridge ramps in the Lair Hill neighborhood. This study recommended reuniting the east and west portions of the neighborhood by extending and replicating the surrounding street grid. It also recommended rebuilding the western Ross Island bridge ramps, and other strategic changes to Naito Parkway (Front Ave). When implemented, these actions could release up to seven acres of land for redevelopment. Pedestrian, bicycle, and local vehicle circulation improvements were also addressed.



- 12. project:** South Waterfront Greenway Development Plan, 2003
Initiated by: Portland Parks and Recreation
Prepared by: Walker Macy, Thomas Balsley

The 2003 South Waterfront Greenway Development Plan made specific recommendations toward the development of 1.6 miles of greenway that connects the South Waterfront Development to downtown Portland to the John's Landing area along the Willamette River. This is created through an environmentally sensitive and continuous public corridor with strong connections.



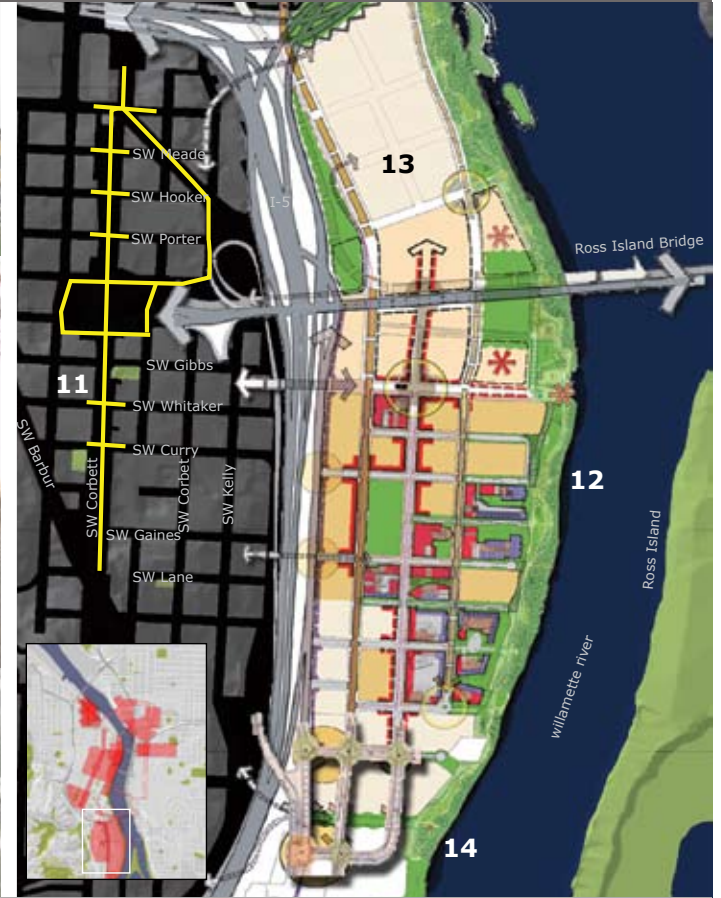
- 13. project:** Urban Design Charrette, South Waterfront Urban Design & Development Update, 2005
Initiated by: Portland Bureau of Planning
Prepared by: Urban Design Group, Bureau of Planning

An accumulation of development issues prompted the Bureau of Planning to host a three-day design charrette. It built upon concepts outlined in an earlier 2003 Urban Design Charrette for the South Waterfront's central district. This charrette focused on the proposed parks and open space concepts, transportation network, and interfaces between private and public development. It integrated OHSU Schnitzer Campus issues and considered future alignments for light rail transit (MAX). Participants also considered the desired character of this emerging neighborhood.



- 14. project:** South Portal Study, 2006
Initiated by: Portland Department of Transportation
Prepared by: Kittelson & Associates

The South Portal Study's recommendations were drafted to fulfill three key functions: preserve existing movements to and from I-5, I-405, and the Ross Island Bridge; facilitate flows to and from John's Landing and areas to the south along Macadam Avenue; and to allow appropriate ingress and egress for South Waterfront residents, employees, and visitors. The study recommended specific improvements like phased street alignments and orientation to improve access and urban design at the southern entrance to South Waterfront.



urban design and development issues

The South Waterfront development area continues its rapid evolution. Unlike the River District, this area will not retain or adapt much of its old industrial infrastructure. Creating vibrant places that are appropriately scaled, public, and enriching remain ongoing urban design challenges. Coordinating varying owner priorities and market sensitivities will also contribute towards the success of this area.

Other Influencing Plans: OHSU/North District Planning, Milwaukie South Corridor LRT Study (TriMet/PDOT), N. Macadam Transportation Study (PDOT)

convention center & lloyd district

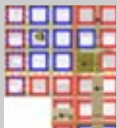
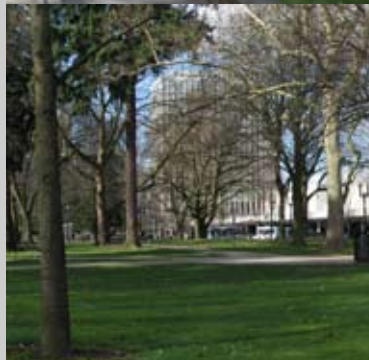
CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT
evolving areas

current projects



- 15. project:** Rose Quarter Urban Design Plan & Development Study, 2001
Initiated by: Portland Development Commission
Prepared by: UD Associates

This study focused on the immediate area surrounding the Rose Garden arena and recommended two alternative strategies for creating a mixed-use district of housing, commercial, and entertainment uses. One of these focuses on the reuse or demolition of Memorial Coliseum. The planning process involved public participation, involvement of major stakeholders, a focus on implementation, and design as a tool for decision making. The study included ideas for I-5/Broadway/Weidler interchange. It did not progress beyond a public review draft on account of difficulties in determining the Memorial Coliseum's future.



- 16. project:** Lloyd Crossing: Sustainable Urban Design Plan and Catalyst Project, 2004
Initiated by: Portland Development Commission
Prepared by: Mithun Architects, Greenworks PC

In 2004, the Portland Development Commission (PDC) made recommendations for sustainable urban design and a related catalyst project for the Lloyd District. Recommendations for a 35 blocks redevelopment area were based upon the four goals of habitat, water, energy, and development. The study pursued a final mix of residential, office, and open space development and identified near-term "catalyst" projects. The first such project consisted of two LEED rated mixed-use towers and a shared park. Both would require public-private partnerships for success.



- 17. project:** Oregon Convention Center Development Vision and Urban Design Framework, 2006-2007
Initiated by: Portland Development Commission
Prepared by: Michael McCulloch, Lloyd Lindley & Mayer/Reed

Spurred by the need for a new convention center hotel, this vision proposes a concentration of exciting entertainment and retail opportunities that reflect the region's natural resources and recreation as well as its economic and commercial landscape. Intended to become a regional attractor, this proposal defines an urban design framework for the area, also identifying its key connections, intersections, and opportunities. It also outlines a redevelopment strategy for the district consistent with the 2001 Lloyd District Development Plan.



urban design and development issues

Despite many improvements, the Lloyd District and associated Convention Center area of Portland's Central City have not developed the complex and rich urban design qualities found west of the Willamette River. Regardless, this area offers unique opportunities that can create special places. Articulate place-making strategies will help.

current projects



18. project: East Burnside-Couch Couplet, 2002 & 2007

Initiated by: Portland Department of Transportation
Prepared by: Lloyd Lindley

This is the same study as identified in the Ankeny Plaza and Old Town section of this review (#4). The East Burnside-Couch couplet component of this plan shifts westbound Burnside traffic on to NE Couch Street at 14th Ave. This allows reconfiguration of the NE 12th / Sandy Blvd./ Burnside intersection. The proposal also helps recover two new city blocks for redevelopment through the consolidation of vacated portions of Sandy Boulevard. This redevelopment opportunity site is identified as a "gateway" opportunity in the Central City Plan.



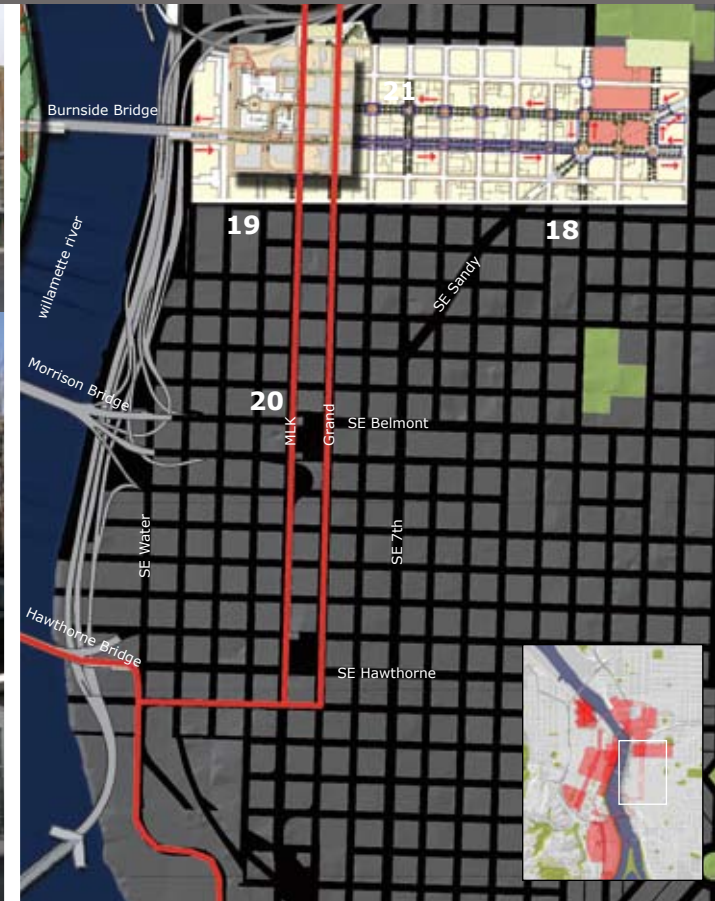
19. project: Burnside Bridgehead Site, 2007
Initiated by: Portland Development Commission
Prepared by: OPUS, Mulvanny G2

This mixed use development proposed for the Burnside Bridgehead Site is intended to make a strong statement on multiple blocks at the east end of the Burnside Bridge. The proposal includes residential, office, retail and live/work opportunities. The plan incorporates the East Burnside-Couch Couplet Plan while enhancing and emphasizing the Eastern Burnside Bridgehead.



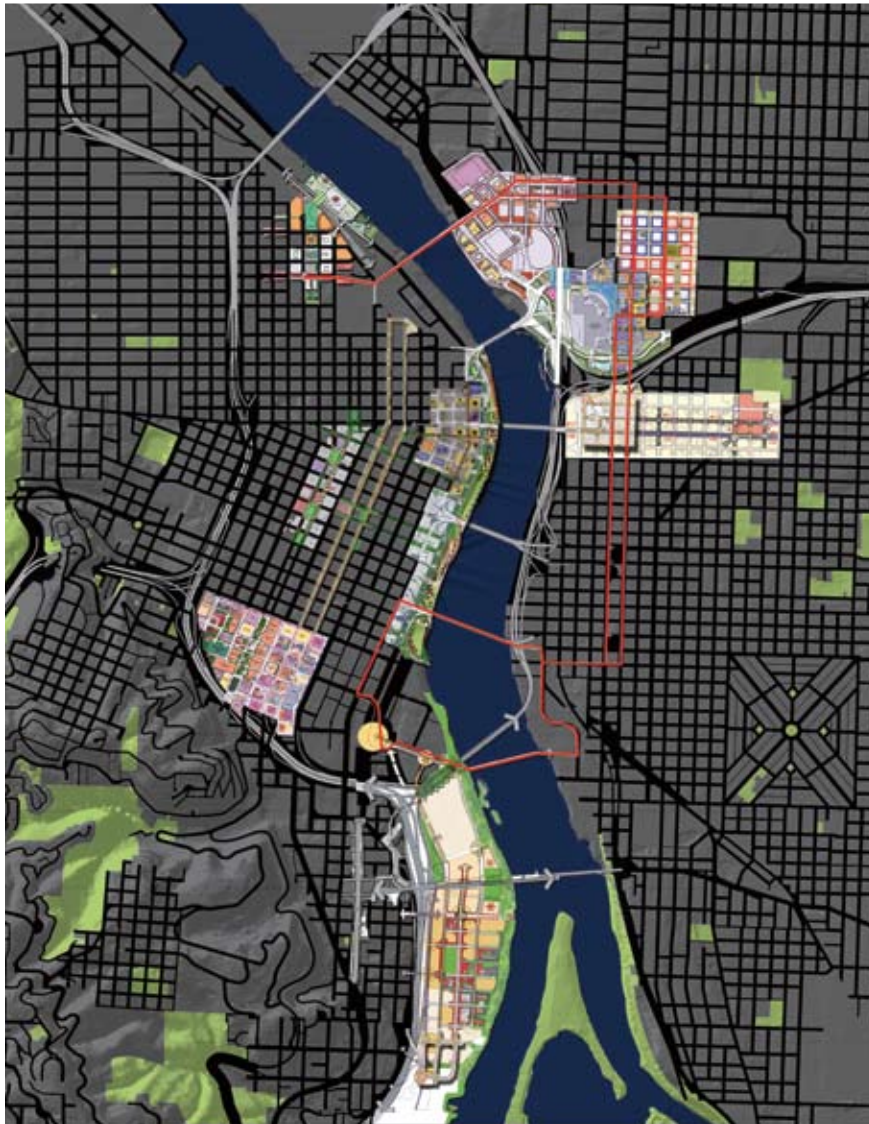
20. project: Portland Streetcar Loop Project (ongoing)
Initiated by: Portland Streetcar, Inc. (PSI)
Prepared by: Portland Streetcar

In the summer of 2006, Metro approved extending the existing streetcar line from NW 10th Avenue and Lovejoy Street in the Pearl District, across the Broadway Bridge and south along the Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd./Grand Avenue corridor. This new transit loop will eventually connect the Central Eastside to both the Lloyd District at the north end and the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) to the south.



urban design and development issues

Portland's Central Eastside Industrial District has long been considered the urban core's industrial sanctuary. While its grainy mix of local and small scale business operations remain highly desirable, planning and designing its future continues to be elusive. Strategies that retain its flexible and local character while allowing infrastructure improvements and place making improvements (such as access to the river) continue to be refined.



findings

Portland has overlapping plans and studies for its areas of highest development activity. Despite their often different interpretations each study reflects relevant urban design and development dispositions.

These varied urban design expressions are of continued importance. Part of Portland's enduring success has been its ability to refine seemingly conflicted objectives into equitable balances and outcomes. Unfortunately such balancing takes time, often shifting agendas and risking responses to changed context. This means good ideas will sometimes languish allowing other, larger forces to dilute or delay desired results.

A new Central Portland Plan offers a unique opportunity to reconsider and calibrate these known, but varied influences against a clearer "big picture." Decisions on the role of the downtown in the region and city will help identify which contradictory ideas must be reconciled and which can fall away. Such clarity will also help Portland decide the extent to which the places it creates should respond to local or city-wide needs.

A review of the twenty projects described in these pages offers the following observations:

- **Varying reasons.** All of the projects described underscore not only the range, but also the potential of each area they seek to influence. The reasons for each effort (plan, project, vision, framework etc.) are all different. Some are in response to an immediate need (i.e. development pressures in the River District); others are more in keeping with long range goals and objectives (i.e. Transit Mall and Park Avenue Visions, Tom McCall Waterfront Master Plan).
- **Varying expectations.** While most of the efforts shown are public, some are private. Private plans, while influential, do not always capture the fullest extent of city concerns (i.e. infrastructure, equity and fairness, balanced growth, public policy etc.) the city must balance. The associated expectations range from wanting changes in prevailing entitlements, such as height and FAR, to promoting good urban design and architecture.
- **Disproportionate development energy.** The distribution of these projects also reflects market preferences and redevelopment priorities. Resource constraints often bias where such public and private energy is deployed. This is reflected in the lack of focused attention on the Central Eastside.
- **An outdated Central City Plan.** Many of the areas currently experiencing development attention and change are not adequately informed by the prevailing 1988 Central City Plan. Areas such as the River District are frequently compelled to revisit their current entitlements in order to fully realize prevailing interest and future potential.

recommendations

The projects conveyed in this review do not reflect the fullest dimensions of change in Portland's Central City which is just as greatly influenced by small interventions as it is by larger scale efforts. Nevertheless, the large areas impacted by the projects shown suggest the following actions:

- **A better tool box.** Recent responses to changing development conditions and potential have compelled the city to respond in more dynamic ways. An increase in the number of urban design charrettes is one such result. These charrettes (or focused two to three day work sessions) have helped articulate responses to shared public and private aspirations not always reflected in formal city mandates. The outcomes have typically not been adopted as city policy in order to ensure less cautious creative input and participation. A new Central Portland Plan should acknowledge this and similar tools as a dynamic means of responding to changing conditions.
- **Greater urban design clarity and performance criteria.** Many of the contradictions seen in successive plans, visions and designs are the result of poor translation between the intent and outcome of stated city goals. This problem may be helped by having clearer, less ambiguous statements that first identify the "importance" of places followed by their urban design "performance criteria." A new Central Portland Plan should first identify, and then clarify the urban design role of the city's most important places.
- **Link aspirations with implementation.** Portland is not short on aspirations. Yet for its most important public spaces and places, it lacks clear implementation tools that can better realize site specific urban design objectives. A new Central Portland Plan should seek to link the urban design hopes for its most important public spaces with reasonable means that will help realize them.



introduction

The Central City has experienced steady development within its boundaries since the 1980s. Over time, this sustained growth has begun to test the limits of permitted development envelopes at the parcel level in each of the city's eight Central City subdistricts. Market pressures and construction costs have caused new buildings to more frequently fill their allowable envelopes (floor area ratios and height), and increasingly the city is being asked for more.

Because the reasons for existing city development regulations are complex, the basis for changing them to accommodate current needs requires careful consideration. These pages explain existing development constraints in their present context in order to encourage appropriate courses of action.

This analysis focuses on the three broad but closely interrelated concerns of FAR (floor area ratio), height, and skyline & visual identity. These issues are selected because they have the strongest urban design implications and are of most immediate concern to the development and design communities. Each is discussed independently but with findings and recommendations that connect them together.

Important regulatory issues such as Portland's bonus system, transfer of FAR, and related density provisions are not covered in this analysis. They will be directly addressed in the Central Portland Plan process itself.



section A4

focus issues

introduction

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is defined as the ratio between the maximum allowable built area and site area. FAR indicates the allowable mass or bulk for a building site. This means that an FAR of 1:1 allows a building to have a total floor area equal to the site area upon which it will be built. This floor area, however, can be distributed over many floors (depending upon the permitted height limit). This provides designers flexibility in articulating architectural form and massing while potentially freeing up a portion of the ground for other purposes such as open space. Good building massing helps improve the public realm, offering streets and open space added relief and vibrancy through better solar access and pedestrian scale.

FAR is particularly significant in Portland because it not only helps establish the eventual mass of a building, but is also a basis from which the carrying capacity of surrounding traffic infrastructure is determined (i.e. trip generation rates, depending upon the building's purpose – office, retail or residential).

A building's FAR can be calculated in a variety of ways. Also, buildings with high FARs are not necessarily the tallest buildings. As these pages will illustrate, there are many different ways that a given FAR can be achieved.

The following pages further explains the basic concepts behind FAR and its use.



section A4.a

focus issue: FAR

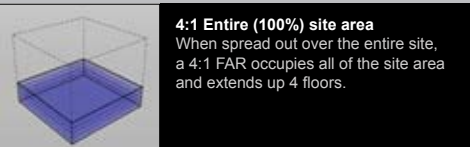
FAR: architectural implications

Using different site arrangements of permitted FAR, this page illustrates the trade-offs between taller, thinner towers and shorter, bulkier structures. All illustrations use examples of buildings in Portland.

These diagrams illustrate how FAR can be distributed in varying ways to create a range of massing and architectural configurations. The ways in which FAR is sculpted on a site can vary greatly, depending on factors ranging from the use (or mix of uses), market demands, as well as other related regulations.

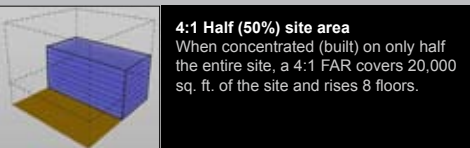
FAR & massing

The diagrams below are examples of how the same FAR can be expressed in many ways on a site. This example assumes development over a generic Portland city block (200' x 200' = site area of 40,000 sq. ft.) with a maximum allowable FAR of 4 and a height ceiling of 150'.



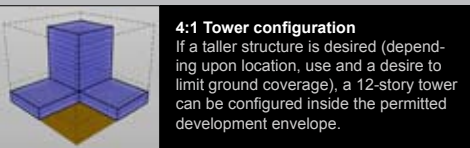
4:1 Entire (100%) site area

When spread out over the entire site, a 4:1 FAR occupies all of the site area and extends up 4 floors.



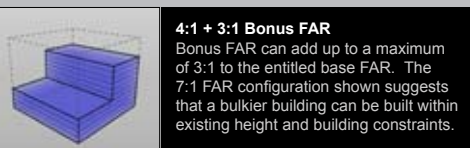
4:1 Half (50%) site area

When concentrated (built) on only half the entire site, a 4:1 FAR covers 20,000 sq. ft. of the site and rises 8 floors.



4:1 Tower configuration

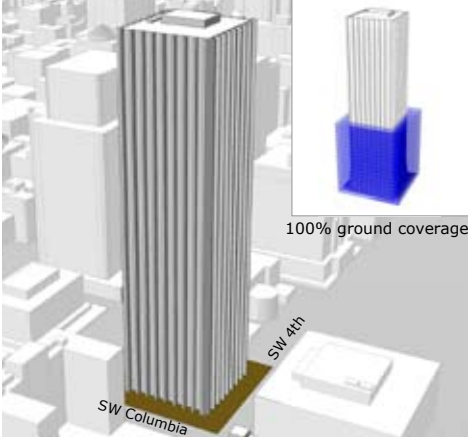
If a taller structure is desired (depending upon location, use and a desire to limit ground coverage), a 12-story tower can be configured inside the permitted development envelope.



4:1 + 3:1 Bonus FAR

Bonus FAR can add up to a maximum of 3:1 to the entitled base FAR. The 7:1 FAR configuration shown suggests that a bulkier building can be built within existing height and building constraints.

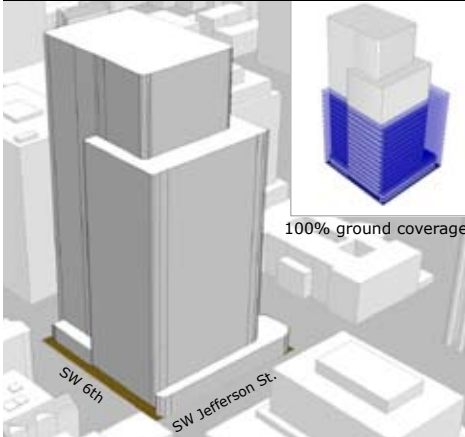
FAR 17:1 Wells Fargo Building



100% ground coverage

Height: 546 ft
Total sq. ft. 689,840
Approximate ground coverage: 80%
Primary use: Office

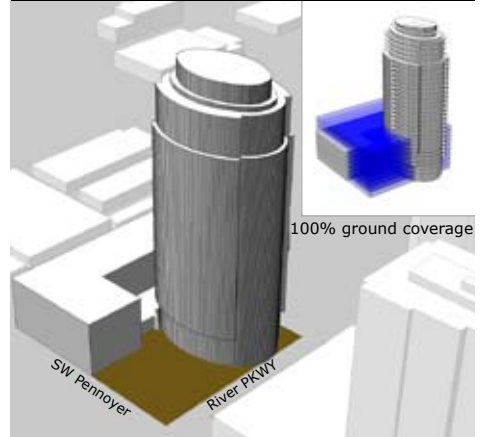
FAR 15:1 Pac West Building



100% ground coverage

Height: 375 ft
Total sq. ft. 596,161
Approximate ground coverage: 90%
Primary use: Office

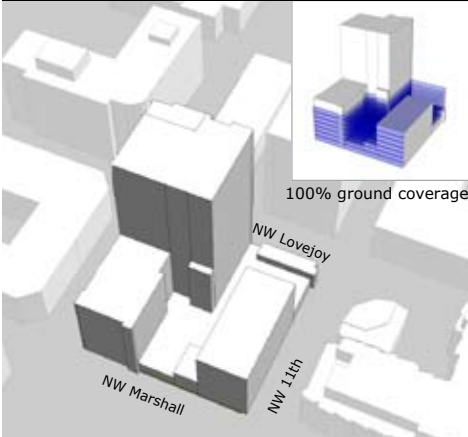
FAR 9:1 John Ross Building



100% ground coverage

Height: 325 ft
Dwelling units: 286
Approximate ground coverage: 75%
Primary use: Residential

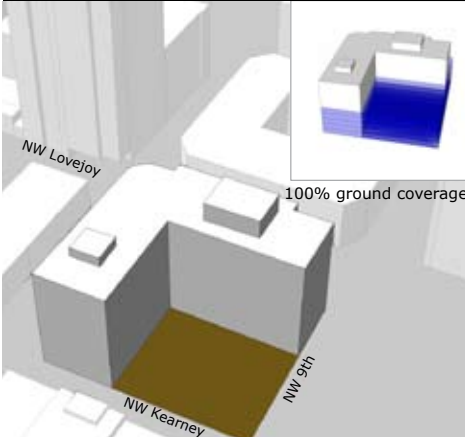
FAR 7:1 Metropolitan Building



100% ground coverage

Height: 225 ft
Dwelling units: 121
Approximate ground coverage: 100%
Primary use: Residential/office

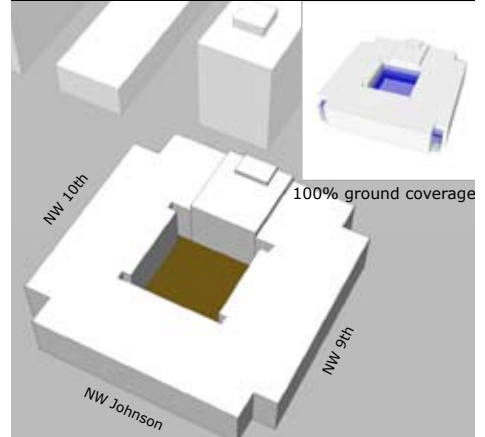
FAR 5:1 Burlington Building



100% ground coverage

Height: 120 ft
Dwelling units: 163
Approximate ground coverage: 60%/65%
Primary use: Residential

FAR 3:1 Pearl Court Building



100% ground coverage

Height: 45 ft
Dwelling units: 194
Approximate ground coverage: 75%/80%
Primary use: Residential

FAR in portland's core

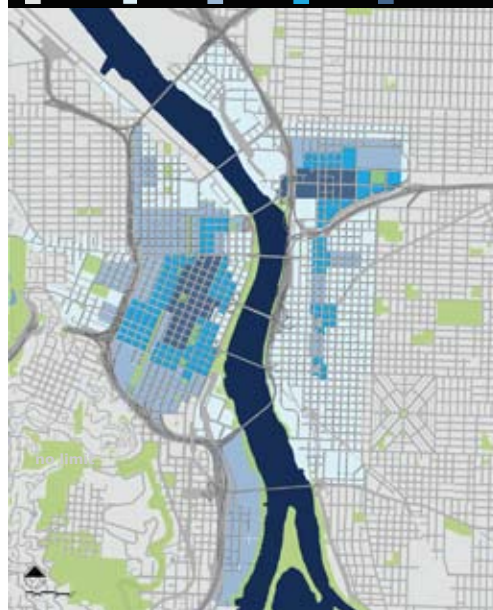
Like height, FAR allocations in Portland's Central City consist of base entitlements and bonus provisions that a developer may use to increase buildable FAR. These bonus provisions vary by location and area-specific desired benefits. The basis for additional FAR allocations is the provision of a range of predetermined public benefits that include: public art, water features, eco-roofs, bike lockers, day-care facilities and additional residential units.

Of these the most used bonus provision is that for additional housing units. It was established to encourage housing in Portland's downtown core when there was relatively little being built. However, the recent high market demand for housing in the Central City has caused some to wonder if this residential bonus provision should remain. A more thorough analysis of Portland's bonus FAR provisions is being undertaken in a Central City Assessment of current conditions.

FAR (above the base allocation) can also be acquired through transfer from other sites. Such FAR is typically purchased from properties unable or unlikely to use their permitted amount due to reasons that include prevailing historic designations or open space dedications. Projects have been known to mix both FAR bonus and transfer provisions to suit their development objectives.

base entitlements

2:1 or less 3:1to4:1 5:1to6:1 7:1to9:1 10:1 or more

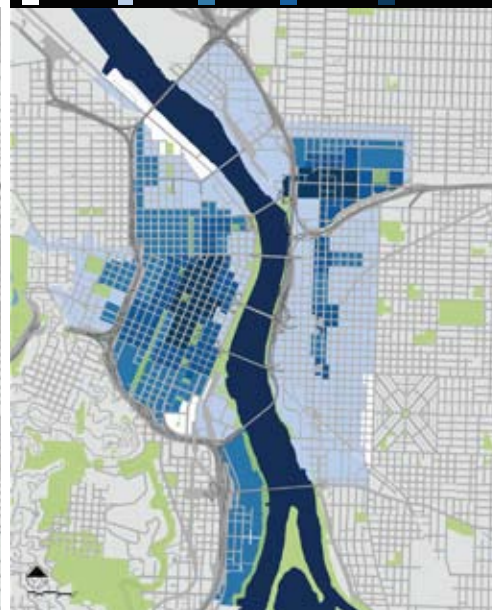


This map indicates the distribution of base FAR in the Central City. Areas with the highest FAR are concentrated in the downtown core and along high-capacity transit corridors. These FAR allocations (darkest) are intended to encourage high-density office/employment uses that typically need larger floor plates.

Recent analysis of Central City development has revealed that most new buildings are utilizing more of their available FAR. Many of these developments are actually using more than 100% of their base FAR, meaning that they are also using bonus FAR as well.

base + bonus

5:1 or less 6:1to7:1 8:1to9:1 10:1to12:1 13:1 or more



While a base FAR and height establish the maximum volume within which a building of maximum allowed floor area must "sculpted," there are a variety of zoning provisions that permit these standards to be exceeded. The above mapped FAR profile shows the impacts of bonuses where they are currently possible. As mentioned, these provisions include FAR transfers from other restricted sites.

existing building profile

>1:1 1:1 to 2:1 2:1 to 4:1 4:1 to 8:1 >8:1



This map highlights the gap between allowed FAR (base+bonus) and the FAR of existing buildings. Although new buildings are trending towards maximizing their allowable FAR, this activity has been largely limited to mixed-use residential projects (e.g. River and South Waterfront Districts). This overall trend can be attributed to a strong housing market. Accordingly, there has not been a corresponding robust growth in non-residential construction the Central City, particularly in the office core.

existing conditions

FAR affects how different built uses can be arranged on a site. Depending upon the use, buildings can be arranged to create meaningful ground level uses and better architectural massing. These arrangements are further influenced by height considerations.

A base FAR can be added to by fulfilling particular area-specific bonus provisions and/or transfer of FAR from other sites. Portland's current provisions are increasingly dated and should be re-evaluated in a new Central Portland Plan. To ensure the best possible integration with larger urban design issues of place-making and urban form, height and skyline issues will continue to be important considerations in determining desired FAR.

pressures for change

There are many forces driving the push for greater FAR entitlements in the Central City. These include the increasing and sometimes indiscriminate transfer of FAR and the related predisposition to maximize residential bonus provisions. Relatively easy FAR transfers from other sites are a particular concern since they have the tendency to "bulk" up buildings and maximize built square footage within prevailing height ceilings and permissible development envelopes. This tends to defeat the intent of leaving sufficient volume within which buildings can be better "sculpted". Additionally, over time uncontrolled FAR transfers also shift FAR distributions away from original intent. Such shifts can also have infrastructure implications particularly when the transfers occur across districts. On the positive side, the desire for more FAR compels the city to acknowledge where development forces are strongest.

The desire for additional FAR entitlements can be summarized as follows:

- Developers seeking to replenish FAR on properties from which it has been depleted (i.e. unforeseen development energy)
- Project development costs compelling larger floor areas
- Communities asking that additional FAR be granted only as a tool to help strategically craft better relationships with the Willamette River (i.e. location-specific building massing, character and views)
- Communities wanting neighborhood specific benefits in exchange for additional entitlements (i.e. affordable and family-oriented housing, public amenities and community infrastructure)
- Creating added density and a critical mass of urban vitality in desired locations
- Capitalizing location based demand and opportunity

challenges

There are many challenges associated with shifts in current FAR entitlements. Communities in areas experiencing development interest are increasingly asking for the use of FAR as a tool to realize desirable urban form as well as leverage other neighborhood specific amenities. Relationships with surrounding geographic assets such as the river and West Hills and the ability to craft dramatic urban form without compromising equally important street character are also regularly underscored by downtown residents. All this poses large questions on how FAR should be reasonably distributed. How should neighborhood aspirations be weighed against development energy or larger city-wide or Central City goals? To what extent can these forces be reconciled?

Currently Portland draws tight correlations between FAR and height entitlements. However some cities (e.g. Seattle & Vancouver, BC) are veering away from such tight associations relying primarily on FAR to better respond to unforeseen market forces while encouraging greater density and architectural character. Such approaches can make urban form outcomes less predictable, though not necessarily less appealing.

Finally, collective agreement on the future role of the Central City relative to the region will also help determine how FAR should be distributed. Regionally driven decisions on appropriate Central City density and land use will significantly impact the location and amount of this entitlement.

introduction

Current height regulations, which control development throughout the Central City, allow the largest and tallest buildings in the downtown core. These regulations are based on specific location based factors that include: proximity to open space or the river, presence in a special or historic district, and location within a desired view corridor or specific infrastructure corridor such as the Transit Mall. In many cases, base height and FAR can be increased through bonuses for the provision of public amenities.

These pages illustrate several key height relationships, drawing particular comparisons between existing regulatory constraints and possible outcomes based upon prevailing conditions. Key cross-sections illustrate important urban form relationships between the river and the city.



section A4.b

focus issue: height

influences



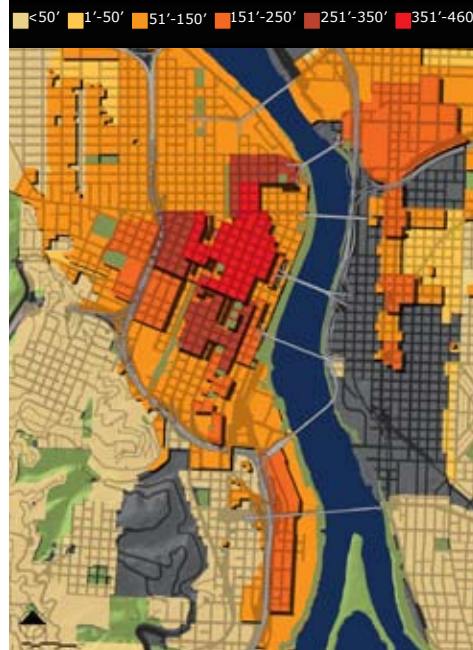
Views: Current heights are designed to preserve public views to the mountains, e.g. Washington Park, east toward Mt. Hood, and north toward Mt. St. Helens.

Open Spaces & the River: The Central City's "step down to the river" policy requires buildings to step down to the river from the transit mall ensuring views, light, and air along the waterfront. Similarly, regulations require south and west building frontages to "step down" to adjacent open space for solar access.

Transit Corridors: The tallest buildings on the transit mall (5th/6th Ave.) have north and south orientations. On the east side, they follow the Holladay light rail alignment and the MLK/Grand corridor.

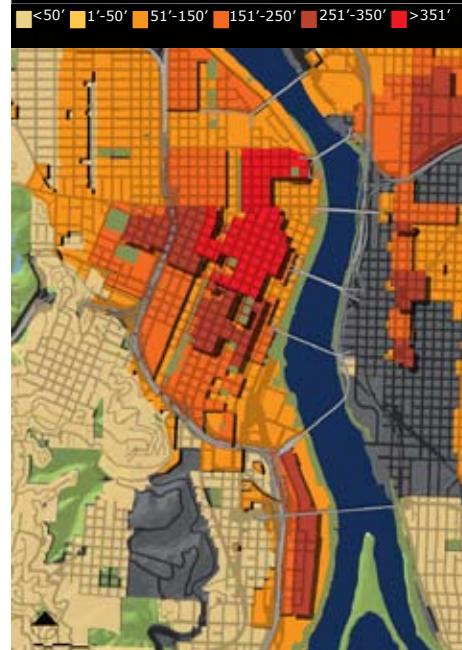
Special Districts: Generally, building heights are required to step down to the edges of historic districts. This is to maintain and protect their character.

maximum base



The above diagram illustrates the current base height regulations in Portland's Central City. The areas given the greatest visual prominence are the central downtown core as well as a crescent of concentrated development extending north along the Transit Mall and linking to the Lloyd District. To date, this link of concentrated development has not been completely realized. Also, there are no height maximums in industrially zoned areas, so much of the Central Eastside is notably free from height restrictions.

maximum + bonus



In Portland, buildings can be taller than their base heights in exchange for specific pre-determined city outcomes (bonuses). Areas providing such bonus provisions take into account established view corridors, historic districts and open space requirements. Height bonuses are particularly designed to encourage additional housing through the transfer of FAR (floor area ratios) from single room occupancy or historic sites. In specific areas such as the West End, providing high ceilings also justifies additional height.

The above diagram shows the resulting height allowances after current bonus allowances have been applied.

existing buildings



The above diagram shows the height of existing buildings in the Central City. When compared to current allowable heights it is clear that few buildings have utilized the full extent of height presently possible.

The 1988 Central City Plan envisioned the high-density office core extending north of Burnside along 5th/6th Avenues to the Steel Bridge. However, there has been little large-scale new development in this area.

New buildings in the Central City have started to push allowable height ceilings. The following pages illustrate some of the related issues.

city sections

>50'
1'-50'
51'-150'
151'-250'
251'-350'
351'-460'

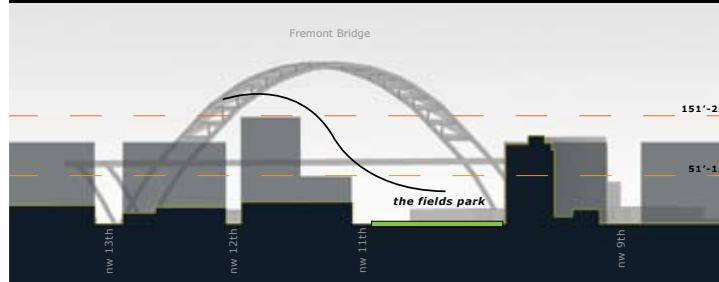


Height Relationships: The selected cross-sections on this page further illustrate important height relationships with open space, the Willamette River, historic districts and the downtown Transit Mall.

Each section shows existing structures as a dark silhouette (existing conditions). Additionally, maximum permissible heights (with allowable bonuses) are shown in lighter gray (future potential). Existing skyline is shown as faint background.

The large amount of area showing permissible height demonstrates unfulfilled development potential.

section aa:

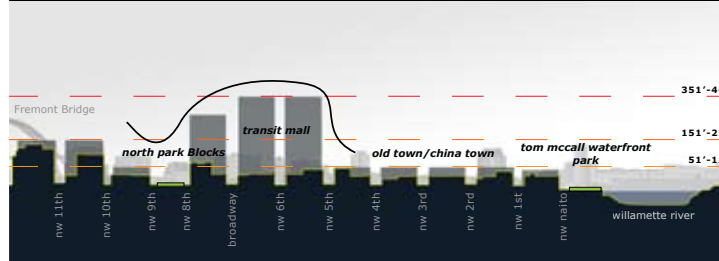


Relationship with open space: North Pearl District

This section shows the deliberate height setbacks around the proposed "Fields Park" just south of the Willamette River in the Northern Pearl District. As is typical throughout the downtown, the west and south facing frontages of buildings adjacent to parks have lower maximum heights to protect these public spaces from shadows.



section bb:

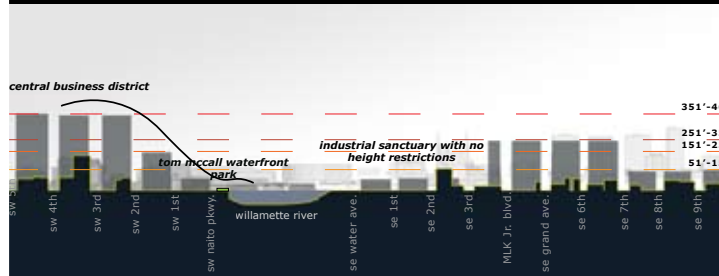


Relationship with Transit Mall, Historic District & River

This section shows how density and height are concentrated along the Transit Mall. This is to encourage building mass and density along public movement corridors of highest intensity.



section cc:

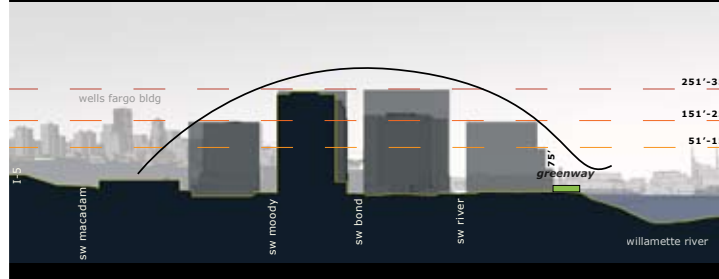


Relationship with River & Inner Eastside

Regulations require height and mass to step down from the downtown core to create a better relationship with Tom McCall Waterfront Park while enhancing views to the river. The industrial Eastside has no height limits. Although this area presently contains no significantly tall structures, community preferences on height may change once such buildings develop.



section dd:



Relationship with the South Waterfront, Greenway and the River

Since the South Waterfront is a relatively narrow area between the I-5 freeway and the Willamette River, it has a shorter transition between tall waterfront buildings and the river.



height & change



There are several factors cited in requests to develop taller buildings. These include development economics (i.e. cost of construction and returns on investment), the cost of land, perceived and real demand, the desire for greater concentration of mixed uses in increasingly attractive areas, and more interesting architecture. Often these arguments are made for properties in locations that are especially challenging for development due to lot size and market and particularly sensitive to height such as locations next to historic districts.

All of this challenges our assumptions on the role of height in the Central City. A better understanding of existing height regulations, recognition of where they may be most relevant, and other influence will help. As the following maps will demonstrate, there is no foreseeable scarcity of development capacity in the Central City. Additional height is therefore not required to compensate for any capacity shortage. This implies other reasons to alter existing height regulations are needed.

development capacity

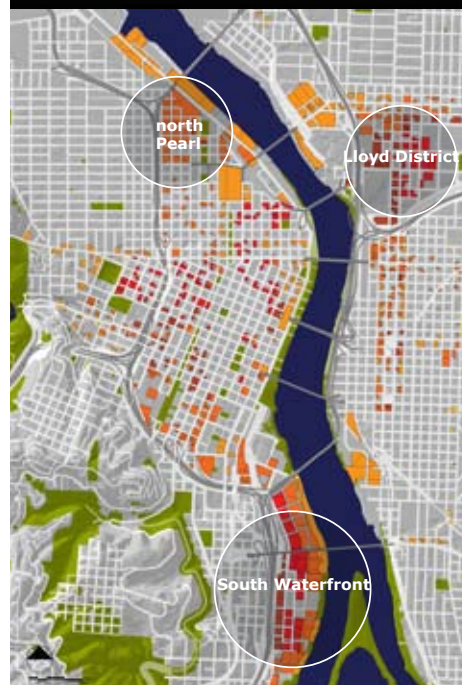
□ areas of potential change



A recent analysis of potential development capacity in the Central City (2007 Central Portland Development Capacity Study) identified sites most "likely to redevelop." This was done by removing historic and local landmarks, existing parks and open space as well as industrial sites from consideration. Remaining properties were then filtered by considering those with structures valued at less than half their land value and properties using less than 20% of their current entitlements. The above map is derived from this study and suggests that the areas likely to experience the most significant changes are the South Waterfront (1), the Lloyd District (2), and the northern edge of the River District (3). In addition to these districts, numerous bridgehead sites are likely to redevelop (4,5), potentially improving the city's relationship with its riverfront and gateways on both banks of the Willamette.

development capacity & height

■ 1'-50' ■ 51'-150' ■ 151'-250' ■ 251'-350' ■ 351'-460'



The above map adds current height regulations to the previous map showing sites most likely to redevelop. Assuming the underlying assumptions in the 2007 Central Portland Development Capacity Study remain valid, this map suggests that most of Portland's tallest development might potentially occur outside the Central City in areas such as the Lloyd District, the north River District and South Waterfront.

potential change to city core

■ 1'-50' ■ 51'-150' ■ 151'-350' ■ 351'-460'

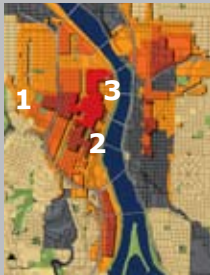


This map enlarges the previous Central City map to convey actual re-developable building sites identified in the 2007 Central Portland Development Capacity Study. The highlighted patches showing areas of likely potential change suggest that the future development potential of downtown is likely to be concentrated in the north, west and south of the Central Business District. The bridgeheads around the Hawthorne, Morrison, Steel and Broadway bridges also indicate the strongest propensity for new development.

height

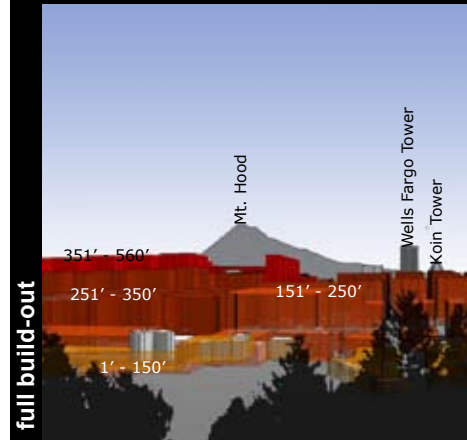
current entitlements

This row images shows specific examples of conditions that influence existing height considerations in three dimensions – the view from Goose Hollow to Mt. Hood, the relationship of adjacent development to Tom McCall Waterfront, and the Skidmore Fountain/Old Town Historic District. These simulations illustrate the full maximum height “envelope” of sites in the central Portland.



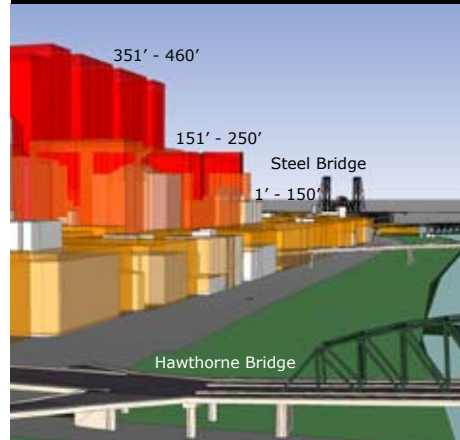
They are intended to show existing entitlements and how they have been crafted to be responsive to different public amenities: views, open spaces, and historic districts.

(1) views mt. hood



View looking east from Rose Garden at Washington Park, showing view trench protecting symbolic view to Mt. Hood.

(2) open space waterfront



View looking north along Naito Parkway from Morrison Bridge, showing the three-block step down to the river.

(3) districts historic district



Bird's-eye view looking northwest at Skidmore Fountain/Old Town Historic District, showing height setback to protect the character of the historic district.

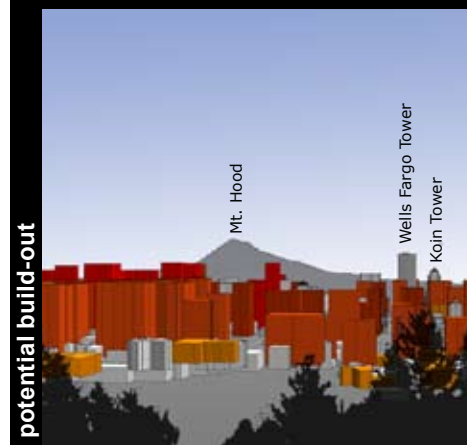
vs. likely build-out

This row of images reconstitutes the same views as above but with maximum height envelopes shown only for sites identified in the 2007 Central City Development Capacity document. The resulting urban form is dramatically different from what the current height entitlement illustrations above suggest possible. Underscoring the reality that areas almost never build out to their



maximum potential, these more conservative illustrations suggest greater thought on a desired height profile.

(1) views mt. hood



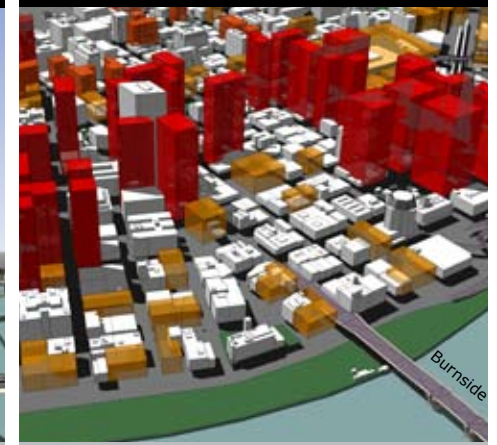
Potential build-out would not affect the view trench to Mt. Hood.

(2) open space waterfront



The step down to the river north along Naito Parkway would be subtle and only a slight degree of difference.

(3) districts historic district

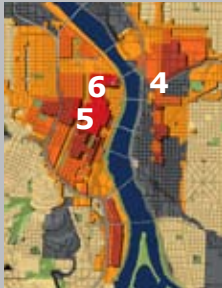


The intended larger/taller development extending north of Burnside along the Transit Mall is fragmented and otherwise compromised.

height

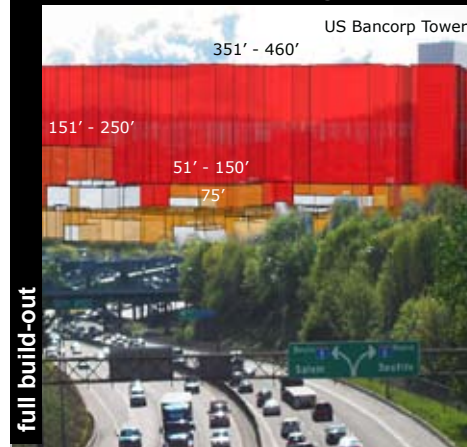
current entitlements

This row of images shows specific examples of conditions that influence existing height considerations in three dimensions – the view from Sullivan's Gulch, South Park Block 5 and Pioneer Courthouse Square. These simulations illustrate the full maximum height "envelope" of sites in the central Portland. They are intended to show existing entitlements and how they have been crafted to be responsive to different public amenities: views, open spaces, and historic districts.



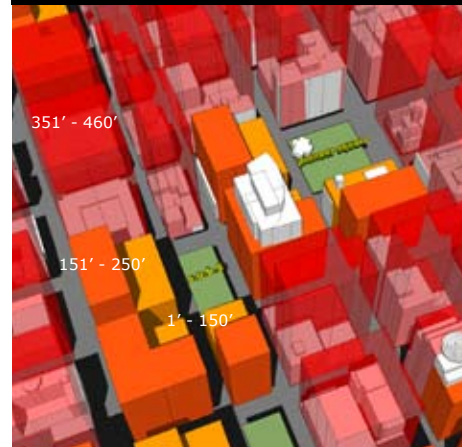
(4) views

sullivan's gulch



View looking west from 12th Ave. overpass at I-84 toward central downtown. Notice how the US Bancorp Tower and the West Hills are obstructed.

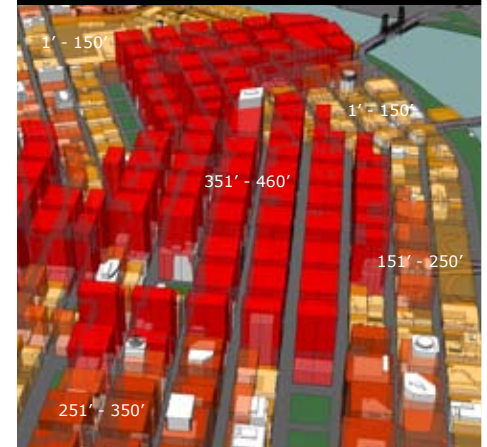
(5) open space s.b.5/p.c. square



Bird's-eye view looking north at South Park Block 5 and Pioneer Courthouse Square.

(6) transit

transit mall



Bird's-eye view looking north along 5th/6th Ave. Transit Mall at potential for taller development.

vs. likely build-out

This row of images reconstitutes the same views as above but with maximum height envelopes shown only for sites identified in the 2007 Central City Development Capacity document. The resulting urban form is dramatically different from what the current height entitlement illustrations above suggest possible. Underscoring the reality



that areas almost never build out to their maximum potential, these more conservative illustrations suggest greater thought on a desired height profile.

(4) views

sullivan's gulch



Potential build-out would still obstruct the US Bancorp Tower and the West Hills.

(5) open space s.b.5/p.c. square



The area immediately surrounding Pioneer Courthouse Square retains much of its existing urban form.

(6) transit

transit mall



The intended larger/taller development extending north of Burnside along the Transit Mall is fragmented and otherwise compromised.



existing conditions

The basis for existing height entitlements in Portland's central city is complex and nuanced to carefully preserve and enhance key urban design relationships. Since the height of a structure impacts the quality of urban spaces around it, height effects more than any one individual structure.

The reasons for the existing distribution of height vary. Sometimes it is concentrated around transportation infrastructure (i.e. the transit mall) and in other instances it is adjusted to ensure desired relationships (i.e. preserve historic districts and maintain public access and views to the river).

While these objectives have been largely successful in articulating urban form as hoped for in the Central City Plan, new and anticipated growth pressures suggest it is time to re-evaluate the existing height distribution.

pressures for change

Since the adoption of the Central City Plan, the downtown has experienced change, often unanticipated. Some of these changes have caused new pressures on existing height entitlements. Contemporary hopes and needs imply height will continue to be discussed as a:

- Tool to increase overall density in the Central City
- Means to provide the best possible distribution of visual and solar access
- Way to capitalize on areas experiencing positive development energy
- Means to capitalize on high value sites
- Means to help developers retain desired return on investments
- Means to achieve memorable city, district and architectural form

challenges

To the extent any of these stated aspirations become primary considerations, the existing distribution of height in the Central City will need to be reconsidered.

It is important to note that existing height distribution (regulatory) diagrams cannot adequately convey the Central City's resulting height profile. When considering the cumulative impacts of recent development, the presence of historic structures and other buildings unlikely to change, there are significant gaps between the general intent of existing height regulations and likely outcomes.

It is therefore clear that current height constraints need to be adjusted to reflect contemporary realities and future priorities. It is also apparent that the impulse to undertake opportunistic changes should be tempered by a more deliberate central city wide attitude on the role of urban form and related public benefits.

In deciding these issues and priorities, Portland should consider its collective need to "sculpt" the city and its emerging communities or support unique market driven opportunities. All these considerations are not mutually exclusive.

Resolving issues around height will be time consuming and potentially contentious. The Central City must weigh a range of considerations and determine the role height should play in creating good urban form, encouraging concentrated activity, enhancing community character and promoting economic opportunity.

Finally, no one approach or emphasis can be easily applied across the entire Central City. Appropriate responses will be influenced by local geography, the needs and role of individual districts, infrastructural capacity as well as the desire for place-making and identity.

introduction

portland's approach to skyline & identity

This inquiry addresses skyline and identity. Both ideas are combined because each one often derives from or influences the other. The following pages highlight the extent to which Portland approaches these issues by illustrating the impacts of existing site development entitlements, particularly FAR and height.

Because of the many ways in which identity can be expressed, discussion of this aspect is greatly truncated. A city's identity can just as easily be derived from activities and attitudes (cultural norms) as it can from the way places are designed. So, while Portland does evoke a unique cultural identity, only the urban design aspects that may contribute to place-making and visual identity are focused upon here.

These pages also describe various opportunities to rethink and refine Portland's approach on skyline issues and related aspects of downtown identity. It should be emphasized that these pages do not constitute a comprehensive analysis of views, skyline and urban identity.



section A4.c

focus issue:
skyline & visual identity

skyline & visual identity

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

focus issue

portland skyline

southwest view towards downtown from the vera katz eastbank esplanade

Selected skylines & vantage points: This page shows three examples of existing sweeping views to and from Portland's Central City. These views underscore the prominence of the three tallest buildings in the downtown (US Bancorp, Wells Fargo Tower & Koin Tower) as well as the important role bridges play as iconic elements that connect and bind the city's east and west banks of the Willamette River.



portland skyline

west view towards downtown from the vera katz eastbank esplanade



portland skyline

south view towards the rose quarter from the broadway bridge



skyline & visual identity

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

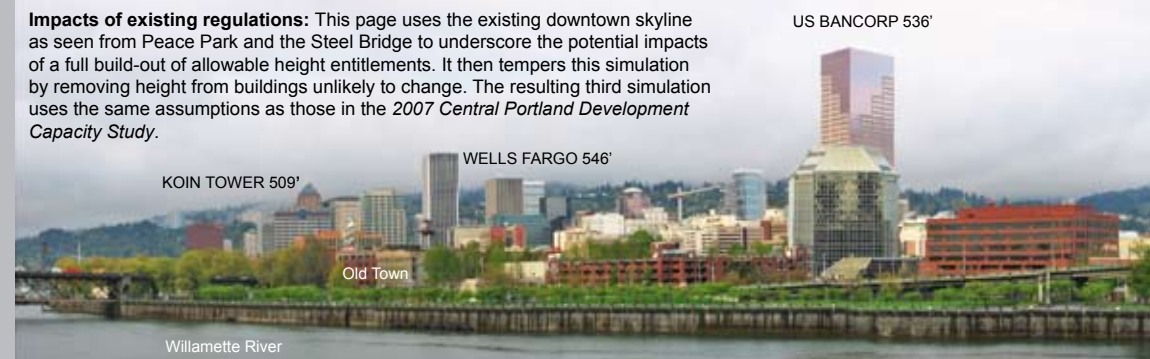
focus issue

Existing Urban Form

This panoramic photograph of downtown Portland from the Steel Bridge shows the city's existing skyline. Note how the 1988 Central City Plan's objective of a dense corridor along the transit mall extending across Burnside into the Old Town/China Town area has not been realized. Clearly there are many under-developed downtown sites that, if developed (within the current regulatory framework), could continue to satisfy this goal.

Portland Skyline

Impacts of existing regulations: This page uses the existing downtown skyline as seen from Peace Park and the Steel Bridge to underscore the potential impacts of a full build-out of allowable height entitlements. It then tempers this simulation by removing height from buildings unlikely to change. The resulting third simulation uses the same assumptions as those in the *2007 Central Portland Development Capacity Study*.



Impacts of Existing Entitlement and Urban Form

This simulation imposed over the existing skyline above, shows the full impact of the maximum height (base plus bonus) development envelopes currently allowed. Note that the buildings have not been sculpted to convey realistic distribution of allowable FAR.

Reflected in this simulation, is the visual impact of a high density core along the transit mall and a steep drop down to the river adjacent to the historic district. If fully realized, such saturated development could dramatically alter Portland skyline.

Portland Skyline



Potential Build-out

An earlier segment in this analysis (height) recognized that not all allowable entitlements can be realized. The underlying assumptions behind this as reflected in the 2007 Central Portland Development Capacity Study identify buildings that are too new, too historic or too significant to expect change. This simulation takes these factors into account, correcting the image above.

Although this resulting distribution may be considered potentially less intense, it remains debatable if this particular skyline is desirable or distinctive.

Portland Skyline



skyline & visual identity

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

focus issue

crafting memorable images

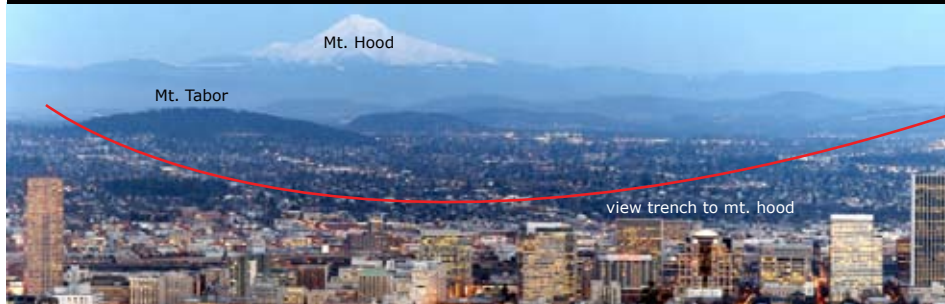
This page underscores the varying roles a distinctive skyline can have to enhance the purpose of a particular location or “place”. Deliberate distributions of building height and mass can enhance the experience of special locations. Particular attention to gateways, approaches to the city, or signature structures on prominent sites all build memorable images and hence identity. The images on this page do not propose preferred compositions but do illustrate the opportunity for renewed deliberation.

signature sites



There are a few significant locations in Central Portland that remain visible from many vantage points to and from Portland's downtown. The Memorial Coliseum is one such location. Could these sites be further enhanced through purpose and design in some way? Such opportunities are few so perhaps such sites should be held for higher and better uses.

portland's grand panoramic views



The most memorable view often relied upon in Portland is that from the Japanese Garden on the West Hills looking east towards Mt. Hood. The existing view currently is anchored by two of downtown's tallest buildings, The US Bancorp and Wells Fargo Towers. The view of Mt. Hood between them is accentuated by the developed “bowl” of downtown in the foreground.

Existing entitlement envelopes when applied may have the net impact of creating a more even spread of building mass. Understanding the fullest impacts of such changes might be yet another aspect of a more deliberate skyline.

bridgeheads & gateways



These images taken from the Burnside Bridge illustrate the extent within which new building envelopes would reside if existing entitlements were used. Although the actual buildings within these envelopes would be more modulated, a case can be made that the building massing of key locations such as these should be more carefully crafted.

first views



These images show the first view of the downtown Portland's skyline when driving from the airport west towards the Willamette River in I-84/30. As can be seen, a full realization of current entitlements would significantly alter the existing view with the West Hills as backdrop. An alternative to relying on the random development of building mass and design in this area would be to encourage approaches like more deliberate building forms and tops, or even a strategically placed iconic structure or building.

other cities

As mentioned, cities pursue/obtain skylines differently. Dominant structures, while not always visible from every vantage point, provide overall city identity and help orient its users. Often more diminutive but equally iconic structures become the endearing image that residents and visitors remember. The following illustrations show skylines of other cities that have been either intentionally pursued or inadvertently acquired.

Chicago:

Iconic buildings and emphasis on dramatic architecture



Hong Kong:

High building concentration with a powerful natural hill backdrop



Seattle:

Iconic tower in a geographically rich and scenic setting



Tokyo:

Mega-concentrations of building mass with a sacred mountain backdrop



Sydney:

Iconic Opera House on the water with downtown as backdrop



varying approaches

Cities have varying approaches towards their skylines. Some deliberately craft it (Chicago, Pittsburgh), others have relied on, or accepted old (Philadelphia) or contemporary iconic architecture (San Francisco), yet others have let their skyline be determined indirectly as outcomes of other intent (policy and code).

Portland falls into the last category, choosing deliberately to allow its downtown urban form (i.e. massing and arrangement of buildings) to be an outcome of specific policy objectives. These objectives include: access to the river, density around transit and extending the downtown high density spine across the Willamette River.

existing skyline contributors

In addition to the above, Portland's skyline is dominated by three older buildings. These towers, built prior to the current maximum height limit of 460' are: the Wells Fargo Tower (546'), the US Bancorp tower or "Big Pink" (536') and the Koin Tower (509'). Additionally, on the downtown's edges, the OHSU hospital complex and Memorial Coliseum can also be considered prominent defining landmarks because of their mass, size and prominent geographic locations. More a microcosm of the full downtown skyline, the aerial tram and associated South Waterfront towers also provide significant new defining elements when approaching the city from the south. At downtown's north end, the Fremont Bridge is a prominent skyline anchor.

skyline considerations

It is not uncommon for buildings or structures to become inadvertent landmarks in their city skylines. Historically, many are accepted only reluctantly. For example, the iconic TransAmerica Pyramid in San Francisco and the Eiffel Tower in Paris were both highly controversial when first built. It should also be noted that size is not always an essential element in obtaining iconic architecture and urban identity. This aspect can be successfully substituted by well sited signature architecture together with a clear (preferably public) purpose. A good example of this is the Sydney Opera House.

future role of skyline

The role of prominent buildings and structures in Portland will continue to be debated by those concerned with its identity as related to architecture and urban form. Traditionally, the lack of distinctive architecture has not been a significant issue for Portland. The best embodiment of the city's current identity continues to be its views of Mt. Hood.

As Portland becomes a denser and potentially a more urban city, what role should architecture play in helping define its larger identity? Are there some unique opportunities that could or should be exploited, or should its skyline continue to be an outcome of broader desired spatial relationships? The following pages attempt to provide some added basis for this discussion.

existing conditions

Portland's skyline is derived directly from its larger downtown goals and objectives. The city's tallest buildings that preceded the current (and lower) maximum height limits continue to dominate its skyline. Other intended density and functional relationships such as a step down of building mass to the river, density along the city's transit corridor and extension of building mass and intensity across the northwest to the east side's Lloyd District have yielded only mixed results.

Simulations indicate that if existing entitlements were fully realized, most of Portland's skyline would change. In some instances (given the limited analysis) the outcomes may even undermine the existing skyline of the city.

pressures for change

There are few pressures to significantly alter Portland's current skyline other than an often expressed desire in the design community for more distinctive architecture and a memorable skyline while looking at Portland, not just away from it. The fullest impacts of current entitlements on the city's skyline have however, not been completely explored. Doing so may offer a chance to make strategic adjustments to enhance existing opportunities.

challenges

Few cities actively pursue a deliberate skyline. The vast majority either capitalize a few locations using inherited structures or through bold (often risky) architectural endeavors that produce memorable outcomes. When successful these approaches directly contribute to a city's visual identity and skyline.

As Portland prepares itself for a new plan for the next twenty years, it would be timely to rethink our architectural and urban design response to strategic locations. While there may be a particular appeal in the "accidental" emergence of an inadvertent icon; there is also great value in identifying where such expressions may best reside. To this end, a new Central Portland Plan should first help identify high value sites and then consider the full range of their potential.

findings

All three focus issues discussed in this inquiry are interrelated. A city's skyline and visual identity is the direct beneficiary of well crafted approaches to FAR and height.

Crafting a coherent approach to each issue individually requires sensitivity to its broader impacts. The preceding pages can be summarized as follows:

flexibility

The current FAR distributions generally allow for a wide range of massing and architectural configurations across uses. Additional FAR obtained by providing particular benefits (mostly residential uses) and the use of transferred FAR (purchased off-site) can push both building mass and ground coverage to fill their envelopes unless there is adequate height to help sculpt the result. In some instances existing height allocations (relative to their FAR) may be inadequate to help reduce bulk, particularly when portions of a city block are constrained to ensure aspects like solar and visual access.

hard Infrastructure

The cumulative impact of prevailing FAR and height distributions influence (and are influenced by) the ability of Portland's infrastructure to support desired levels of development. This infrastructure includes utilities, transportation and transit capacity, open space and recreation as well as community amenities such as libraries, community centers, educational facilities, etc.

soft Infrastructure

Height allocations particularly influence local micro-climate, solar access and views differently at both ground and upper levels. These cumulative impacts are in turn influenced by local topography and land features (i.e. the river), the presence of landmarks and the proximity of historic districts. Collectively, these contribute to the city's skyline and potential visual identity.

basis for height

A recent study affirms that Portland does not need height to compensate for any foreseeable shortage of development capacity. The basis for changes in existing height allocations are therefore most likely to be driven by desired views, solar and micro-climate concerns, desires for location specific visual emphasis. More general local and city identity as well as the broader desire for urban density and synergistic economic opportunity are also considerations.

intent vs. likely outcomes

Existing entitlement diagrams can be misleading in terms of their implied outcomes. Outcomes suggested in prevailing height and FAR distribution diagrams should be tempered by structures that are unlikely to change. These include: recently built structures, historic and contributing structures, and sites where the replacement of existing structures is economically infeasible. This adjusted diagram is a better indicator of the Central City's likely development prospects and future urban design potential. Such an adjusted diagram also better informs likely skyline profiles over time.

skyline and visual identity

Portland's skyline is the outcome of a deliberate height and FAR distribution strategy that combines the Central City's relationship with its surrounding geographic features (hills and river) with a desire for functional density (i.e. along high intensity transit corridors). It is not focused on iconic buildings or any other deliberate architectural approaches. This is because the design and function of public spaces has traditionally superseded the desire to celebrate architecture.

A new Central Portland Plan is a good opportunity to rethink this basis for the Central City's skyline. Should a revised skyline contain room for explicit iconic architecture? Should such architecture dominate and define its downtown skyline or be less dominant? To what extent should a new skyline reflect Portland's downtown by function or district? Should the city's visual identity be reflected at all by its architecture? If so, how?

ground level emphasis

Portland places considerable emphasis on creating active and vibrant streets. The extent of ground coverage on development sites and the ability to fill them with appropriate uses contributes greatly towards this goal. The design and function of the lower three to four floors immediately above street level are most important to this relationship.

Assuming, for example, if vibrant and active street character remains an important goal, then can FAR entitlements be used as a tool to encourage more infill or even office development? How we resolve this and other local and city-wide challenges will greatly impact the everyday quality of Portland's Central City urban design.

recommendations

- Relate height and FAR entitlements to the Central City's overall distribution of development over time. Limited absorption rates might imply that concentrated growth in strategic locations may be more catalytic and effective in place-making than dispersed growth.
- Examine the possibility of linking additional height and FAR entitlements with the provision of specific community-enhancing benefits.
- Use height to strategically enhance particular aspects of Portland's skyline (bridgeheads, areas of prominent civic activity, key relationships with the river and hills, etc.)
- Ensure that height and FAR entitlements respond directly to corresponding soft (light, air and views) and hard (utilities, circulation and open space) infrastructure needs.
- Create better modeling tools to capture existing development concentration and desired place-making attributes in order to better focus development resources.
- Identify sites where height and FAR entitlements and/or skyline are most valuable. Link appropriate uses to them to ensure these sites are developed to their fullest potential.
- Develop a well defined approach to Portland's skyline and visual identity integrating landmarks, geographic features, special urban places and architecture while recognizing local and desired character.
- Examine skyline issues from the corridors of greatest impact (approaches of the city) to build visual identity and appeal.

section B

historic plans & relevant precedents

introduction

Starting with its 1903 Olmsted plan, Portland has periodically benefitted from many “great plans.” Each of these plans put considerable thought into Portland’s future, contributing elements to its infrastructure that have cumulatively made up many of its enduring places. To plan both the present and our future, it is important to understand the basis for these places. Many of the underlying concerns for these plans underscore issues that remain relevant today.

These pages identify and assess all the historic great plans for Portland. For the purposes of this study, “great plans” refer specifically to the large, single conceptions for Portland containing physical urban design and form expressions.

The reviewed plans are as follows:

- 1903 Olmsted Plan
- 1912 Bennett Plan
- 1921 Cheney Plan
- 1932 Bartholomew Report
- 1943 Moses Report
- 1966 Comprehensive Plan
- 1972 Downtown Plan
- 1988 Central City Plan

The following pages reconstitute these plans in a consistent graphic format to allow easier comparison. The timeline of events (shown left) places each great plan for Portland in its prevailing context (globally, nationally, regionally and locally). Understanding our evolution provides important historical perspective and continuity.

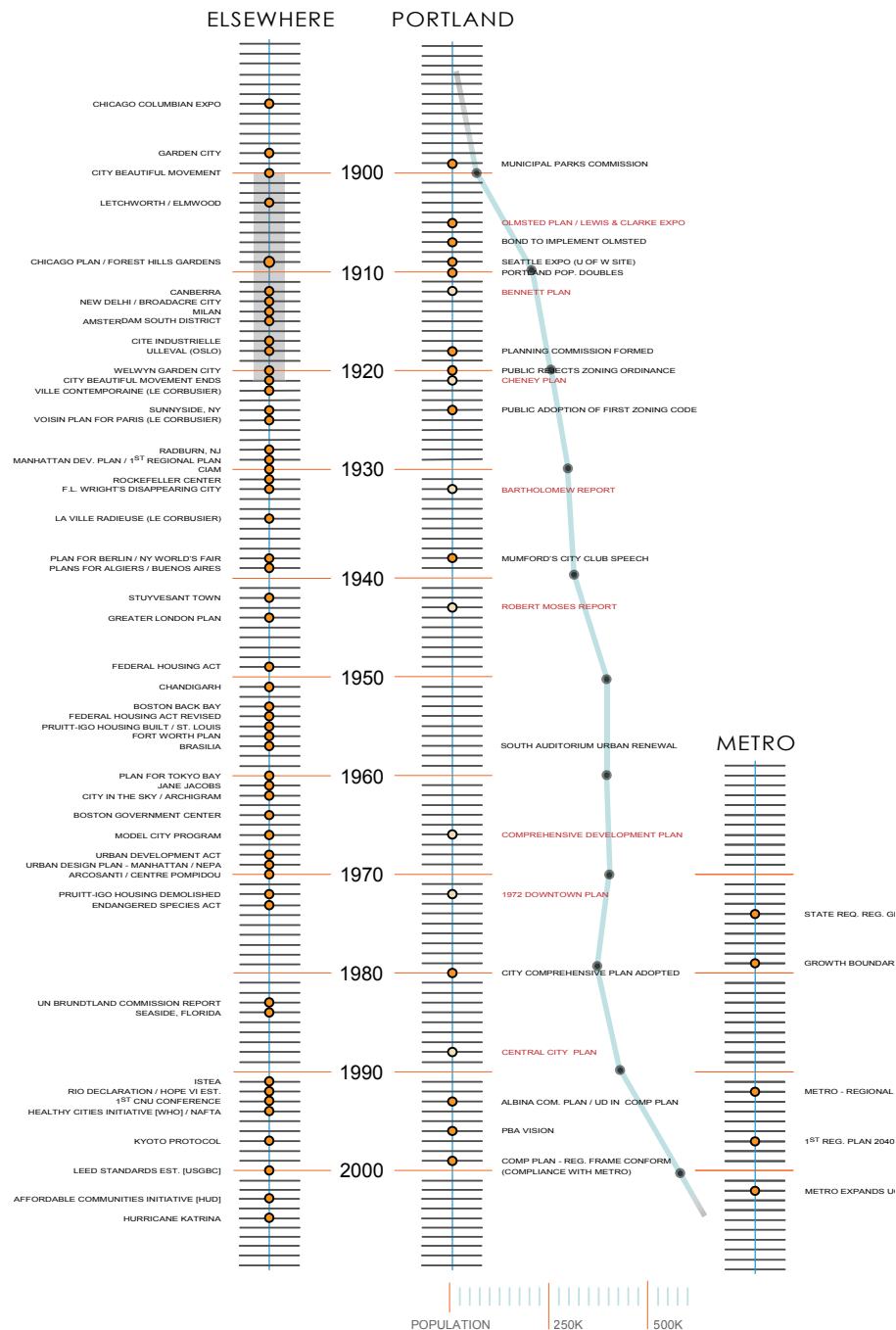


section B1

portland's great plans – history

portland's great plans

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT



a brief history of great portland plans

The history of Portland's great urban attributes begins unexpectedly in the 1840s when the city grid was laid out with a pedestrian friendly 200' x 200' block and grid street layout. The city's early pursuits for articulate urban form followed the international "City Beautiful" movement (1900-1920) during which John Olmsted (1903) and Edward Bennett (1912) proposed grand city organizing schemes. Each sought to integrate parks into the urban block formation by carefully manipulating streets and buildings to define great public spaces and experiences. The desire at the time was to enhance or reveal the "grandeur" of city life.

Following these early efforts, interest in city form and structure shifted focus to refining transportation and open space systems. This is reflected in the plans formulated by Cheney (1921), Bartholomew (1932) and Robert Moses (1943). This emphasis was briefly broken by Lewis Mumford's 1938 impassioned City Club speech in which he challenged Portland's citizens to create a city worthy of its beautiful setting.

The 1940s through the late 60s saw Portland unabashedly pursued the automobile and related big freeway projects as suggested primarily by Robert Moses. Reclamation of the city for its citizens was spurred by the 1968 Downtown Waterfront Plan, which called for the removal and replacement of the riverfront Harbor Drive freeway with a waterfront park. This began a trend that resulted in the cancellation of several major transportation projects including the Mt. Hood freeway project in 1976.

In 1972, the Portland Downtown Plan was developed in response to a growing lack of public involvement in major public investments and development decisions. It remains one of Portland's clearest and most profoundly impacting contemporary urban design influences. Despite changes in context since, the Downtown Plan continues to provide a reliable framework for the development of the central city.

In 1988 Portland formulated a Central City Plan to provide a 20-year vision for the future establishing the Central City as the regional center of commerce and cultural activities – all within a "balanced" mix of jobs and housing while retaining the integrity of surrounding neighborhoods and historic areas. The urban design elements of this plan are assessed separately in greater detail.

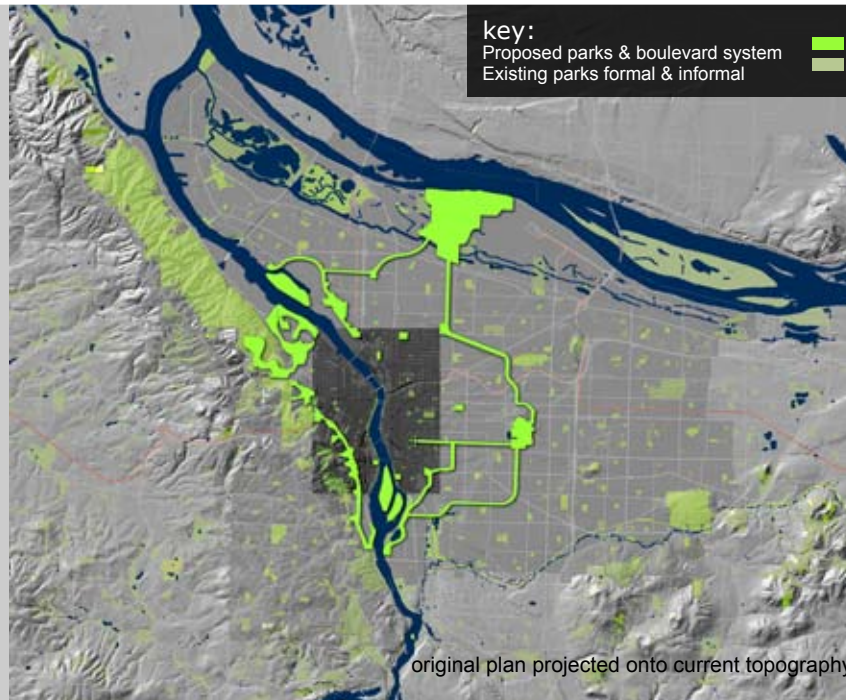
understanding portland's plans

Each of the following sheets describes one of the great plans for Portland as identified above. Rather than capture the fullest complexity and detail formulated by each plan. Each sheet summarizes its most significant urban design elements and relevancies for Portland today. This is done using a consistent format in order to make comparisons between plans easy.

olmsted plan 1903

Between 1885 and 1915, Portland's population had increased by 300% and its physical boundaries had grown by 154%. Partly in response to this and growing consciousness of the City Beautiful Movement, the Olmsted brothers were commissioned by the then Parks Board to design an open space system that would accommodate prevailing and future open space needs. Emanuel T. Mische, a horticulturalist on Olmsted's staff, was subsequently hired in 1908 to implement this plan.

plan sponsor
Parks Board



▲ Olmsted Brothers Proposed Park and Boulevard System¹



▲ Ross Island Park Plan



Ladd Circle Planting by Mische

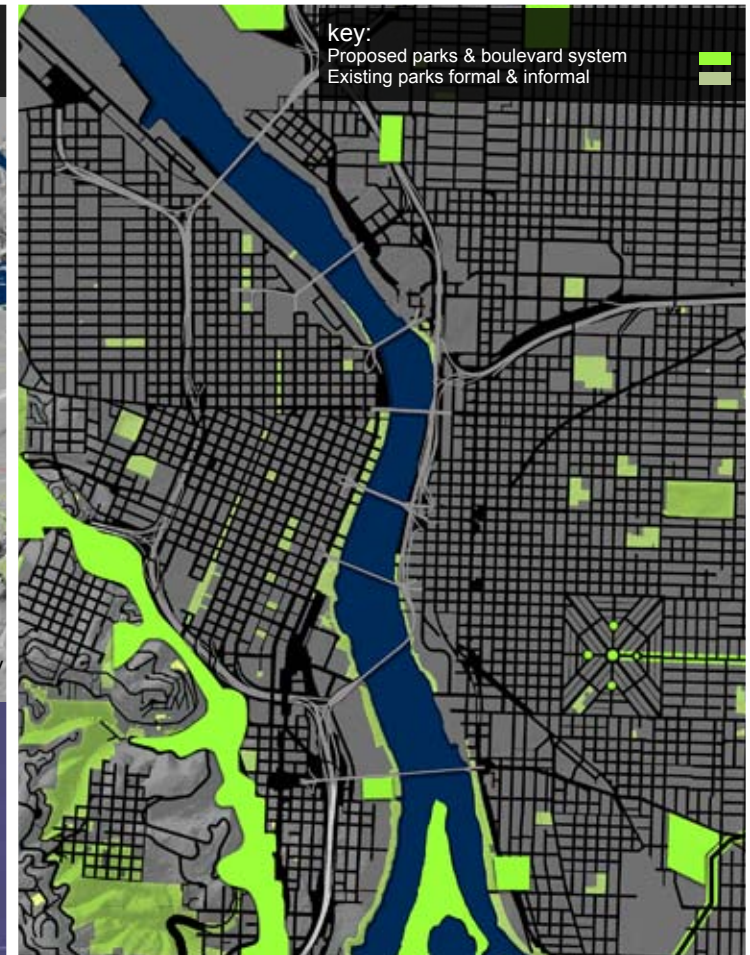
big idea:

- "A good park system is a manifestation of the intelligence, degree of civilization and progressiveness of the citizens."
- "A network of open spaces that vary in use and is connected by a system of parkways and boulevards."

references:

1. Guzowski, Kenneth James. "Portland's Olmsted Vision (1897-1915): A Study of the Public Landscapes Designed by Emanuel T. Mische in Portland, Oregon." 1990
2. Portland Parks & Recreation. "Olmsted Landscape Legacy: 1903-2003." 2003

portland's great plans



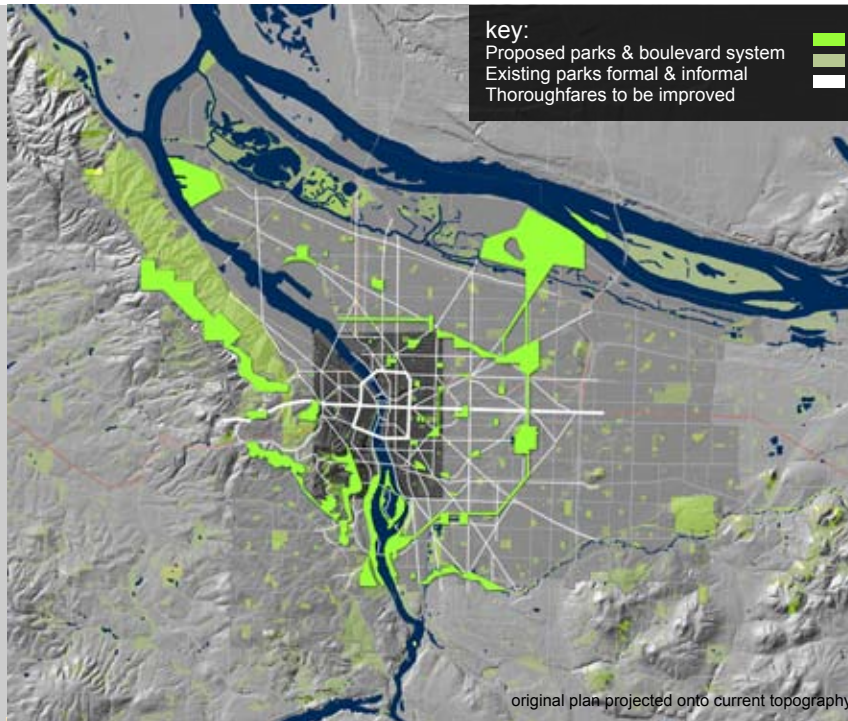
elements that persisted:

The plan's open space ideals (i.e. a park network that is programmed for regional and local activities).
Major city parks (Forest Park, Washington Park, Park Blocks, Willamette Park, Sellwood Park, Westmoreland Park, Mount Tabor, and Peninsula Park).

bennett plan 1912

After the 1905 Lewis & Clark Fair, the Portland Improvement League asked Edward H. Bennett, a protégé of Daniel Burnham, to develop The Greater Portland Plan. Anticipating that Portland would grow to 2,000,000 residents, the plan addressed street circulation, civic centers, parks and boulevards, and rail and water terminals in the traditional grand Beaux Arts manner and prevailing City Beautiful Movement.

plan sponsor
Portland City Council



▲(top) Proposed Civic Center²

▲(above) Greater Portland from proposed Hillside Vista Point²



Proposed development of Park Blocks and Burnside Street, at the intersection looking north² ►

◀ Diagram of main thoroughfares¹



big idea:

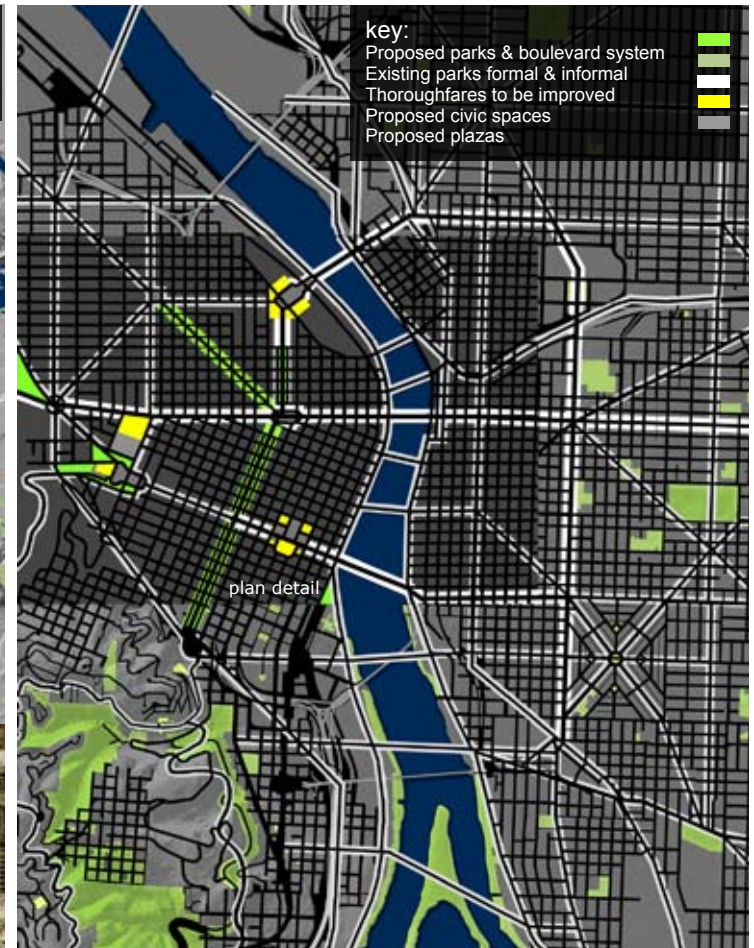
- Bennett suggested the city be seen as a living organism: business center=heart, streets=arteries, and parks=lungs
- Use of grand boulevards, viewpoints, and street vistas to create a formal sense of civic identity

references:

1. Cheney, Chas. H. "Diagram of Main Thoroughfares Proposed by Edward H. Bennett City Planner 1912." 1919

2. Dana, Marshall N. "The Greater Portland Plan of Edward H. Bennett." 1912

portland's great plans



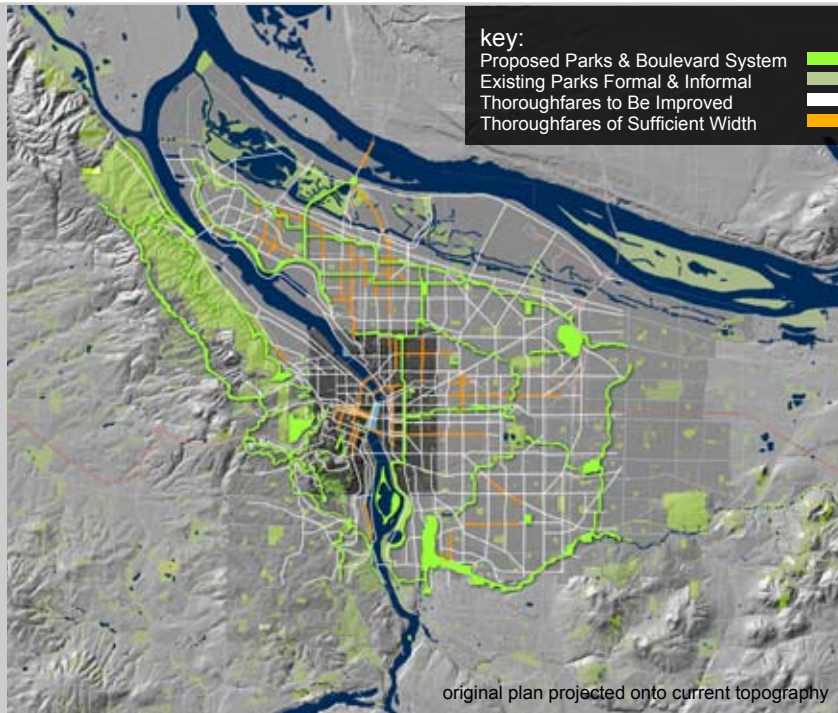
elements that persisted:

- Improvements to infrastructure
- Widened thoroughfares
- Strong connections to the suburbs

cheney plan 1921

Spurred by continued difficulties in implementing the more expansive aspects of the Bennett Plan, Charles H. Cheney was brought in by the Portland Planning Commission to help further refine and develop a pragmatic plan that could be implemented. This plan addressed specific infrastructure and safety concerns with strong regional planning as basis.

plan sponsor
Portland City Council



▲ Major traffic, streets, and boulevard system¹



▲ New double-deck Bascule bridge design¹



Proposed new Burnside Street Bridge¹

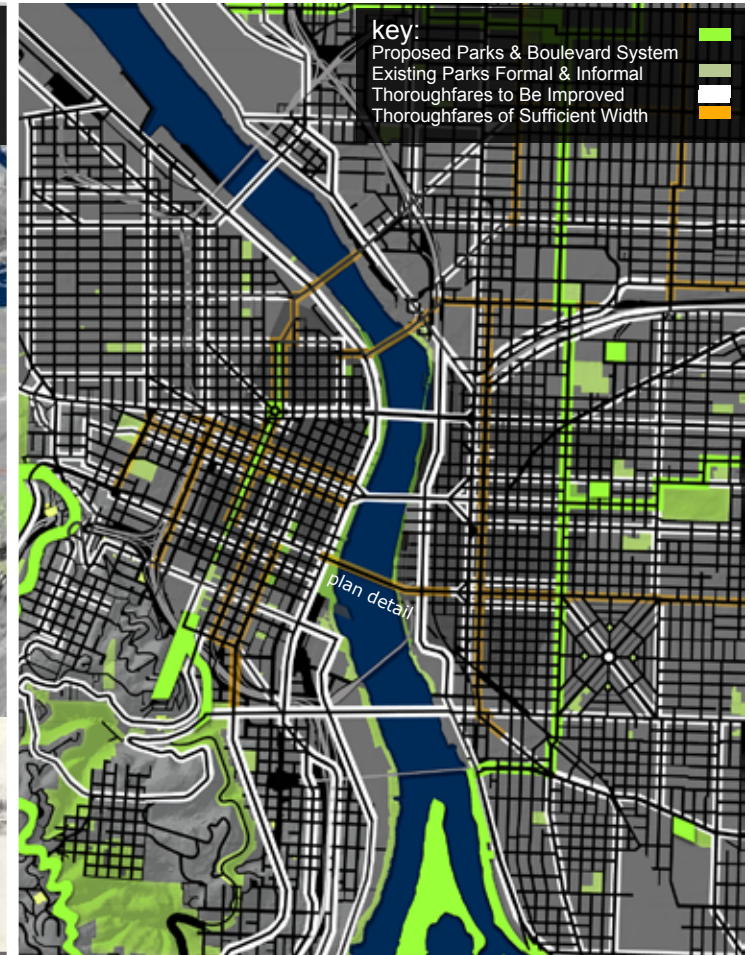
big idea:

- Street hierarchy and park and boulevard programming
- Comprehensive regional view of Portland
- Safer access to the industrial waterfront

references: 1. Cheney, Charles. H. "Major Traffic Street Plan Boulevard and Park System for Portland Oregon." 1921

portland's great plans

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT



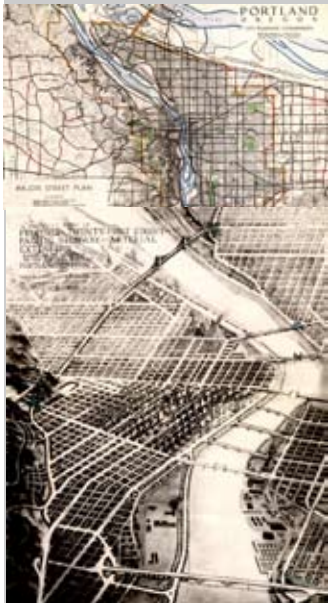
elements that persisted:

- Street improvements (Interstate Ave., Foster, NE Sandy)
- New bridges (Sellwood, Burnside, & St. Johns bridges)
- Improvements to boulevards and parks (Alberta Park and playgrounds)
- Advocacy of the purchase of land for school playgrounds and athletic fields

bartholomew report 1932

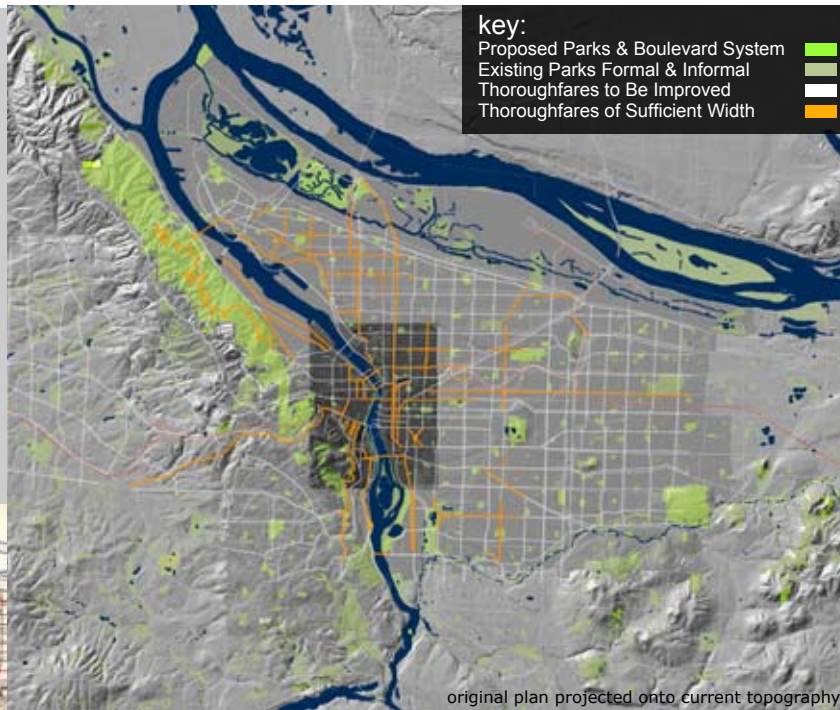
In 1932 Harlan Bartholomew was brought in by the Portland Planning Commission to see if a new plan could revitalize Portland out of the great Depression and address growing automobile use. The result, a greatly detailed study known as the Bartholomew Report was the first plan to clearly articulate ideas for Portland's Central City.

plan sponsor
City Planning Commission



▲(top) Major Streets Plan¹

▲(above) Proposed 21st St - Pacific Highway - arterial extension¹



key:
Proposed Parks & Boulevard System
Existing Parks Formal & Informal
Thoroughfares to Be Improved
Thoroughfares of Sufficient Width

original plan projected onto current topography



◀ Detail of proposed waterfront improvements¹

Perspective of the proposed waterfront development¹ ▶



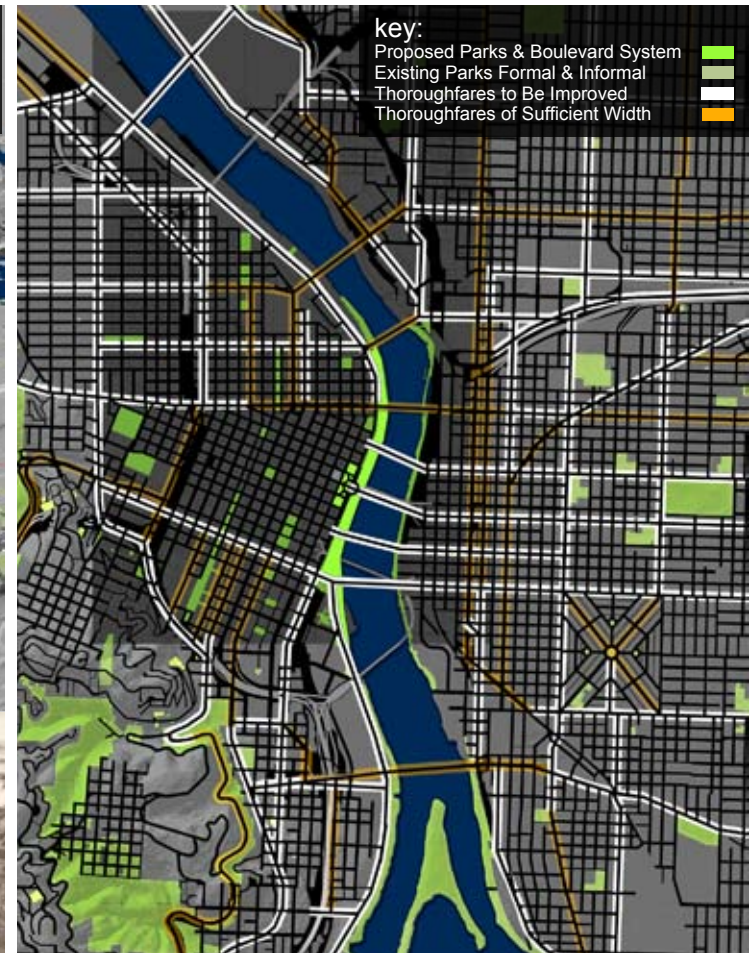
big idea:

- An improved street system
- An expanded business district (free from primary arterials)
- Waterfront improvements

references: 1. Bartholomew & Associates "Report On Proposed System of Major Streets and Development of Waterfront." 1932

portland's great plans

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT



key:
Proposed Parks & Boulevard System
Existing Parks Formal & Informal
Thoroughfares to Be Improved
Thoroughfares of Sufficient Width

elements that persisted:

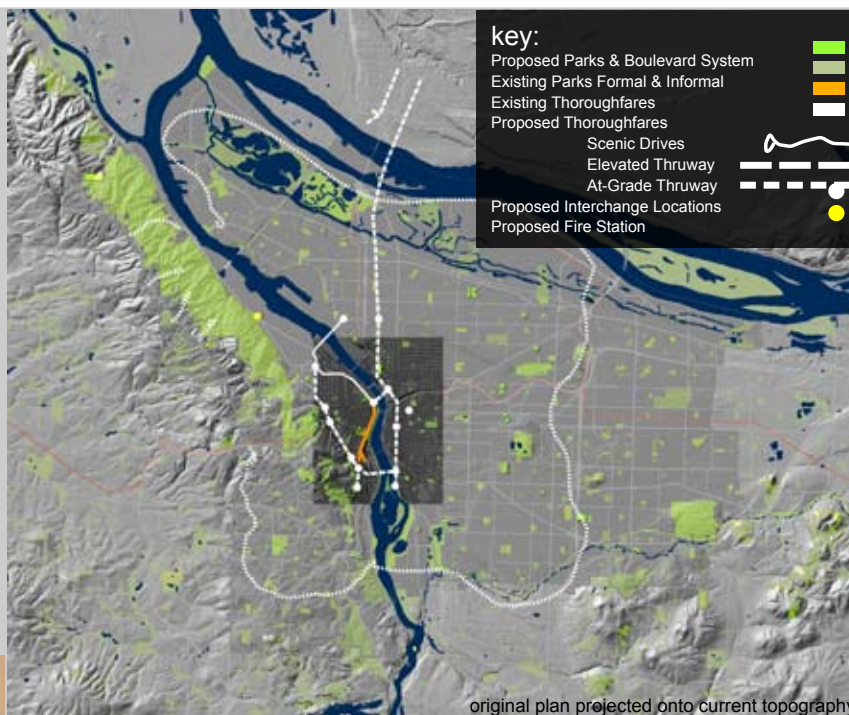
- West waterfront park was first suggested during a time of active waterfront uses.
- City infrastructure improvements including streets and parks

moses report 1943

Spurred by the Federal Government's requirement for post-war planning, an influential group of bankers, real estate interests and industrialists appointed by the mayor invited Robert Moses to develop a plan for Portland. Unlike much of the country Portland was still experiencing growth at this time. This was also the last instance a plan for Portland was developed by prominent planners from outside the city.

plan sponsors

- City of Portland
- County of Multnomah
- School District No. 1 of Multnomah County
- Port of Portland
- Commission of Public Docks



original plan projected onto current topography

◀ Proposed thruway and scenic drive system¹

(Left to right):
Civic Plaza Plan¹
Union Plaza Plan¹
Waterfront Plan¹



◀ Proposed parks, police, school, and fire districts¹

big idea:

- Arterial program of thruways
- Infrastructure improvements (streets, parks, freight, rail, waterfront, Union Station Plaza, and Civic Plaza)
- System of scenic drives encircling the city

references: 1. Moses, Robert "Portland Improvement," 1943

portland's great plans

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT



elements that persisted:

- Highway system
- Improved bridges and parks

comprehensive plan 1966

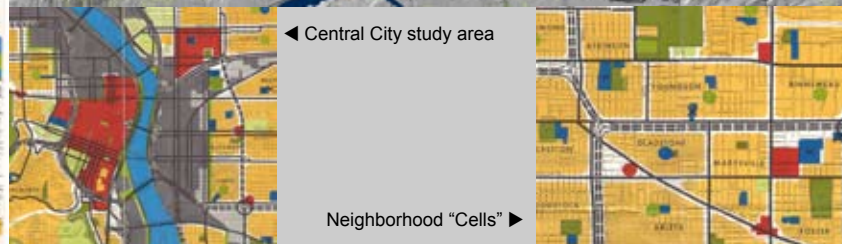
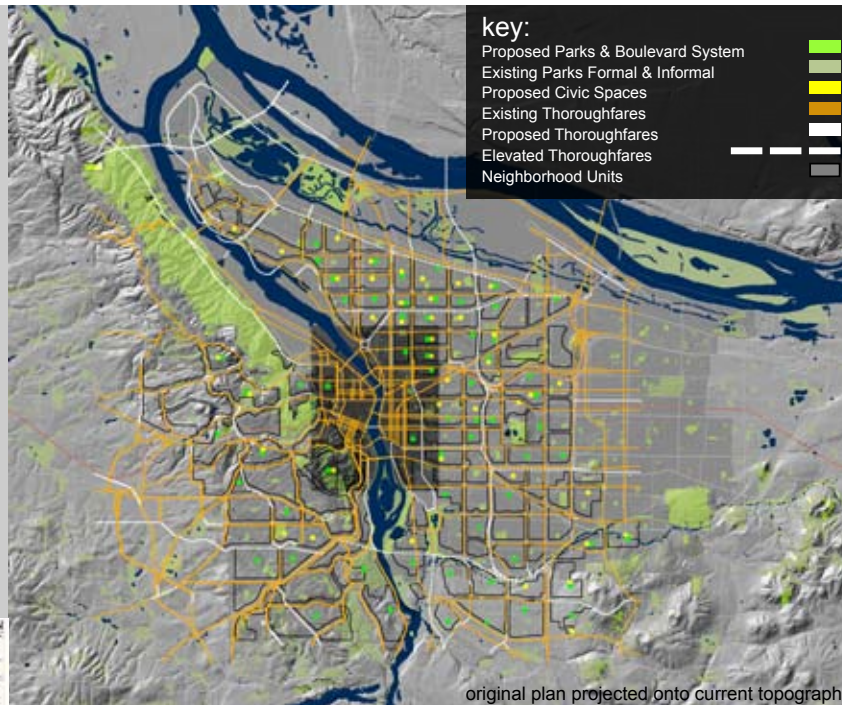
By 1958 the Portland Development Commission was formed to help implement Federal Housing Act mandates with tools that included the use of urban renewal. Following the success of the South Auditorium Project, this plan was developed by the City of Portland on short notice to underscore desired relationships between housing, commercial, education, open space and transportation.

plan sponsor
City Planning Commission

COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN
PORTLAND, OREGON



▲ 1996 Comprehensive Development Plan¹

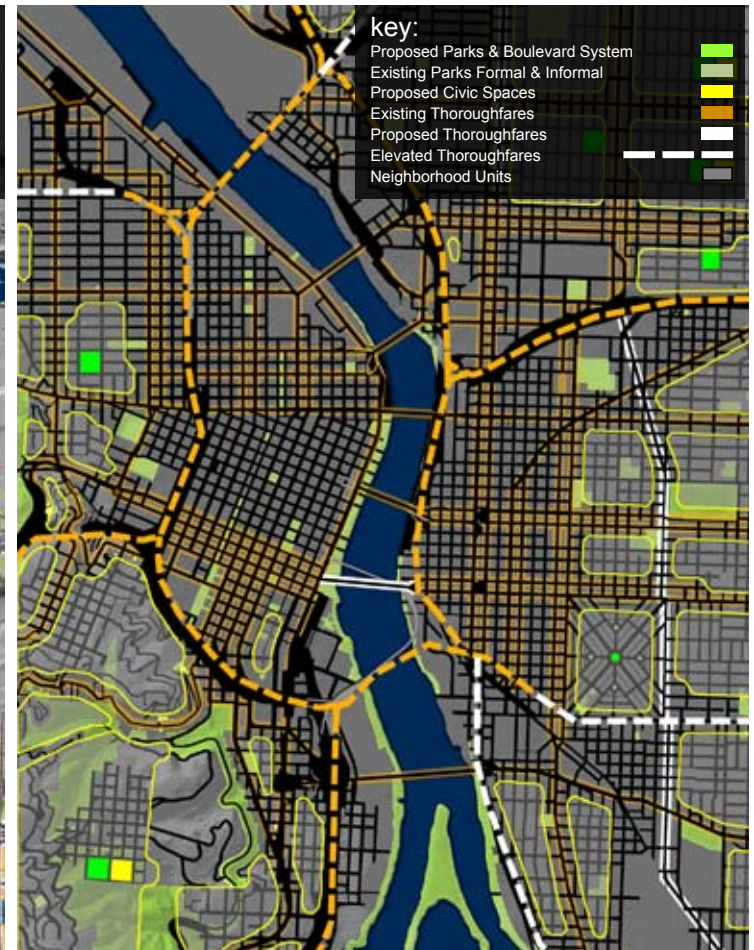


big idea:

- An increased number of major thoroughfares to "decongest" neighborhoods
- Neighborhood cellular structure in which each "cell" has its own park, school, and retail

portland's great plans

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT



elements that persisted:

- Expansion of the downtown core area
- Acknowledged note of industrial areas
- First use of the neighborhood as a "unit"

references: 1. Portland City Planning Commission. "Comprehensive Plan." 1966

1972 downtown plan

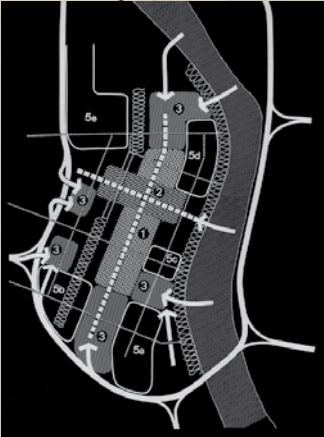
This plan was initiated by community concerns that included disinvestment in the downtown, increasing crime and perception of poor public decisions. It marked a major shift towards the quality of public spaces and experience, focusing on the downtown central business district west of the river. The influence of Jane Jacobs helped articulate this plan which continues to assert a positive influence today.

plan sponsor
City Planning Commission

Central City preliminary
traffic, circulation, and
parking plan ¹ ▼

Imageable Districts ¹ ▼

Central City open
space system ¹ ▼



Concept Plan ¹ ▲



▲ Concept Plan today

◀ (Far left) West of Tenth
residential area ¹

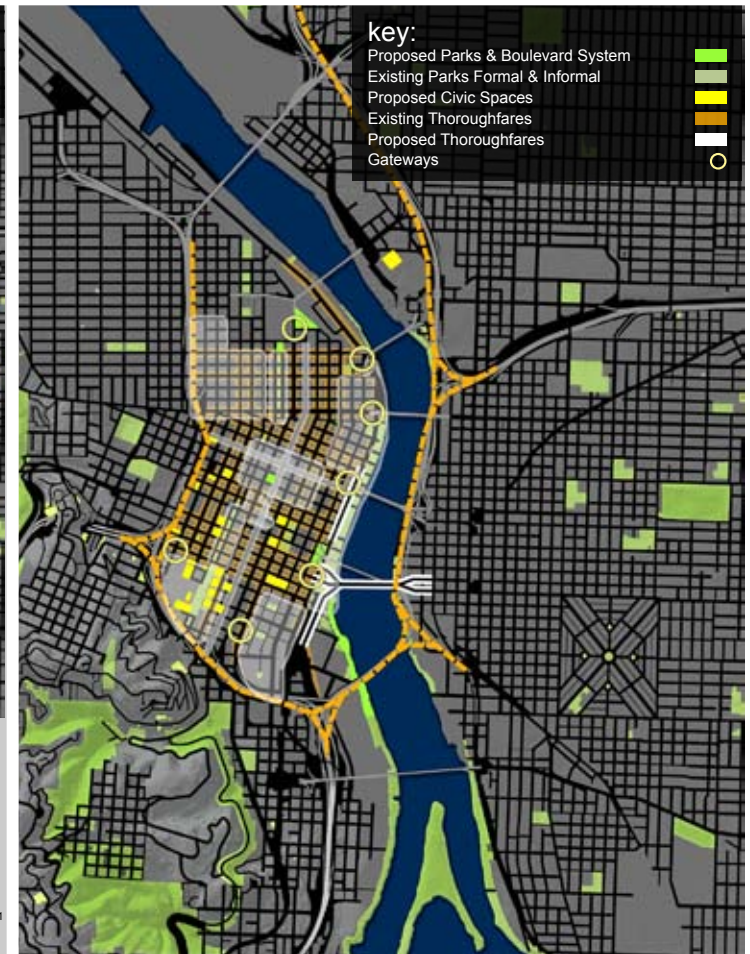
◀ (Left) North Park Blocks ¹

big idea:

- High-density offices oriented to North-South axis
- A compact retail core oriented to E-W transit
- Medium-density office related to access and parking
- Low-density mixed uses
- Special districts
- Housing areas identified

references: 1. City of Portland. "Planning Guidelines - Portland Downtown Plan." 1972

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT portland's great plans



key:
Proposed Parks & Boulevard System
Existing Parks Formal & Informal
Proposed Civic Spaces
Existing Thoroughfares
Proposed Thoroughfares
Gateways

elements that persisted:

- All the "big idea" elements have been integrated into Portland's planning strategies
- Adopted into the 1988 Central City Plan

1988 central city plan

Built on the momentum of the 1972 Downtown Plan, this plan expanded its scope to include the east side of the Willamette River. As Portland's current city policy for planning, change and development, this plan contains functional policies, specific objectives and actions for eight sub-districts. The culmination of an extensive four year planning process, the plan, its goals and related 21 policies tie it to Portland's adopted Comprehensive Plan.

plan sponsor

City Planning Commission



▲ Central City Plan Map ¹



▲ Central City Urban Design Plan ¹



▲ Vintage trolley ¹



▲ Proposed park with underground parking (Block 5) ¹



▲ Proposed park over freeway (405) ¹

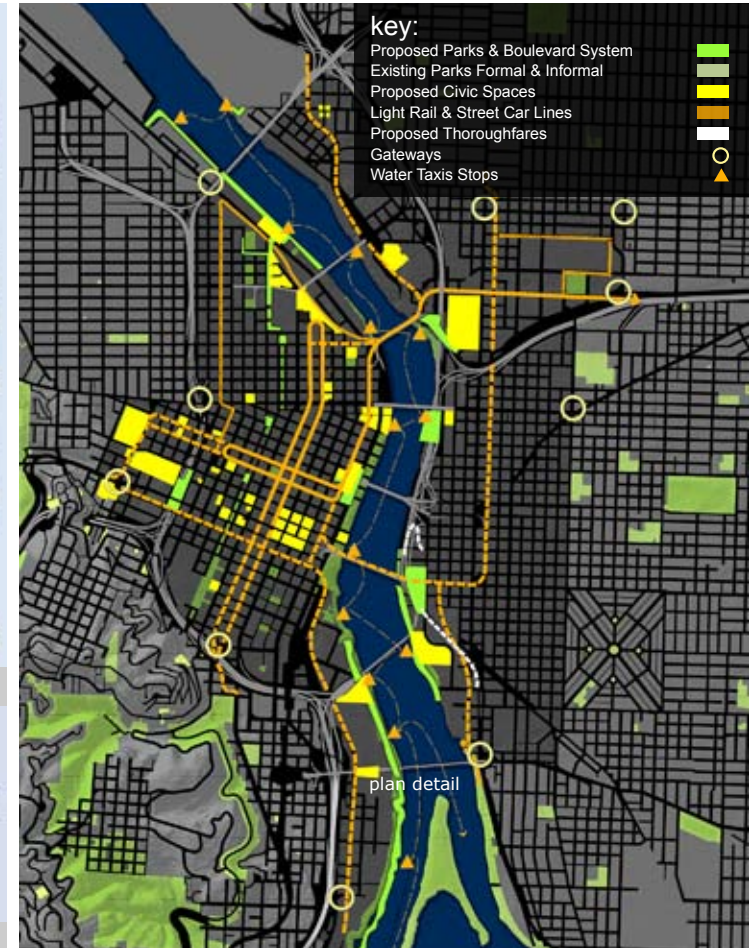


▲ Water taxis ¹

big idea:

- A focus on the Willamette River
- The transit corridor as a "spine"
- High-density office core
- Lloyd Center as an extension of the Downtown area
- Retention of key lower density viable industrial areas
- A park and open space system that embraces the river

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT portland's great plans



elements that persisted:

The development and implementation of policies directed toward protecting and shaping the urban environment. In particular:

- Policy 12: Urban Design
- Policy 11: Historic Preservation
- Policy 8: Parks & Open Spaces

references:

1. City of Portland. "Central City Plan" 1988 <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=88693>

findings

It is easy to forget the deep and insightful considerations found in Portland's inherited great plans. Each plan is reflective of its time and has made indelible contributions to the city's infrastructure and urban form. Many of Portland's parks, bridges, and arterial corridors exist today as a direct result of a recommendation in one of these plans. Each plan also reveals how Portland's sense of civic quality and urban design have evolved. Many of the original ideas proposed in each plan remain relevant. The relevant findings from this comparative study are:

- Early plans (particularly until 1943) were heavily influenced by projected impacts of the automobile. Only since 1972 has Portland deliberately tried to de-emphasize the automobile.
- Portland's open space approaches have always been driven by a regional understanding of its natural assets.
- The civic spaces in the early plans for Portland seemed to be driven by providing transportation responses in each plan.
- Although Portland's early plans progressively tried to establish clean street hierarchies, such clarity remains elusive.
- Portland's early plans had very strong expressions of urban structure and civic form. This clarity is something we have lost in our recent plans. Our current emphasis has been on defining desirable general relationships, not site-specific design expressions for our most important urban places.
- The pursuit of urban design quality at the local "street" scale is relatively new.
- While each great plan has influenced many enduring additions (parks, arterials, bridges), Portland has historically avoided implementing their most radical structural changes whenever suggested.

recommendations

Clearly, over time we have moved away from the formal architecturally expressed "designed" aspect of urban form to larger, more policy based aspirations.

A new Central Portland Plan should contain a clearer (more architectural) expression of desired urban form than the current 1988 Central City Plan. It should also include unambiguous statements of the role of design and clarify the degree to which architecture and design should influence "place based" development. A new plan should recognize and call out the enduring elements of previous plans and identify relevant aspects of them that should be enhanced or changed.

introduction

Like any other city, Portland has its share of planning, urban design and development challenges. Although each city has its own unique political, institutional, and cultural landscape, we can learn from and be inspired by how other cities over time have creatively addressed common issues.

These pages examine the urban design of six cities with characteristics comparable to Portland and how they have evolved. The study reveals a number of relevant urban design approaches which range from strong connections across the river, to integration of industrial heritage through urban form, to open space allocations that restore social equity and balance.

The six cities studied (Barcelona, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Kyoto, Philadelphia, and Savannah), were selected from a much larger list of candidate cities. The criteria for selection was based upon each city's compatibility with Portland in four areas:

- Urban form confined by topography
- A relationship with water
- A grid layout
- Well-established character and identity

Each city is described in terms of its urban design beginnings, a selected point of transition to the contemporary, and a representation of current conditions. Relevance for Portland are then highlighted.

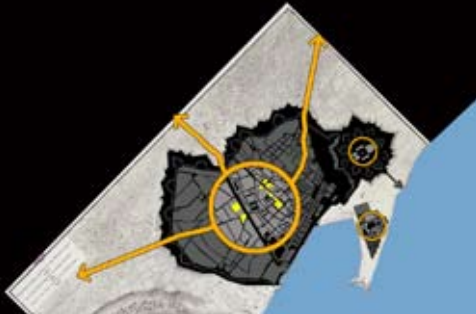
Each city's particular attitude to grid, river, and topography underscores the range of creative approaches Portland may consider when addressing its own unique issues. When appropriate, strategies that implement particular urban design objectives are also highlighted.



section B2

precedents –
historic case studies

1806



urban design beginnings

The capital of Catalunya, Barcelona was built on top of a Roman settlement founded in 15 B.C. along the Mediterranean coast. The city is contained by the Collserola hills and the rivers Llobregat to the south and Besos to the north. Early Barcelona was a fortified port characterized by narrow winding streets and alleys.

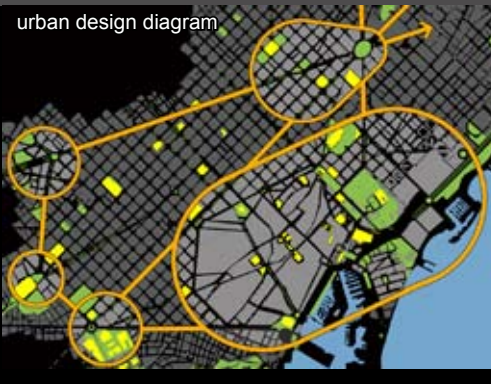
1859



urban design transition

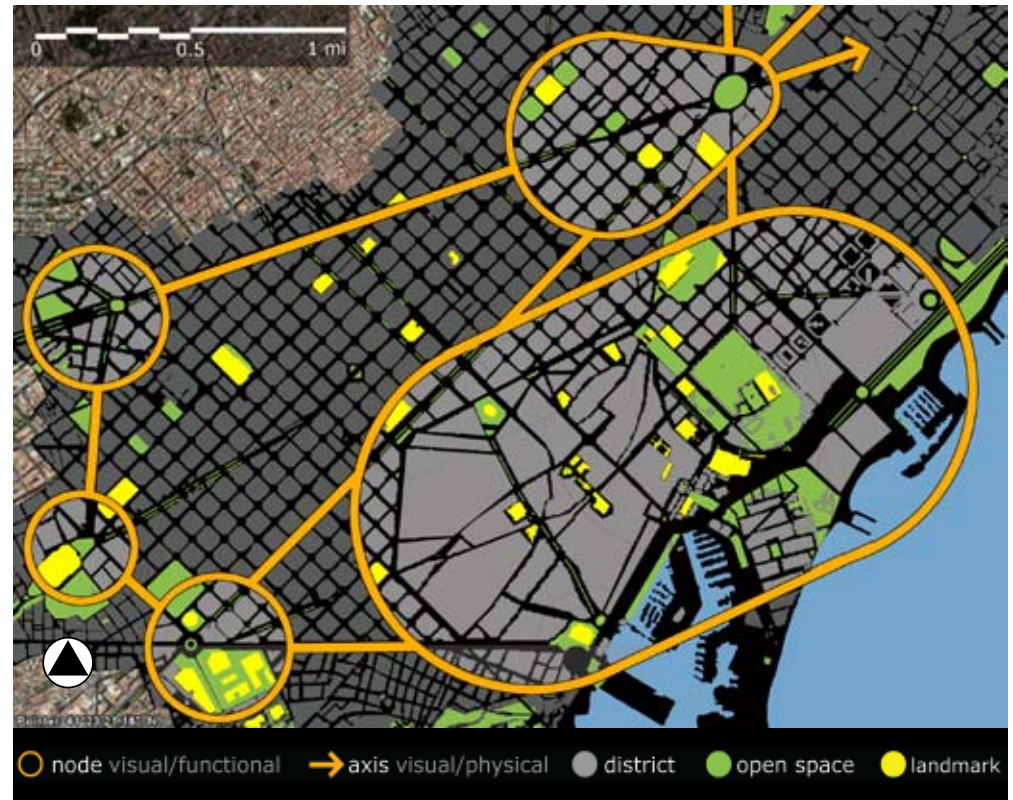
In 1859, the city began the extension of its street network under the direction of the urban planner Ildefons Cerdà. The ancient fortifications were removed and replaced with a grid-iron network of streets and blocks forming districts made up of 20 blocks. A second transformation came in 1929 with the "Exposicion Universal." A system of avenues, parks, plazas, and exhibition halls lifted the status of Barcelona as a prominent industrial center.

urban design diagram



urban design today

The original plan of Ildefons Cerdà's "Eixample" insisted that each block provide for open space. These provisions were largely ignored, leaving the city with a deficiency of open space. In preparation for the 1992 Olympic games, large redevelopment projects transformed the city from an industrial center to a cultural center. Since then, the city has mounted a strategic effort to provide public space to all of its residents.



urban design relevancies for Portland:

Barcelona uses art, open space, and architecture to strengthen key locations throughout the city in hopes of reinforcing unique attributes of the community. Urban design principles that support this include:

- Understanding the city as the sum of its neighborhoods
 - Balance individual expression and community
 - Equitable allocation of resources
- Understanding the unique urban language of the city and expressing it
- Adaptive reused public buildings to encourage regeneration
- Using public space as a powerful design tool with purpose
 - Creates landmarks by placing public art at strategic locations
 - Establishes neighborhood character/identity
 - Settles historic debts and influences the urban environment
 - Encourages social mixing
 - Promotes highest level of design in the most deficient neighborhoods

edinburgh united kingdom

1762



urban design beginnings

The city of Edinburgh originated as a castle town with a fortress located at the top of a hill with the town down below. The town was built along an east-west axis that terminated at the castle to the west and the Palace of Holyrood to the east.

1766



urban design transition

In 1766 a competition was held to lay out a new town just north of the major axis. James Craig's winning design consisted of a system of elongated blocks nestled within the existing context. Major axes were designed to place emphasis on monuments and open space. Later additions did not adhere to the grid structure, but implemented the use of vistas and views inspired by its design.

urban design diagram



urban design today

Edinburgh has been able to promote its downtown core through festivals, tourism, and business. A strong commitment toward heritage sites and creative industries has made the city a destination for tourism and international business.



urban design relevancies for Portland:

Edinburgh uses its history, topography, and natural amenities as a design tool for organizing space. Key urban design characteristics include:

- Stronger urban space composition over time
 - Interplay of castle town and gridiron patterns creates complexity and character
 - Grid allows open space to become organizing elements
 - Topography is allowed to define the urban form, views, and open space allocation
- Leadership that recognizes design as a mechanism for protecting and promoting the city's identity
 - High standards of construction and design
 - Balance between preservation and innovation
- Creative city
 - Strong relationship between the university, the city, and the private realm for innovation
 - Festivals as activities that shape the city

glasgow united kingdom



urban design beginnings

The city of Glasgow formed as a river town with a cathedral on the banks of the Molendinar Burn and the town center near the Clyde. The main road between the cathedral and the town center became a prominent axis.



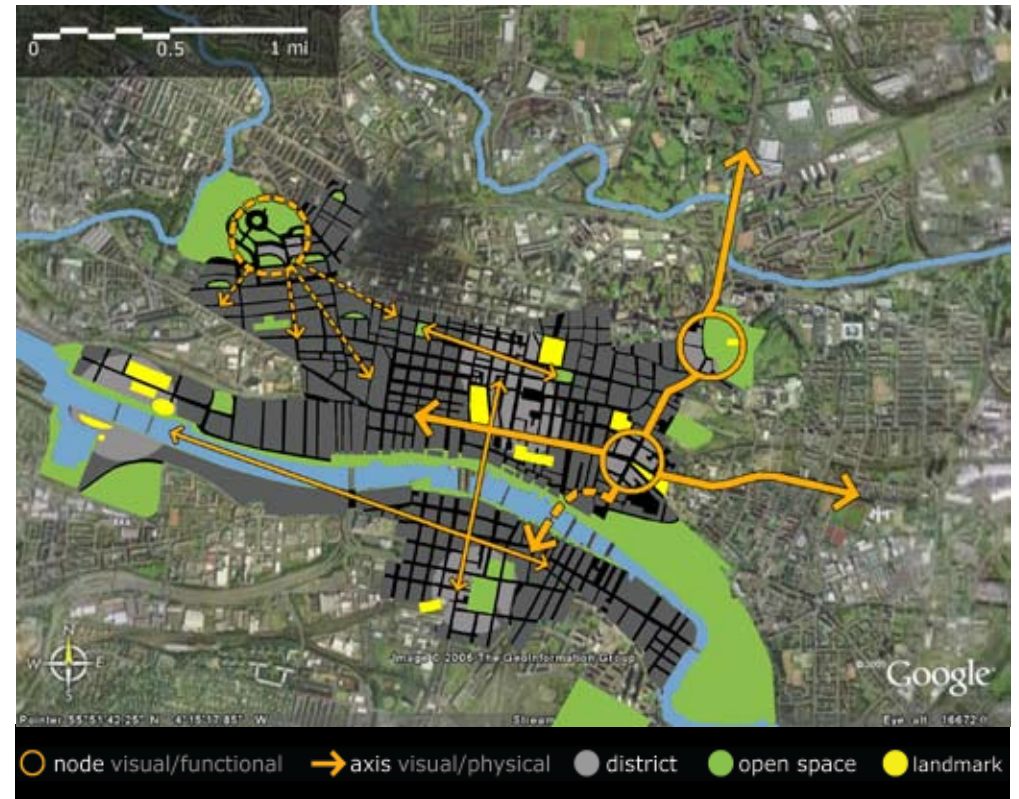
urban design transition

Industrialization led to the expansion of the city's infrastructure. An adaptable grid-iron pattern of streets was adopted which allowed for a democratic and efficient allocation of space.



urban design today

Industrial development along the south bank (the Gorbels) eventually became integrated into the urban form of the city. Large tracts of industrial land have been transformed into world-class museums, performance halls, and sports arenas. Extensive revitalization efforts bringing technology, residential, retail, and entertainment along the water's edge has reinforced the city's orientation to the river.



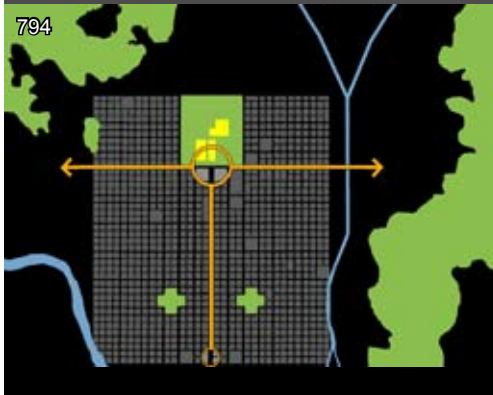
urban design relevancies for Portland:

Known as an industrial city, Glasgow has made recent efforts to reinvent itself as a cultural center by transforming the industrial waterfront along the south bank with greenspace, museums, restaurants, commercial district, residences, and galleries. Several key urban design strategies include:

- Reinforcing connections to the river
 - Emphasize public access
 - Encourage development that increases waterfront activity and use
- Integrating industrial heritage into the city form
 - Adaptive reuse of materials and structures to transform the waterfront into a vibrant community asset
- Reinforcing the existing urban fabric with strategic redevelopment
 - Emphasizing hinge points in urban fabric with strong architecture
 - Expanding inherited urban nodes

historic kyoto japan

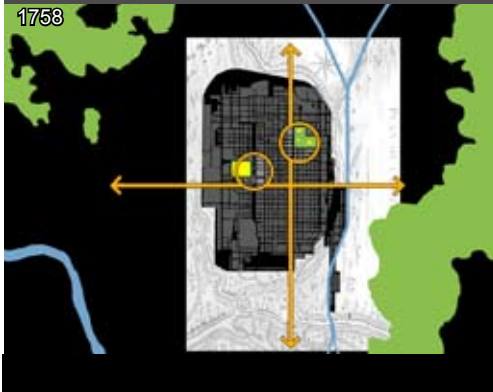
794



urban design beginnings

In 794 Emperor Kammu built the imperial capital Heian-kyo at the present site of Kyoto. The site was determined using Chinese geomancy, balancing the relationship between the valley, the rolling mountains, and the rivers (Katsura and the Kamogawa). The plan is divided into halves by a north-south axis that originates from the Imperial Palace to the north and terminates at the Rashomon gate to the south with gardens evenly distributed.

1758

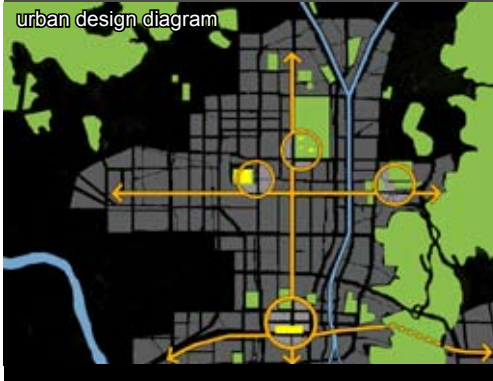


urban design transition

Most of the original city of Heian-kyo was destroyed during the Onin War leaving only the primary shrines and street grid. After political control was transferred to Tokyo, Kyoto reinvented itself as an industrial city – developing a textile industry, installing hydroelectric power, and creating an electric railway system of transit.

Historic Kyoto continues to struggle to retain its relationship with the grid, water, and topography.

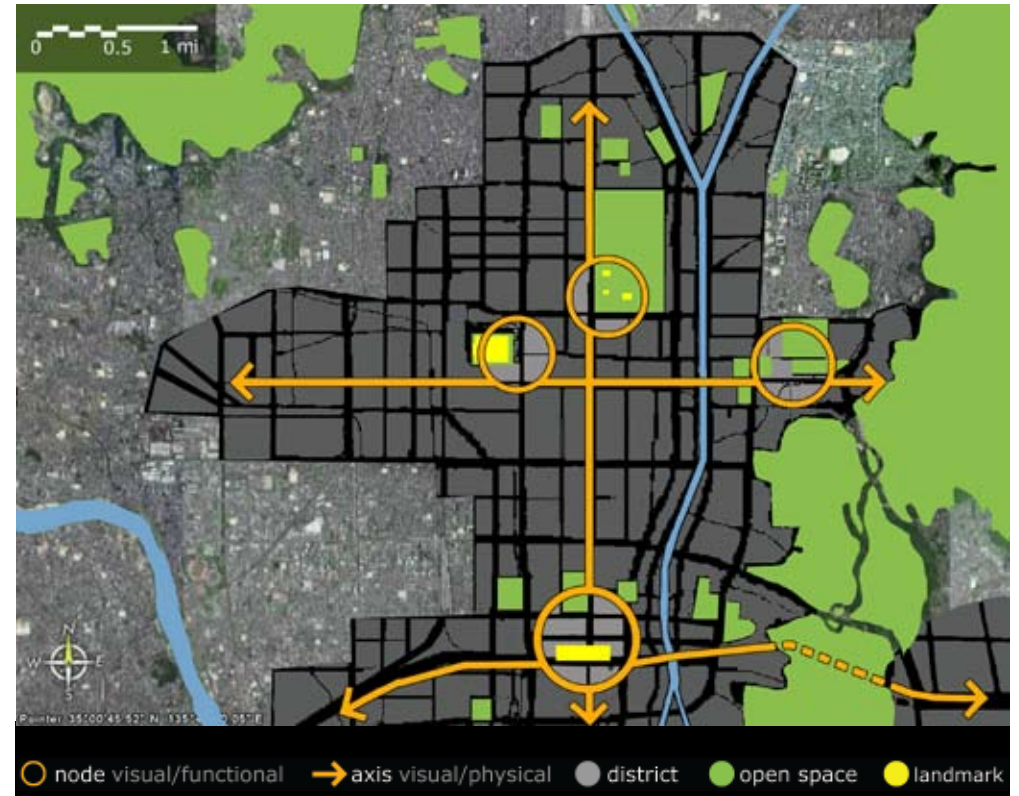
urban design diagram



urban design today

Following WWII, Kyoto experienced a rapid growth of population and industry. This led to rising land prices, urban sprawl, and traffic congestion. In an attempt to alleviate these conditions, Kyoto has structured policies to:

- Promote urban beautification
- Create local public spaces
- Develop transit stations as key areas of activity
- Preserve cultural assets



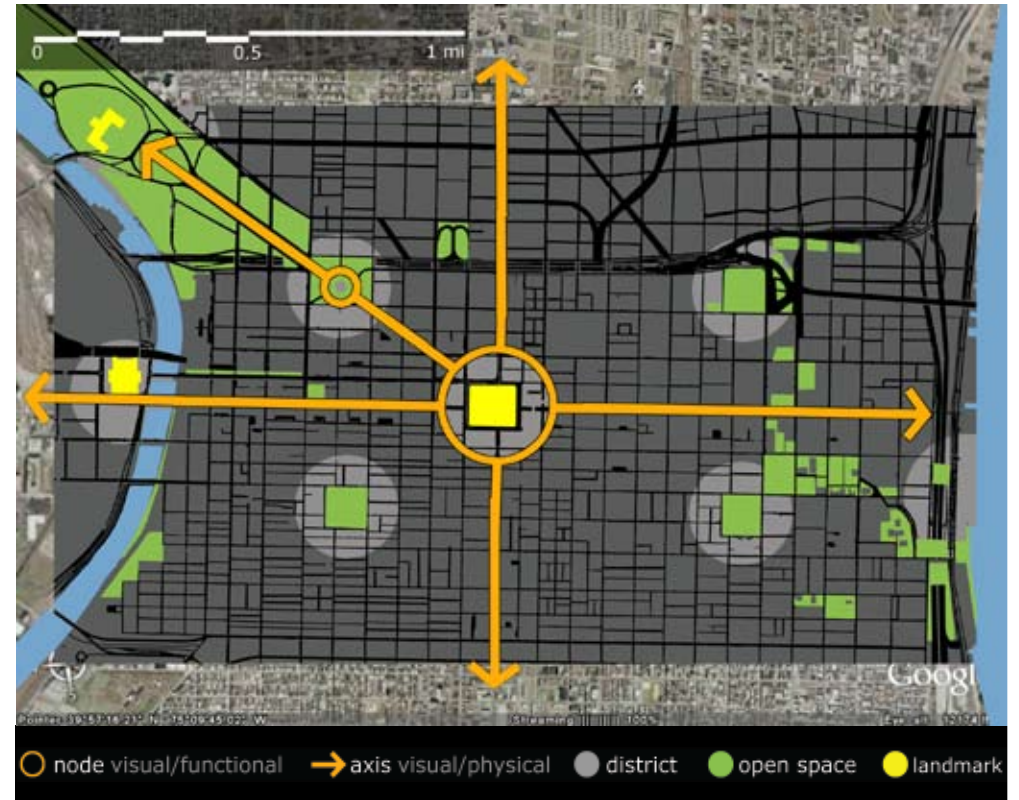
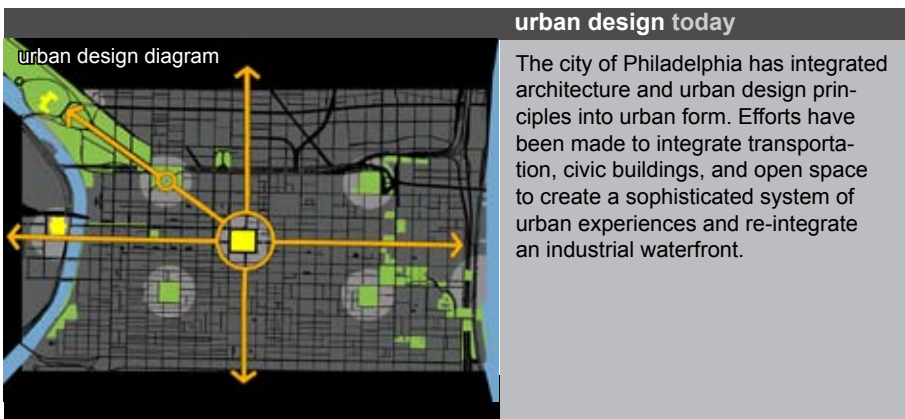
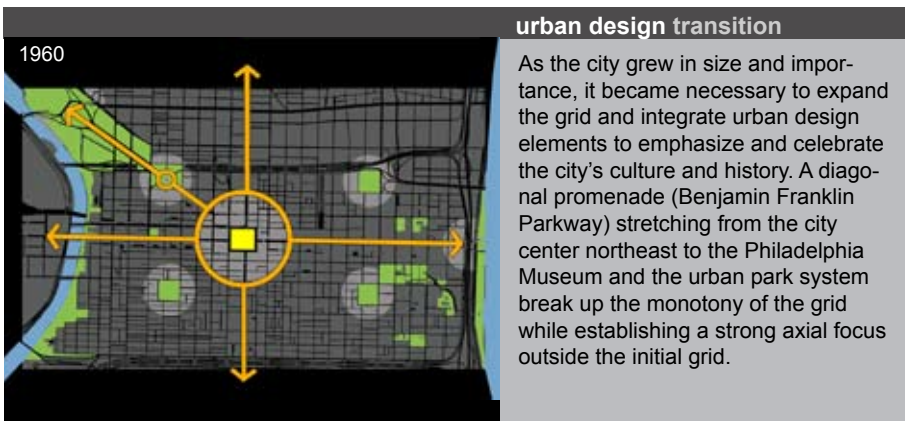
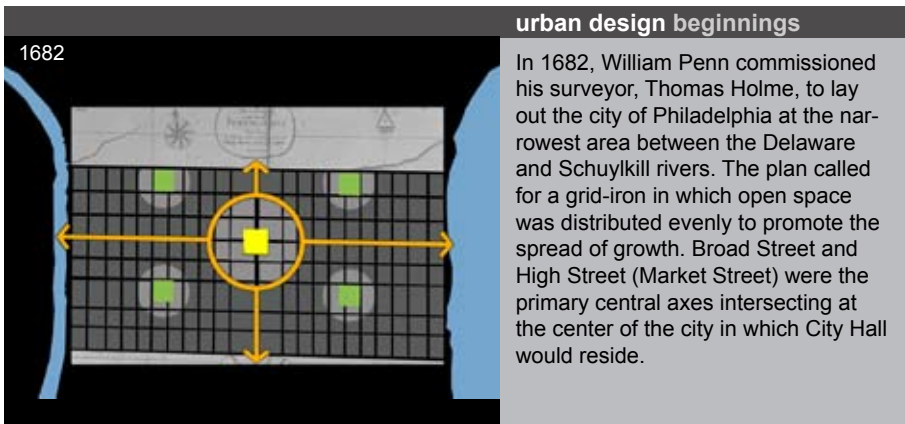
urban design relevancies for Portland:

Kyoto's urban design approach is socially oriented. It has adopted a planning philosophy that focuses on a human-centered healthy environment; conservation, renewal, and creation; a productive artistic and cultural center; and a city with a global vision. Urban design addresses these objectives by:

- Using urban design guidelines instead of restrictions to preserve and promote heritage architecture and streetscape design
 - Encouraging traditional use of materials
 - Encouraging traditional building forms i.e.: machiya – traditional housing
- Balancing contemporary structures with historic urban fabric
- Restricting height of new construction to 200 feet to protect views and allow temples to punctuate the skyline
- Allowing the grid to shift in size to accommodate development

philadelphia united states

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT historic case studies



urban design relevancies for Portland:

Philadelphia has relied on its grid pattern to be an effective framework for development (i.e., providing for space, infrastructure, and circulation) as well as a means of expression. Urban design strategies that focus on the grid include:

- Emphasis on civic structures and historic elements
- Emphasis on historic grid and park layout
- Breaking the monotony of the grid to produce strong gestures
- Treating transportation systems and open space as architecture
- Developing axial corridors

savannah united states

1733



urban design beginnings

In 1733, British General James Oglethorpe laid out the design for a modular city on the banks of the Savannah River. The plan called for a rectangular layout of 12 blocks with 24 squares placed at regular intervals. The emphasis was an equal allocation of space with equal distribution of open space.

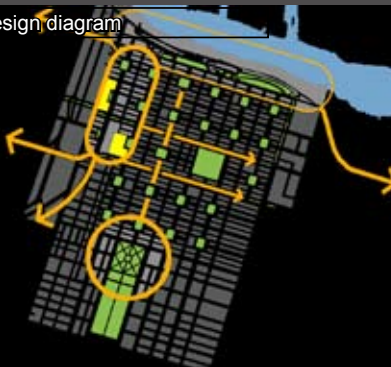
1818



urban design transition

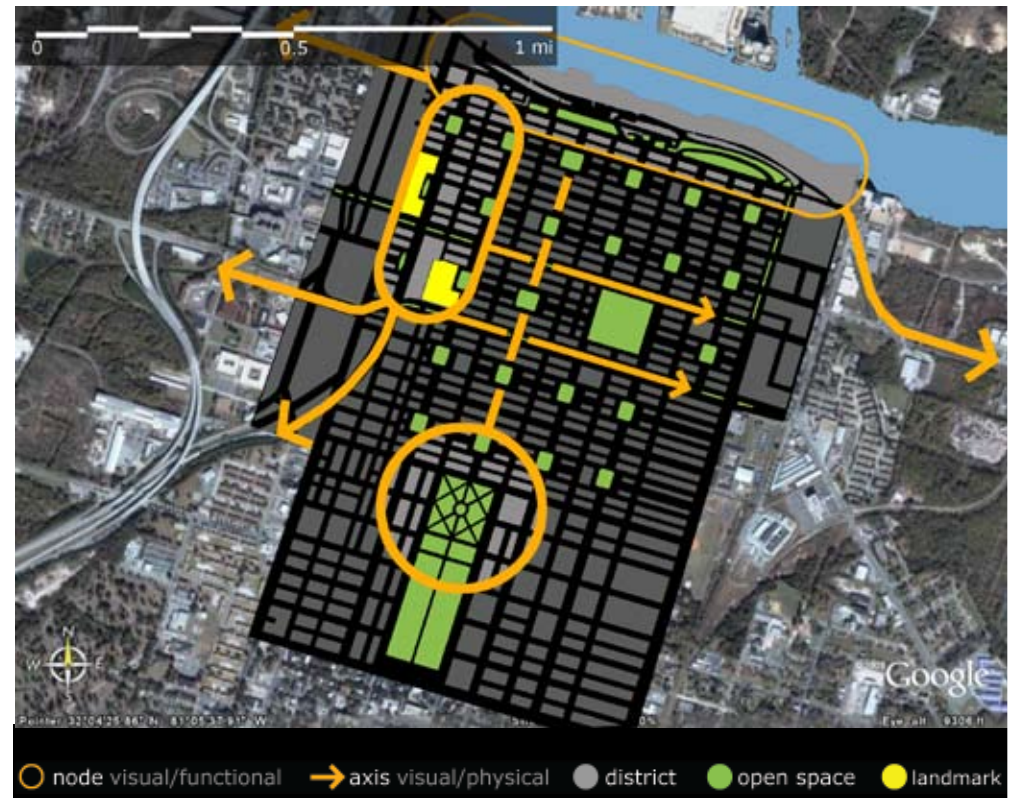
Over time, Savannah expanded its historic grid streets and parks. This expansion of its urban design elements has allowed it to retain its heritage.

urban design diagram



urban design today

The area encompassing the original layout has been designated a historic landmark district. A strong preservation movement has been able to bring life to this area by capitalizing on its historic architecture and pedestrian scale of movement and space.



urban design relevancies for Portland:

Savannah's unique grid pattern and open space allocation has resulted in an environment rich in built and natural texture. Urban design principles support this relationship through:

- Dedication to initial design philosophy
 - Using the gridiron as a deliberate act for organizing society
 - Consistent use of open space to generate character by extending the monotony of the historic grid to create a persistent and recognizable urban pattern
- Investment and promotion of historic districts as public assets
 - Adaptive reuse of historic structures
 - Protection of historic districts

findings

As anticipated, there is a considerable range of goals, approaches, and strategies to pursue urban form and design in each city. Despite these unique and context-specific approaches, each city shares broad attitudes to urban design issues relevant to Portland.

- Each city has developed urban design strategies that are integrated with a citywide development approach.
- The urban design strategies for each city embrace their history and evolution.
- Each city seeks to integrate active uses with function and urban form.
- Each city pays special and increasing attention to adaptability (of urban structures and places).
- There is a broad desire to identify and capitalize on uniqueness.

Each city was selected on the basis of its compatibility with Portland on the basis of four shared factors. Each city is compared against them as follows:

relationship with grid

It is significant that in addition to using the grid as a basis for organizing function and form, each city has also recognized that interruptions in the grid (pivots or focal points), whether by chance (history or topography) or design, create special places that should be enhanced. Further, grids that surround the old sections of some of these cities (Barcelona and Edinburgh) create edges of transition and interest.

Each city uses its grid differently. Some follow it rigidly (Philadelphia, Barcelona, Savannah) whereas others manipulate it for emphasis (Kyoto, Edinburgh, Glasgow). Philadelphia and Barcelona have disturbed the monotony of their grids through powerful diagonals but Savannah deliberately enhances its character through repetition and extension of the historic grid. In contrast, Kyoto plays with its grid by combining or further sub-dividing it to satisfy changing function and need. Kyoto also overcomes monotony through a height strategy that allows only temples and prominent structures to dominate.

The city grid has also been used as a social unit. Barcelona and Kyoto and Savannah have used it to allocate public and private functions. This relationship has changed over time. Notably, Barcelona is correcting a failed aspiration that each block contain some shared open space by removing alternate development blocks to restore open space equity.

relationship with topography

Cities with the strongest natural forms have a natural advantage in framing and defining their urban form. Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Kyoto have capitalized on their assets by deliberately limiting development on surrounding hills, preserving only large historic monuments and allowing only few prominent institutions and outlooks.

recommendations

Each city's relationship with water varies. Proximity to water frames and contains the urban cores of Philadelphia and Kyoto while Barcelona and Savannah have water as an edge. Glasgow and Edinburgh embrace both sides of their river.

Cities with port origins (Barcelona, Philadelphia, Glasgow and Savannah) have been reinventing their relationship with water to include recreational activities, public amenities and new development (primarily residential). Rivers in Kyoto and Edinburgh have morphed from their origins as natural drainage and protective defense functions into active and vibrant public amenities.

Historically, rivers have acted as dividing factors that separate distinct city functions and social divisions. These traditional patterns are systematically being broken down as cities reinvent themselves. Glasgow has sought to bind together both sides of its river with entertainment and a vibrant waterfront. Philadelphia has been seeking greater connections across its western river with ties to educational institutions and public amenities (central station and post office). Such urban design strategies for creating stronger connections, functions and relationships across river banks are particularly relevant to Portland.

character and identity

Barcelona pursues its agenda of social equity in terms how art and design are expressed in the city. Glasgow has chosen to leave industrial artifacts to retain historic memory and character and reinvent itself as a cultural and youth-oriented city. Edinburgh has strict design guidelines to retain historic character and ambiance while using monuments and icons to pursue the creative city and promote innovation. Kyoto encourages preservation and restoration of the traditional machiya building form. Savannah has adopted a strategy to create a city of parks. Philadelphia has used a mix of traditional historic inheritances and reuse of existing infrastructure to continue its evolution.

recommendations

Each of the above cities has sought in different ways to carefully integrate its urban design with city policy and development strategies.

Specific considerations such as establishing more creative and recurring uses of Portland's grid, creating better waterfront relationships to and across each river bank, promoting civic functions and events to strategically activate street life, and enhancing existing assets (such as bridges) through lighting and design should all be pursued.

Appropriate urban design strategies for Portland can be better formulated if its particular uniqueness can be captured and clearly expressed.

introduction

To help inform and be integrated into the Central Portland Plan effort, this study reviews current thinking in eight recently adopted downtown plans.

In particular, this comparative look searches for patterns and innovations in future downtown planning efforts. While every city's context for planning and urban design is different, this study looks to highlight approaches and solutions that might not otherwise stand out when evaluating Portland alone.

Each of the eight plans is selected for one or more of the following reasons:

- A recent plan update
- A comparable size or growth of downtown population
- The physical relationship and proximity of its downtown with water
- Noteworthy aspects of the plan itself

The downtown plans compared in this study also offer some insight of current planning trends and methods in downtown areas. The following summaries provide a brief description of each city and highlight significant aspects of its downtown plan. The study describes each city's general statistics compared to Portland as well as each city's plan:

- vision
- guiding themes
- plan champions
- impetus
- process implementation tools
- targets
- urban design goals
- district level approaches
- plan highlights

A short summary of Portland's 1988 Central City Plan is also included to provide context to this comparative review.



section B2.b

precedents – contemporary case studies



atlanta, ga

Imagine Downtown Plan:
Envisioning Central Atlanta's Future (2005)

The population of Atlanta's downtown is slightly less than Portland's; however, the regional population is more than double. While the downtown has seen rapid growth, the City continues to struggle with issues associated with transportation access and developing vibrant, 24-hour downtown environments. Recently, Atlanta has seen over \$3 billion worth of new investment and development. Building on the existing momentum, Atlanta has sought to design a plan that promotes the responsible growth and development of a vibrant and attractive downtown.

Noteworthy features of Atlanta's *Imagine Downtown Plan* include an online survey with multi-media imagery to capture a collective community vision. The plan also incorporates a city-wide Illustrative Plan, which combines goals, a development framework of current and future land uses, a public spaces plan, and a transportation plan. Districts and neighborhoods are defined by a 1250-foot radius, and a vision and emerging priority projects are identified for each. Atlanta specifically calls for targeting investments toward catalytic projects to achieve its overall vision.



charlotte, nc

Center City 2010 Vision Plan (2000)

Charlotte is similar to Portland in population, median income, and unemployment. However, as the nation's second largest financial center, Charlotte's central area is dominated by office towers and surface parking lots with minimal retail and housing, making it very different from Portland's center. Charlotte uses its plan to help guide development towards more urban patterns.

Charlotte's *Center City 2010 Vision Plan* identifies key catalyst projects and implementation steps. Of particular importance to the plan is the need to establish a "uniquely Charlotte" downtown identity to reinforce its role as the center of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the Piedmont. One goal is to "provide a laboratory for inventing Charlotte's twenty-first century architecture." The city envisions new construction to make a specific statement and contribution to American architectural history. To recapture its identity as the "city of trees," Charlotte's plan proposes a center city park, as well as a linear park next to the freeway to act as the spine of the park system.



chicago, il

The Chicago Central Area Plan (2005)

Chicago offers an interesting case study because, like Portland, it has a "green" focus. The 2005 Chicago Central Area Plan was the first downtown plan for Chicago since 1958. With a downtown population of over 83,000 and a regional population of over 9 million, Chicago Mayor Daley targeted the center area as the heart and neighborhood of everyone in the city. The Chicago plan offers some great insights to economic development strategies used by larger cities.

Chicago's plan strategy relies on the city's role across scales globally, regionally, and as a hometown to many. As the center for transportation, business, retail, tourism, education, and culture in the Midwest, Chicago aims to "build on success" while experiencing "extraordinary growth in every sector," and seeks to become the international model of a sustainable city, with the greenest downtown in America. As Chicago is poised for new growth, the plan calls for developing new workforce strategies to adapt to employment changes, providing better access to transit, creating interest along key corridors, and attracting tourism with historic preservation. The plan also features extensive three-dimensional modeling and 'before and after' photo montages as visual tools for discussing and illustrating urban form.



milwaukee, wi

Milwaukee Downtown Plan (1999)

Milwaukee is an industrial city with evolving service and technology sectors. The city-wide population of Milwaukee is very similar to Portland; however, only 7,200 people reside in the downtown as compared to 31,068 (in 2006) people that reside in Portland's Central City. This is partly due to the fact that Milwaukee has historically spread out rather than grown in height, "leading to the unfurled urban City of today." The Metropolitan region continues to outpace the City in population and construction growth, and its plan focuses on making Milwaukee a destination city with projects that spur activity.

A key feature of the *Milwaukee Downtown Plan* is the classification of downtown into areas of high, moderate, and low susceptibility to change. Using a Visual Preference Survey (VPS), people were asked in public meetings and online to identify preferences for future land use forms and transportation, specifically for areas with a high susceptibility to change. A VPS was also used to determine qualitative character of neighborhoods, streets, and waterfront.

Milwaukee recognizes the waterfront as its signature feature, supporting special uses and recreation. Similar to Atlanta's approach, neighborhoods in Milwaukee are defined by 1500-foot radial centers, which are encouraged to overlap to extend the walking network of downtown.



minneapolis, mn

Minneapolis Downtown 2010 (1996)

Minneapolis has a larger regional population than Portland. Similar to other cities, the metropolitan region is growing rapidly, and the Minneapolis plan seeks to retain downtown as the economic driver for the region. The plan focuses on making Minneapolis the region's urban retail and entertainment capital.

Minneapolis Downtown 2010 focuses on the Downtown Core, stating that recommendations of the plan should be coordinated with the plans for neighborhoods and districts. As the symbolic center for the city and region, like Charlotte it highlights the need to create and market a downtown image. Downtown is envisioned as not only the region's cultural center, but also as the center for retail and entertainment. In addition, the plan strives to make downtown Minneapolis the location of the region's most unique and prestigious neighborhoods.



pittsburgh, pa

The Pittsburgh Downtown Plan (1998)

Pittsburgh has a smaller downtown population than Portland, yet has a much larger regional population. The city and region of Pittsburgh have undergone major economic and social changes including the diversification of its employment base from manufacturing to technology and knowledge-based enterprises. The plan was aimed at addressing issues such as its vulnerable retail corridor, negligible residential population, limited riverfront access, and worsening traffic problems. The city concluded that "the overall mix of stores and entertainment options must be strengthened if downtown hopes to keep employees in the area beyond working hours, and attract suburban residents, meeting and convention groups and regional visitors, both day-trippers and overnight guests."

The Pittsburgh Downtown Plan emphasizes the iconic image of its skyline, the relationship of heights to the landform and river, and the significant role of bridges as symbolic (connecting downtown) and architectural. In order to attract people downtown, it seeks to enhance public transit, expand the riverfront park system, establish a diversity of activities, and direct key investments toward young student populations.



san diego, ca

San Diego Downtown Community Plan (2006)

Although the population of San Diego's central city and region is almost double the population of Portland's central city and region, the two cities share many similarities including their use of urban renewal areas throughout downtown and their close proximity to water. The *San Diego Downtown Community Plan*, adopted in February 2006, focuses on urban renewal as an ongoing redevelopment mechanism. It also targets the waterfront as a key feature of downtown.

The *San Diego Downtown Community Plan* process began with an entire series of studies, or 'working papers' to compare case studies, assess demographic and market issues, and analyze downtown opportunities and challenges. Highlighted features of the plan include an analysis for each district with a discussion of desired structure and form, an emphasis of the waterfront as the "front porch" of downtown, focusing growth pressures in new rather than mature neighborhoods, and three-dimensional modeling at both the macro and micro scale to illustrate urban form.



seattle, wa

Center City Seattle (2000 - current)

The downtown and regional population of Seattle is almost double that of Portland. Seattle's Center City strategy, spearheaded by Mayor Nickels, focuses on the center of Seattle as the core of jobs for the region. Through redevelopment and zoning changes this strategy informs various neighborhood plans.

Without a plan update, Seattle's strategy has focused on a series of studies, including a background report determining gaps and opportunities and key strategies for *Center City Seattle*, such as *The Blue Ring: Seattle's Open Space Strategy*, which are currently shaping the city's urban form and design. Features include emphasis on LEED requirements, slim towers to maintain public view corridors, and poly-centric retail.

portland 1988 central city plan

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



vision

The City is a legacy for the future.

guiding themes

- The region's economic center and transportation hub
- Focus on the Willamette River
- Assure a human scale and exciting environment
- Good place to live, work

champions of the plan

Mayor Bud Clark

Commissioner Margaret Stracham

Commissioner Earl Blumenauer



Central City Plan Map

plan targets for 2010

- Jobs: 50,000 new* 41% increase
- Housing: 5,000 new** 44% increase

*Job target amended to 75,000 in 1995

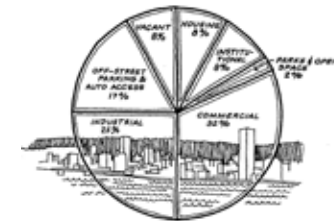
**Housing target amended to 15,000 in 1995

progress on targets (2005)

- Jobs: 33,414 since 1986
- Housing: 9,234 new since 1990

planning process tools

- Public process to garner comments about aspirations for the City's future
- 15-member Steering Committee
- Planning Commission hearings and working sessions
- Document review



Distribution of Land Uses

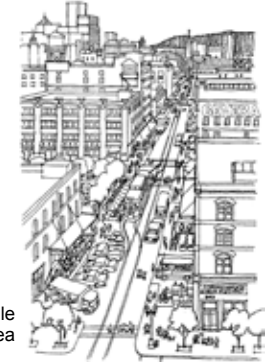


Illustration of Northwest Triangle warehouse area



fact sheet

	Portland (1988)	Portland Now
Region		
population	1,170,000	1,950,000
City		
population	437,319 (1990)	529,121
unemployment rate	6.1% (1990)	7.90%
med. household income	\$25,592 (1990)	\$42,278
Central City		
population	20,700 (1990)	31,068
housing units	13,584 (1990)	20,016
avg. household size	1.5	1.4
acres	2,750	2,750
# of jobs (approx.)	122,000 (1986)	122,000
retail total s.f.	2,180,000 (1986)	3,500,000
office total s.f.	13,900,000 (1986)	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	8	8 (+2 subareas)

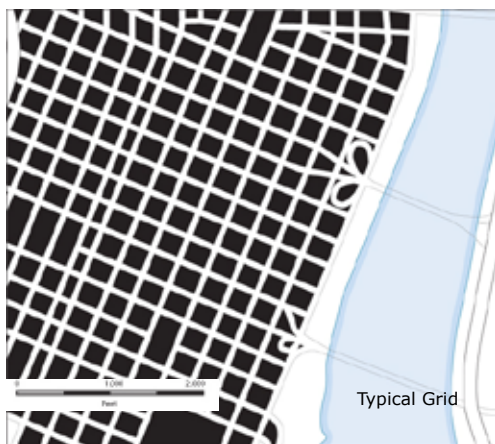
The City population, unemployment rate, and median household income are from the 1990 American Community Survey. The statistics for Central City population, housing units, number of jobs, retail and office square feet are from Steering Committee Final Reports. Regional population for Portland reflects the three county region, taken from Portland Metro, 2006.

implementation tools

- Create Urban Renewal Districts, TIF and Tax Abatement
- Allow zoning to create mixed-use opportunities (RX and EX)
- Create FAR and building height maximums, and height bonuses
- Publish Central City's Developer Handbook
- Major regional investment in light rail system
- Encourage private sector initiative such as the Portland Streetcar and Chinese Garden

impetus behind the plan

There was a strong desire to expand thinking of the 1972 *Down-town Plan* to a larger central area. Portland's growth, coupled with the emergence of newer industrial technology and transit, required a new evaluation of the relationships between, and the role of, the districts in the Central City.



Typical Grid

urban design related goals

- Create a rich and enjoyable environment for pedestrians throughout the Central City
- Strive for excellence in the design of new buildings
- Encourage designers of new developments to sensitively enhance Portland's human scale of buildings, streets, and open spaces
- Promote the formation of districts with distinct character and a diverse and rich mixture of uses (in nonindustrial areas)
- Identify and protect significant public views
- Locate the highest densities downtown and along potential and existing transit corridors
- Step density down toward: the Willamette River; residential neighborhoods adjacent to the Central City; and as the distance from the core increases

district-level approach

Each district includes a policy, action chart, and urban design plan. Some districts have been updated significantly since 1988.*

District Policies:

- Strengthen downtown as the heart and preeminent business location in the region, expand and reinforce its role in retailing, housing, tourism, cultural, educational, entertainment, governmental and ceremonial activities.
- Protect and enhance the character of Goose Hollow* by encouraging compatible new development
- Extend development while protecting housing/social services for the district's special needs groups.
- Preserve the Northwest Triangle's (currently River District*) character and architectural heritage while encouraging both industrial activity and mixed use development.
- Strengthen the economic development of Lower Albina as an industrial employment area while preserving historic buildings and providing a connection to the river.
- Reinforce the Lloyd Center as the eastern anchor of Central City retailing and locate highest density in areas served by light rail.
- Preserve the Central Eastside as an industrial sanctuary while improving freeway access and expanding the Eastbank Esplanade.
- Develop North Macadam (currently South Waterfront*) as a mixed-use neighborhood with significant residential development along river and commercial development along light rail.

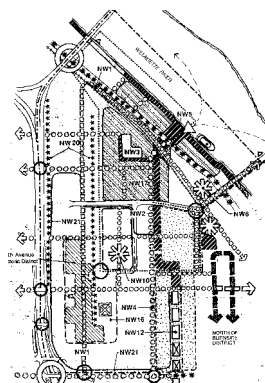
* Major amendments: University District Plan and River District Plan, 1995; Goose Hollow Station Community Plan, 1996; South Waterfront Plan 2002; Downtown's West End, 2002



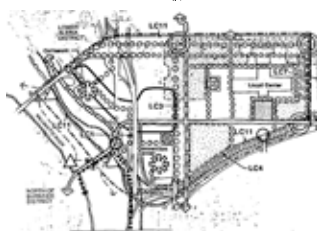
Central City Plan Area and Subdistricts
Note: Additional subdistricts have been added/Central City boundary has been modified since 1988 plan.

Citywide Urban Design Plan

Northwest Triangle Urban Design Plan



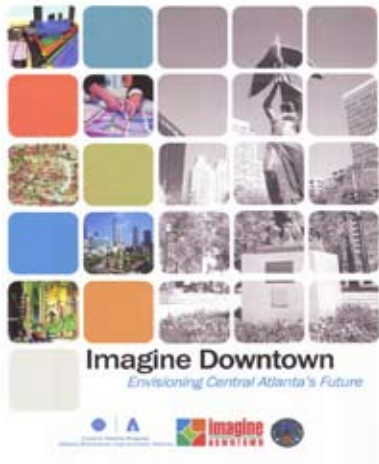
Coliseum/ Lloyd Center Urban Design Plan



highlights

- Continue the momentum of the 1972 Downtown Plan for positive action while including east side and river.
- Increase the supply and variety of urban housing as a multi-faceted community development goal.
- Set policy, objectives and actions for each subdistrict.
- Organize the city to "embrace the river."
- Create density around the Transit Mall.

atlanta imagine downtown plan (2005)



vision

A City of regional scale but with small-town hospitality and a distinct identity.

guiding themes

- Activating a 24-hour environment
- Integrating and enhancing transportation networks
- Expanding Downtown's cultural and tourism destinations

champions of the plan

President of Central Atlanta Progress Inc.,
Mayor Shirley Franklin

fact sheet

	Atlanta	Portland
Region		
population	3,925,400*	1,950,000
City		
population	394,929	529,121
unemployment rate	9.00%	7.90%
med. household income	\$39,752	\$42,278
Central City		
population	25,796	31,068
housing units	19,900	20,016
avg. household size	1.3	1.4
acres	2,560	2,750
# of jobs (approx.)	99,667	122,000
retail total s.f.	1,600,000	3,500,000
office total s.f.	14,750,000	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	5	8

The data for City population, unemployment rate, and median household income were derived from the 2005 American Community Survey.

* Ten-county region, Atlanta Regional Commission, 2006.

plan targets 2010

- Jobs:
79,340 new
80% increase
- Housing:
8,000 new units
40% increase
- Office:
2,000,000 s.f.
14% increase
- Retail:
600,000 s.f.
38% increase
- Hotel Rooms:
2,300 new
unknown increase

planning process tools

- On-line survey
- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Document Reviews

contemporary case studies

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT



Proposed cultural and entertainment center



Development Framework Plan

implementation tools

- Regulation of private development using zoning and development incentives
- Creation of a Tax Allocation District (a method to finance redevelopment activities in underdeveloped areas)
- Fostering public/private partnerships
- Involving community partners and stakeholders



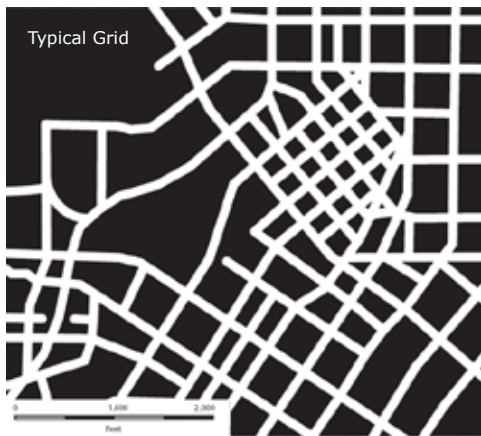
impetus behind the plan

New projects have brought in over \$3 billion worth of new investment and development and have generated momentum for new residential, commercial, institutional, and government activity in the center city. The plan seeks to take the next step and refine previous comprehensive master plans for downtown Atlanta with a more detailed and strategic focus to guide future public and private investment.

atlanta imagine downtown plan (2005)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



urban design related goals

- Build new walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods on and around Centennial Hill
- Bridging the gaps in downtown created by the Interstate
- Reestablish Peachtree as the premier street of the Southeast
- Connect all of Georgia through a state-of-the-art multi-modal transportation hub
- Invigorate Auburn Avenue as the dynamic center of African-American culture, heritage, and advancement
- Unite Downtown and Midtown in a revitalized SoNo (South of North) neighborhood
- Support the Centennial Olympic Park district as Atlanta's showpiece, world-class destination



Public Spaces Plan



Transportation Plan

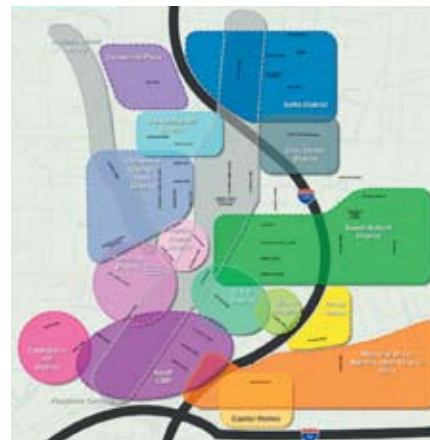
district-level approach

Interconnected and diverse neighborhoods each discuss their own vision and emerging priority projects. Goals include:

- Connectivity and transition to other neighborhoods
- Creating opportunities for more activity
- Addition of new housing (where appropriate)
- Creation of comfortable, walkable, livable place

Emerging priority projects include:

- Redevelopment opportunities
- Street improvements for cars and pedestrians
- Infill of parking lots, revitalization of historic buildings



Neighborhoods and Districts

The Illustrative Plan is a convergence of three plans: Development Framework, Public Spaces, and Transportation Plans, incorporating goals established in the Imagine Downtown process.



Rendering for future potential development in the South CBD



Rendering for future potential Centennial Hill

relevancies for Portland

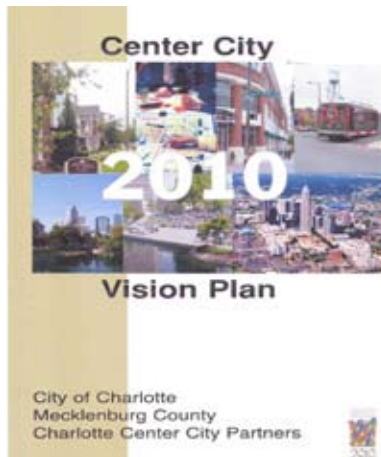
Atlanta's *Imagine Downtown Plan* includes:

- A downtown Illustrative Plan with renderings showing possible urban form
- A focus on current and future land uses, public spaces, and transportation systems
- Neighborhood visions and emerging priority projects
- An online survey with multi-media imagery to capture collective vision
- Identifying and targeting investments toward catalytic projects
- Defining neighborhoods within a walking distance radius of 1250 feet
- Identifying and reinforcing the premier street(s) of downtown

charlotte center city 2010 vision plan (2000)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



vision

A viable, livable, memorable city

guiding themes

- Walkable neighborhoods with street-level development
- enhances pedestrian experience
- Mixed use development supporting work and play
- Balanced, comprehensive approach to growth/development
- Waterfront is 'front porch' of downtown

champions of the plan

City Planning Department



An artist's rendering of the Center City, based on the recommendations of the 2010 Vision Plan

fact sheet

Region	Charlotte	Portland
population	1,594,799*	1,950,000
City		
population	651,101	529,121
unemployment rate	4.80%	7.90%
med. household income	\$46,975	\$42,278
Central City		
population	6,000	31,068
housing units	4,165	20,016
avg. household size	1.4	1.4
acres	1,600	2,750
# of jobs (approx.)	65,000	122,000
retail total s.f.	237,000	3,500,000
office total s.f.	10,000,000	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	11	8

The data for City population, unemployment rate, and median household income were derived from the 2005 American Community Survey.

* Sixteen-county region, Charlotte Regional Partnership, 2006

plan targets 2010

- Jobs: no target
- Housing: 6,000 new units 14% increase
- Retail: 500,000 s.f. 45% increase
- Office: 2,300,000 s.f. 16% increase
- Hotel Rooms: no target

planning process tools

- SWOT analysis/existing documents
- Meet with community, key stakeholders, and other agencies
- Drafted final plan

implementation tools

- Prepare a development strategy to approach national developers for entertainment facilities
- Consider public art program to improve pedestrian environment
- Permit parking of express buses during peak hours



Office development at gateways

impetus behind the plan

To help guide the increasing amount of development activity occurring in the downtown and provide a formal public development strategy.

charlotte center city 2010 vision plan (2000)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



urban design related goals

Center City must continue to pursue the following actions:

- Serve as the symbolic focus of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.
- Encourage centralized density that discourages decentralized sprawl and development of rural land.
- Focus the urban density required to function as a central node for transit destinations and connections.
- Support unique uses and activities such as a convention center, performing arts, and sports that serve the region
- Provide a laboratory for inventing Charlotte's twenty-first century-architecture
- Offer urban living opportunities for Charlotte's citizens.



Land Use, Growth and City Form Recommendations



Open Space, Parks and Recreation Recommendations

district-level approach

Goals for the Neighborhoods:

- Encourage the development of pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods that provide goods and services to residents within a 10-minute walk of their home
- Offer a variety of uses – office, home, school, store – within each neighborhood to promote active communities throughout the day, evening, and weekends
- Promote unique neighborhoods throughout Center City by celebrating the different histories, people and character of each one
- Provide the primary uses in neighborhoods with supporting uses

Goals for Catalyst Projects:

- Leverage specific projects to create a vibrant downtown
- Emphasize compactness and intensity
- Balance with existing context
- Provide for accessibility with functional linkages
- Build a positive civic identity



Existing and Proposed Neighborhoods and Districts



Transportation, Streets, and Parking Recommendations



Catalyst Project Recommendations



Illustration showing existing freeway (top) and future potential linear park (bottom) in freeway's right-of-way

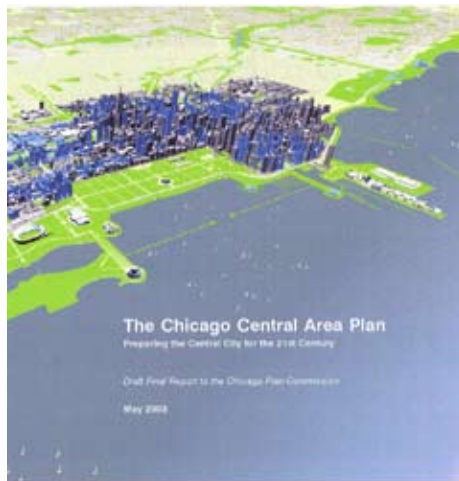
relevancies for Portland

Charlotte's *Center City 2010 Vision Plan* recommends:

- Promoting identifiable "uniquely Charlotte" 21st century architecture
- Creating a linear park next to the freeway to act as spine of park network
- Identifying key catalyst projects and implementation strategy
- Promoting specific uses along certain streets to sustain premier address image
- Addressing 'edge conditions' between neighborhoods and the Center City, where current barriers exist
- Recognizing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats within Plan

chicago the central area plan (2005)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT contemporary case studies



vision

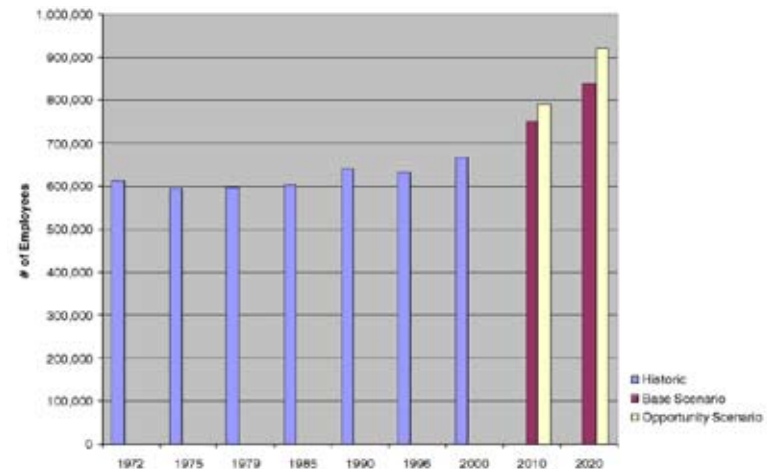
Downtown of the Midwest
Crossroads City
The Greenest City in the U.S.

guiding themes

- Business success depends on quality of life
- The best of the past is the foundation for the future
- Downtown is everyone's neighborhood
- A green city is always a healthy city

champions of the plan

Mayor Daley



Total Central Area Employment 1972-2020

fact sheet

	Chicago	Portland
Region		
population	9,443,356*	1,950,000
City		
population	2,701,926	529,121
unemployment rate	9.06%	7.90%
med. household income	\$41,015	\$42,278
Central City		
population	83,500	31,068
housing units	56,600	20,016
avg. household size	1.5	1.4
acres	1,011	2,750
# of jobs (approx.)	668,000	122,000
retail total s.f.	9,200,000	3,500,000
office total s.f.	107,000,000	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	3	8

The data for City population, unemployment rate, and median household income were derived from the 2005 American Community Survey.

* Twenty-four-county region, City of Chicago, 2006.

plan targets 2010

- Jobs:
272,000 new
41% increase
- Housing:
44,000 new units
78% increase
- Retail:
7,000,000
76% increase
- Office:
44,000,000 s.f.
41% increase
- Hotel:
14,000 new
52% increase

planning process tools

- 24-member steering committee/7-task-force-drafted plan
- Public meetings to gather comments

implementation tools

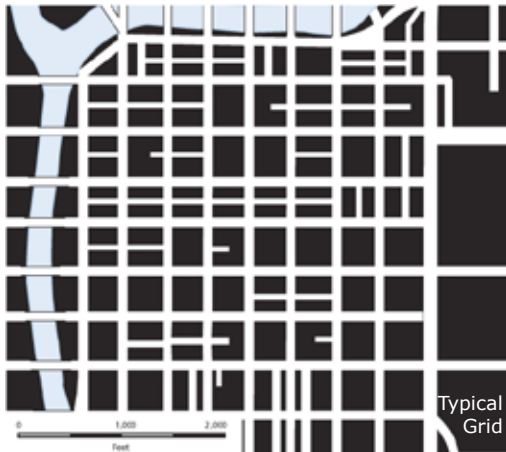
- Revise zoning districts to incorporate vertically mixed-use districts
- Provide incentives and education/outreach to owners about historic preservation
- Seek state and federal funding for new transportation systems
- Implement green policies such as Urban Heat Island Initiative and LEED



impetus behind the plan

The downtown plan had not been revised since 1958. The new plan was created to foster "urban greatness" and guide economic and cultural expansion and development.

chicago the central area plan (2005)



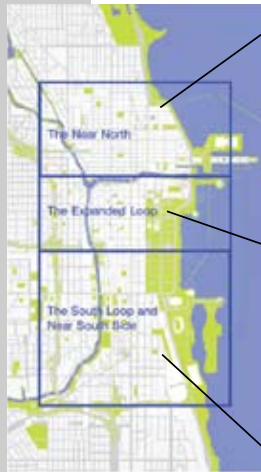
urban design related goals

- Plan emphasizes the connections between its three guiding themes:
 1. Development Framework
 2. Transportation
 3. Waterfronts/Open Space
- Physical Connections: People will be able to walk or bicycle along waterfront; workforce will be educated near centers of employment; workers can choose to live near their jobs or easily access public transit
- Connecting People: Central Area should be a meeting place for people from the city, region, nation, and world.

district-level approach

The three major geographic districts should reflect the following commitments:

- Natural features, streets, parks and buildings can be organized to respect and recognize each other.
- New open spaces must be visible, accessible and usable by all.
- All streets in the Central Area should have usable, pedestrian friendly and attractive sidewalks.
- Maintain the diversity and density of the Central Area.
- Emphasize environmental sustainability by generating high performance, resource conserving buildings, creating rooftop gardens, landscaping streets, and emphasizing public transportation.



Chicago's three districts, key recommendations, and potential future built development



CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT contemporary case studies



Vision for a new park over the Kennedy Expressway

Existing Area



Vision for a new park where the post office currently resides

Existing Post Office



Vision for Michigan Avenue

Existing Michigan Avenue



relevancies for Portland

Chicago's *Central Area Plan*:

- Envisions the city across scales of development: globally, regionally, and as hometown to many
- Creates 3-dimensional models and 'before and after' scenarios as visual tool for discussing and illustrating urban form
- Develops new strategies for changing workforce
- Develops key corridors to provide better access to transit, interest, and places
- Uses historic preservation to attract tourism

milwaukee downtown plan (1999)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT contemporary case studies

Milwaukee Downtown Plan



the plan

vision

The City as the gathering place by the river.

guiding themes

- The city as an entertainment destination
- A balance of transportation
- Catalytic projects that spur activity

champions of the plan

Mayor John O. Norquist

fact sheet

Region	Milwaukee	Portland
population	1,528,070*	1,950,000
City		
population	556,948	529,121
unemployment rate	6.00%	7.90%
med. household income	\$32,216	\$42,278
Central City		
population	7,200	31,068
housing unit	unknown	20,016
ave. household size	unknown	1.4
acres	1,097	2,750
# of jobs (approx.)	74,500	122,000
retail total s.f. (w/mixed-use)	7,000,000	3,500,000
office total s.f.	13,250,000	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	3	8

The data for City population, unemployment rate, and median household income were derived from the 2005 American Community Survey.

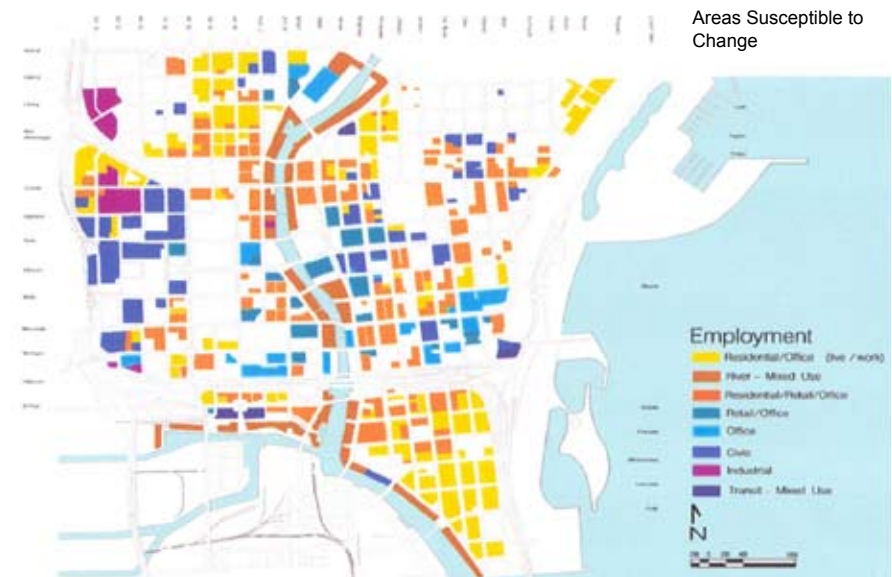
* Four-county region. Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, 2005

plan targets 2010

- Jobs:
19,000 new
25% increase
- Housing:
12,000 new
unknown increase
- Office:
11,623,000 s.f. 26%
increase
- Retail:
no target
- Hotel Rooms:
no target

planning process tools

- Interviews
- Analysis of areas of change and susceptibility
- Visual preference survey
- Citizen workshop and professional workshop



implementation tools

- Transportation investments
- Public/private partnerships
- Zoning and land use regulations to reflect mixed-use
- Adopt Downtown Plan as part of the City Comprehensive Plan
- Distribute Downtown Plan to property owners and downtown developers



impetus behind the plan

Early 1996 saw construction begin on several highly visible projects in downtown Milwaukee. Public officials were aware that key downtown planning and policy documents needed to be created or revised to reflect the new projects and the changing conditions in both the local and national markets for retail and office space and downtown housing. A new plan was needed to provide a blueprint for the further development of downtown and to identify the specific actions which should be taken to foster that development.

milwaukee downtown plan (1999)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT contemporary case studies



Typical Grid

urban design related goals

Visual Preference Survey (VPS) results indicate the following principles:

- Animate the pedestrian realm
- Define downtown with readily identifiable architectural character
- Infill and retrofit vacant and underutilized spaces with mixed-use commercial buildings
- Use the lake and river as Milwaukee's signature features for special events and recreation
- Create a continuous open space network throughout downtown
- Treat streets as downtown's most important public spaces
- Create Pedestrian Priority Streets to accommodate pedestrians over vehicular movement
- Emulate traditional pattern for new housing. Include a wide variety of housing types including those at the water edge
- Make transit more inviting and user-friendly
- Create a safe and secure Downtown



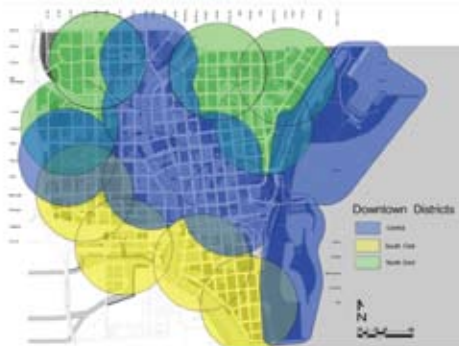
Central District: Neighborhoods



Preferred Images from VPS illustrate Parks and Open Space, Lakefront, and River Mixed-Use

district-level approach

- Districts are categorized by intensity and extent of their service areas
- Neighborhoods are defined by a 1500-foot radial distance emanating from a central point (transit networks or existing retail)
- Neighborhood Centers should remain walking distance to each other to extend the walking network downtown
- Centers should accommodate an intense mix of uses
- Multiple centers are expected and encouraged
- Special recognition should be provided in areas where concentrations of particular types of development (e.g., theaters) are distinctive and walkable, to help make destinations easy to find



Downtown: Districts and Neighborhoods



Central District: Land Uses



Landscaping Plan indicates network of open spaces

relevancies for Portland

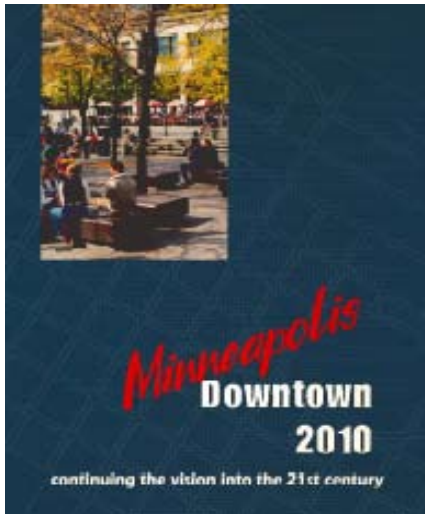
The Milwaukee *Downtown Plan*:

- Focuses on Areas likely to Change as the focus of development
- Uses Visual Preference survey/photographs to clarify citizens' desired character of city
- Defines neighborhood centers as a 1500-foot radial distance from a central point
- Encourages overlapping neighborhood boundaries to extend downtown's walking network
- Supports special uses and recreation along waterfront as city's signature feature
- Creates a network of open spaces with a landscaping plan
- Promotes an identifiable architectural character of the central city

minneapolis downtown 2010 (1996)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



vision

A downtown that serves as the economic center for the upper Midwest Region and is an urban community that is alive and filled with people.

guiding themes

- The region's urban retail center
- Entertainment and cultural capital
- Prestigious neighborhoods

champions of the plan

Downtown 2010 Steering Committee

fact sheet

Region	Minneapolis	Portland
population	2,642,056*	1,950,000
City		
population	350,260	529,121
unemployment rate	8.78%	7.90%
med. household income	\$41,829	\$42,278
Central City		
population	19,000	31,068
housing units	12,570	20,016
avg. household size	1.5	1.4
acres	1,200	2,750
# of jobs (approx.)	135,000	122,000
retail total s.f.	3,600,000	3,500,000
office total s.f.	21,386,000	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	5	8

The data for City population, unemployment rate, and median household income were derived from the 2005 American Community Survey.

* Seven-county region. Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce, 2006.

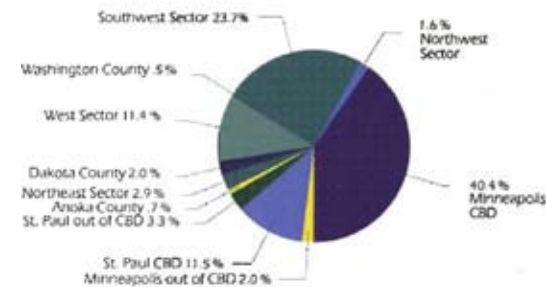
plan targets 2010

- Jobs:
35,000 new
26% increase
- Housing:
3,000 new units
24% increase
- Office: 7,502,600 s.f.
35% increase
- Retail:
no target
- Hotel Rooms:
800 new
19% increase

planning process tools

- Steering committee (10 members)
- 5 subcommittees (50 members)

Downtown is the region's largest office center

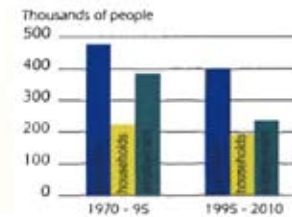


Percentage of people entering and leaving downtown by transportation type



Source: City of Minneapolis 1990 census count

The Twin City metro area will experience slower growth in the upcoming years



implementation tools

- Zoning revisions
- Transfer of development rights mechanisms
- Streamlined approval process
- Expansion of the Downtown Special Service District



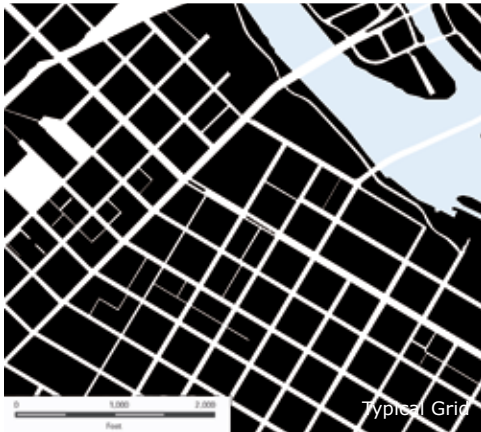
impetus behind the plan

Downtown was growing and important issues came to light such as access and transportation challenges, the health of downtown retail, and the health of neighborhoods. The City of Minneapolis created the Downtown Plan to help answer three main questions, "What should downtown Minneapolis look like in 2010?", "How should it grow?", "How should people get there and move about?"

minneapolis downtown 2010 (1996)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



urban design related goals

- Downtown should support a compact development pattern for retail and transit by concentrating high-density office development adjacent to these facilities.
- Retail core will continue to be the focal point of downtown.
- Downtown should offer a complete package of entertainment and cultural attractions.
- Downtown will add housing for all income levels, focusing on empty nester market.
- Transportation system should balance needs of cars, transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- Downtown should create an image to warrant status as a major priority for the region.



Future potential high-density office



Future potential urban housing

district-level approach

Downtown Core is the focus; neighborhoods and districts do not fall under the scope of the plan, but recommendations of the plan should be coordinated with the plans for these areas.

- Office: High-density office development should be concentrated in areas that encourage transit. Locate street-level retail within these areas.
- Retail: A continuous retail presence within the retail district should serve as primary center of shopping.
- Entertainment: Downtown should be maintained as the location for the region's professional sports. Locate street level attractions within this area.
- Hospitality and Conventions: Facilitate pedestrian movement between the convention center and hotels, retail, and entertainment.
- Education: Encourage education institutions to share resources by locating in areas where they complement downtown's primary functions.
- Housing: Expand housing opportunities for all income levels, and capitalize on sites that are well-suited for housing, encouraging high- to medium-density housing.
- Movement: Improve quality of transit stops.



Downtown: Districts



Downtown: Street-level retail



Downtown: Premier sites for housing development



Downtown: Office



Downtown: Retail space per block



Downtown: Open Space

relevancies for Portland

The Minneapolis Downtown 2010 plan:

- Focuses the plan on the downtown Core only
- Creates and markets a downtown image
- Focuses downtown's importance as a regional draw
- Commits to high-density office, housing, transit, sports and entertainment, retail, and quality of streets
- Creates indoor as well as outdoor open space networks
- Uses systems maps to understand relationship of uses, e.g. retail and entertainment

pittsburgh the downtown plan (1998)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



vision

A 24-hour city fueled by significant numbers of new employees, residents and visitors

guiding themes

- Active environments that attract people
- A 24-hour city
- The use of rivers and riverfronts as central features rather than dividers of the central city

champions of the plan

Downtown Planning Collaborative



The Plans's Focus Areas

fact sheet

Region	Pittsburgh	Portland
population	2,607,394*	1,950,000
City		
population	284,366	529,121
unemployment rate	10.44%	7.90%
med. household income	\$30,278	\$42,278
Central City		
population	8,216	31,068
housing units	1,900	20,016
avg household size	4.3	1.4
acres	411	2,750
# of jobs	120,000	122,000
retail total s.f.	3,000,000	3,500,000
office total s.f.	24,000,000	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	11	8

The data for City population, unemployment rate, and median household income were derived from the 2005 American Community Survey.

* Ten-county region, Pittsburgh Regional Alliance, 2005

plan targets 2010

- Jobs:
19,600 new
16% increase
- Housing:
3,000 new units
158% increase
- Office:
1,000,000 s.f.
4% increase
- Retail:
500,000 s.f.
17% increase
- Hotel Rooms:
1,200 new
41% increase

planning process tools

- 6 task forces
- 3 oversight committees
- Planning group
- Core group
- Focus area and plan district

implementation tools

- Develop a comprehensive and co-ordinated entertainment and retail strategy
- Work with regional marketing associations to integrate promotional efforts to attract visitors
- Benchmark and assess Pittsburgh's needs
- Work with developers and realtor to identify sites for infill and new district developments



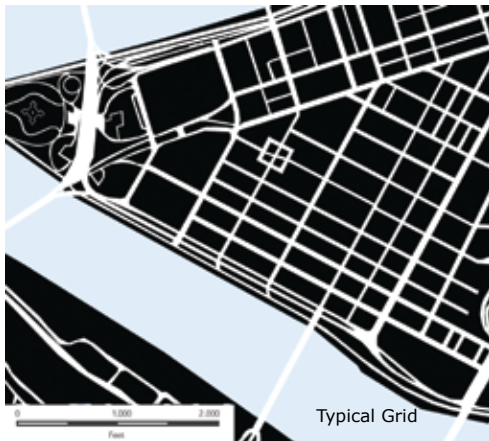
impetus behind the plan

It's been 35 years since Pittsburgh last undertook a comprehensive downtown planning process. Since then the city and region have undergone major economic and social changes including the diversification of its employment base, from manufacturing to one driven by technologies and knowledge-based enterprises. The plan was aimed to address issues such as a vulnerable retail corridor, negligible residential population and limited riverfront access.

pittsburgh the downtown plan (1998)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



urban design related goals

- Reinforce the traditional pattern of key block patterns and streets as primary public spaces
- Capture potential amenities present in the extensive and beautiful riverfronts
- Encourage the rivers to unite the greater downtown, not divide and separate it
- Build upon existing conditions that have guided development:
 - Landform created by intersection of rivers and the building heights that mimic it
 - Pittsburgh's downtown skyline as an iconic image
 - Large and architecturally significant stock of buildings and bridges

district-level approach

General urban design strategies for all districts focus on:

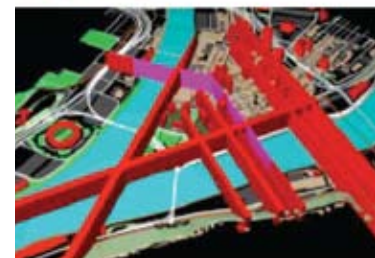
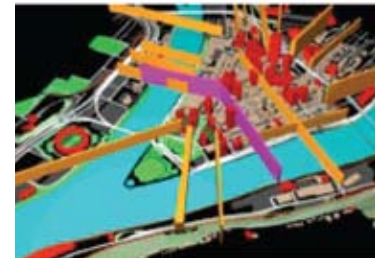
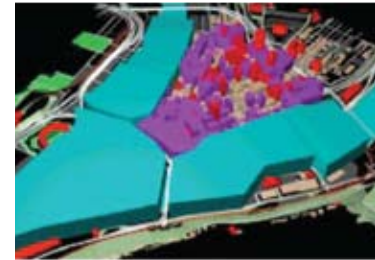
- Enhancement to the public infrastructure, in particular streets and public transit to be more pedestrian-friendly and supportive of public transit usage
- Expansion and development of the riverfront park system and its connection to the core of the city
- Establishment of Urban Design Guidelines and a review process to insure that new projects are of highest quality and conform to the principles detailed in the Downtown Plan



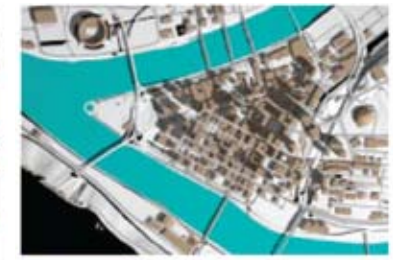
Plan Districts and future potential development illustrated

The Plan's Districts

The planning process identified eleven coherent districts that call for individualized design and development approaches. Transportation and urban design improvements enhance the physical connection and synergy between districts. The complete Plan document provides detailed descriptions of each district, and clearly delineates what an investor could expect to be supported in that district.



Views into and out of the Downtown, illustrating building heights that mimic the landform as iconic view of Pittsburgh



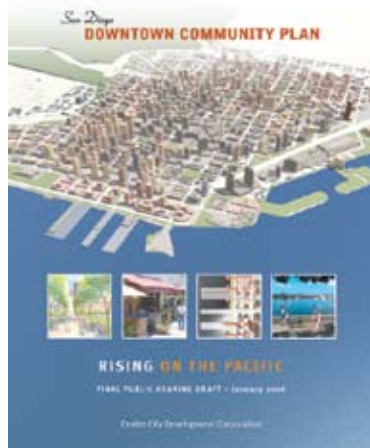
Sun and shade studies on building heights and block pattern to determine areas for housing, open spaces, and street trees

relevancies for Portland

Pittsburgh's Downtown Plan:

- Maintains and enhances skyline as iconic image of the city
- Refines relationship of heights to landform/river
- Directs key area investments to student populations
- Promotes waterfront as a uniting feature of downtown, not dividing
- Recognizes bridges as important physical assets to take cues from
- Uses 3-dimensional modeling to illustrate potential new development densities
- Uses sun and shade studies to determine best uses for undeveloped parcels

san diego downtown community plan (2006)



vision

Rising on the Pacific

guiding themes

- Distinctive downtown/center of the region
- Intense/livable/sustainable/ diverse
- Connection to the water and climate
- Waterfront is 'front porch' of downtown

champions of the plan

Centre City Development Corporation (Urban Renewal Agency)

contemporary case studies

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT



Table 5.1: Neighborhood Centers Locator and Descriptions

Location	Neighborhood (served by map)	Type	Existing or New	Description/Key Features
1 India St	Little Italy	Main Street	Existing	Mixed shops and services catering to traditional neighborhood, with restaurants, cafes, and boutiques drawing visitors. Streetscape improvements underway.
2 Harbor Dr	Columbia and Marina	Expanded Main Street	New	Waterfront retail/restaurant district, serving workers, residents, and visitors.
3 Market St	Marina	Main Street	New	Stretching along the re-landscaped boulevard, incorporating current site of Ralph's supermarket. Reinforce retail and pedestrian character along Q and Market Streets.
4 6th Ave	Cortex	Main Street	New	Active frontages linking two-way converting street. Linking Balboa Park/Highway 101 and Gore, stitching West Cortex and Cortex Hill together.
5 7th, 9th Ave, C and F St	East Village - Northwest	Place	New	Cultural focus and retail along main street. Half-block park providing backdrop to historic Post Office building. Center also includes plaza facing C street transit corridor.
6 Park at the Park, J St	East Village - Ballpark	Combined Main Street, Place	New	Focusing on Park-at-the-Park and along J Street. Incorporating historic buildings, ballpark centered activities.
7 10th St	East Village - Northeast	Main Street	New	Parallel parks along fault lines where feasible. Active frontages linking parks and street.
8 10th, 11th, 12th, and J St	East Village - Southwest	Place with adjacent Main Street	New	Large plaza lined with retail uses on surrounding streets and adjacent buildings, and providing recreational opportunities. Linked via linear park to East Village green. Combined with active frontages along 11th Street.

Neighborhood Centers

fact sheet

	San Diego	Portland
Region		
population	2,833,275*	1,950,000
City		
population	1,264,600	529,121
unemployment rate	5.10%	7.90%
med. household income	\$45,733	\$42,278
Central City		
population	26,150	31,068
housing units	14,600	20,016
avg. household size	1.8	1.4
acres	1,445	2,750
# of jobs (approx.)	74,500	122,000
retail total s.f.	2,700,000	3,500,000
office total s.f.	13,100,000	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	8	8

The data for City population, unemployment rate, and median household income were derived from the 2005 American Community Survey.

* Nineteen county region, San Diego Regional Planning Agency, 2006.

plan targets 2010

- Jobs: 77,300 new
104% increase
- Housing: 29,400 new units
200% increase
- Office: 11,623,000 s.f.
120% increase
- Retail 2,733,000 s.f.
100% increase
- Hotel: 7,700 new
105% increase

planning process tools

- 2-year process with 35-member steering committee of civic and neighborhood leaders
- 1,500 people in public workshops

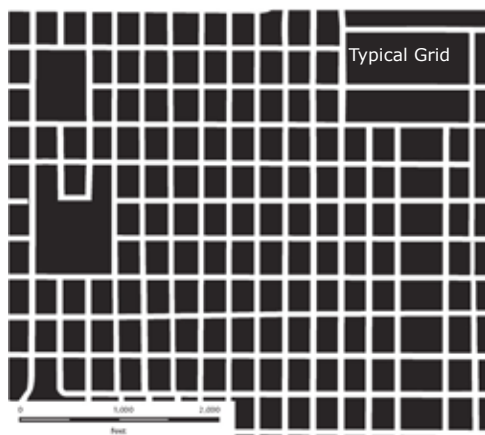
implementation tools

- Regulation, policy, and permit process
- New streetscape master plans
- New neighborhood design guidelines
- FAR transfers
- Urban renewal agency



impetus behind the plan

To create a Downtown visioning and land use/development policy that ties into the Urban Renewal Areas.



urban design related goals

- Maximize the advantage of San Diego's climate and downtown's waterfront setting by emphasizing the public realm
- Foster vital and active street life, and maximize sunlight into streets and open spaces
- Build upon natural features and historic assets
- Ensure that development is designed with a pedestrian orientation
- Promote fine-grained development while enabling desired development intensities
- Provide direction for more detailed guidelines and capital project designs

district-level approach

Neighborhoods and Districts shall have:

- A Main Street or Neighborhood Center with a mix of retail, services, housing, employment, civic, and/or cultural uses that reinforces distinctive neighborhood traits
- A significant park or open space feature
- Linkage to the rest of downtown and neighborhoods surrounding downtown via Green Streets
- Urban form that protects sunlight in major parks and the finer grain Neighborhood Center/Main Street area.



Land Use /Opportunity Sites



Pedestrian Priority Zones



Street Typologies



Downtown Structures



Arts and Culture



Parks and Open Spaces

Key Urban Design Diagrams



Civic Core District:

(Left to Right)
Location Map;
Activity centers,
open space, and
connections;
View of potential
development.

Marina District:

(Left to Right)
Location Map;
Activity centers,
open space, and
connections;
View of potential
development.

relevancies for Portland

San Diego's Downtown Community Plan:

- Promotes waterfront as a main attractor
- Uses three-dimensional modeling to illustrate urban form and future potential development at macro and micro scale
- Determines civic/core activity centers, open space, connections, and desired structure and form for each district with a three-dimensional model of future development
- Invests in preliminary wide-reaching studies ('Working Papers') to assess case study comparisons, demographic and market assessment, downtown opportunities and challenges, a discussion of draft principles, and stakeholder feedback

seattle center city (2004 - current)

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies



vision

A livable, walkable, 24/7 city.

guiding themes

- Sustainable transportation and development
- Diverse housing and mobility for residents
- Good design and connectivity as priority
- Reinforce historic preservation policies/regulation

champions of the plan

Mayor Nickels

fact sheet

Region	Seattle	Portland
population	3,460,400*	1,950,000
City		
population	563,374	529,121
unemployment rate	3.6%	7.90%
med. household income	\$45,736	\$42,278
Central City		
population	54,572	32,858
housing units	34,578	20,016
avg. household size	1.6	1.4
acres	2,505	2,750
# of jobs (approx.)	230,844	122,000
retail total s.f.	3,500,000	3,500,000
office total s.f.	36,806,396	23,000,000
# of subdistricts in plan	11	8

The data for City population, unemployment rate, and median household income were derived from the 2005 American Community Survey.

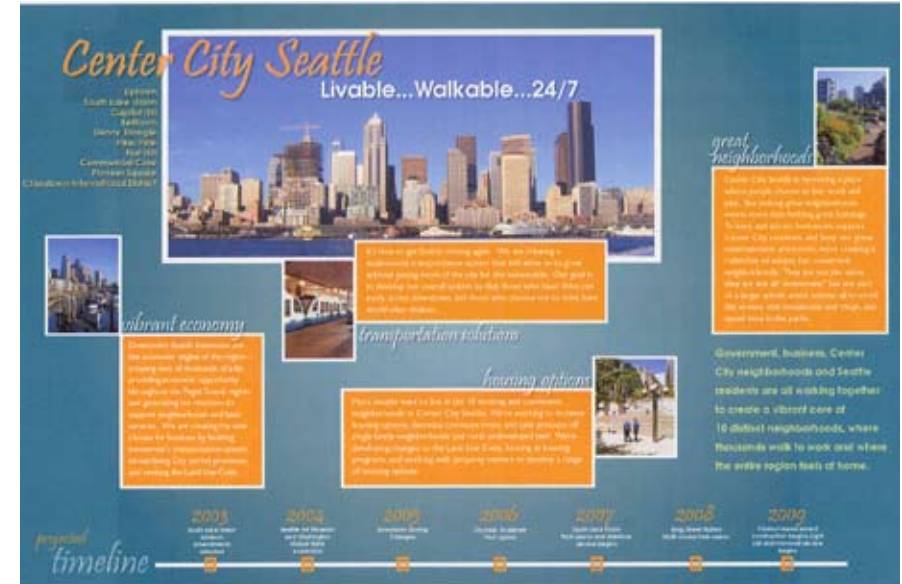
* Four-county region, Puget Sound Regional Council, 2005.

plan targets 2010

- Jobs: 50,000 new
22% increase
- Housing: 21,800 new units
51% increase
- Office: no target
- Retail: no target
- Hotel: no target

planning process tools

- Urban design forum (charrette) sponsored by the design and planning commission (previous mayor)
- Advisory groups for specific projects to recommend actions to Mayor
- Public open houses



implementation tools

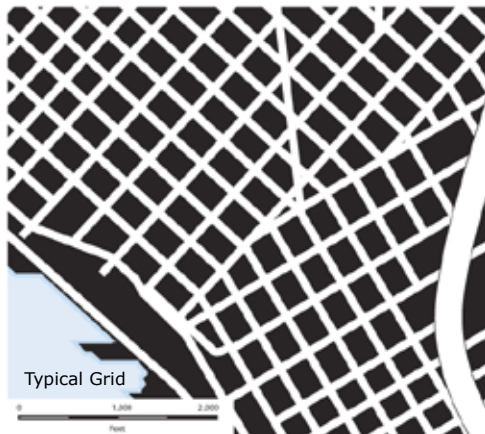
- Greater heights (unlimited for the main office core)
- Greater maximum floor area
- A new program for market-rate housing to contribute to affordable housing
- Greater transferable development rights for historic structures downtown



impetus behind the plan

Initiated in 2004, Nickels' Center City Seattle strategy will address major changes affecting this area, including recently proposed downtown zoning changes, redevelopment of the central waterfront, replacement of the viaduct, light rail, the Westlake streetcar, new and improved parks, biotech development, and new mixed-use development.

seattle center city (2004 - current)



urban design related goals

- Create a multi-modal transportation system with “world-class choices” that will allow the city to grow
- Create a vibrant economy
- Enhance and build urban neighborhoods within the Center City
- Provide additional housing by increasing height and density limits in specific areas of downtown Seattle

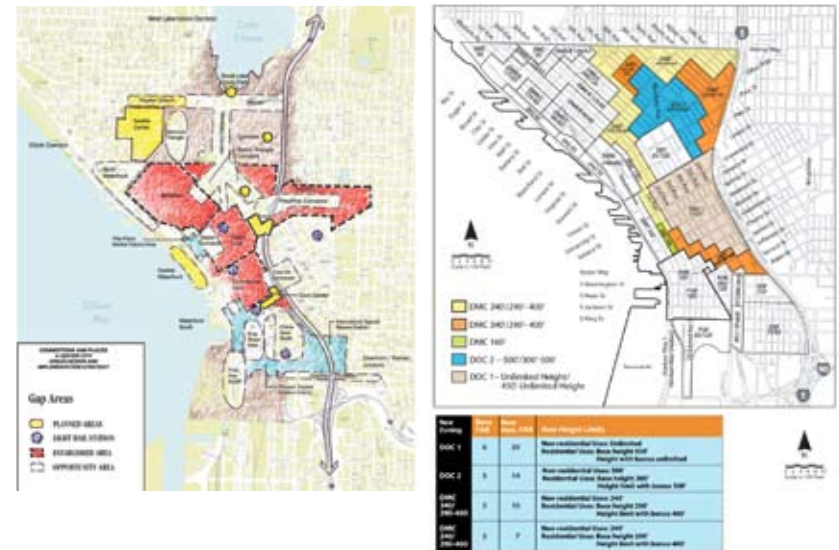
Background Study:
Gaps and Opportunities

Gap Areas = areas with no plan or vision, areas with plans but no implementation

Planned Areas = areas with plans that are likely to be implemented

Key Corridors = significant rights of way that need design

Taken from
Connections and Places, Center City Mosaic, 2000.



district-level approach

Common principles for each geographic area and Center City as a whole:

- Encourage economic growth, transportation, new housing, and great urban neighborhoods in Seattle's downtown core and the nine centrally located neighborhoods immediately around it
- Downtown Zoning changes to provide additional housing by increasing height and density limits in specific areas of downtown Seattle
- Redevelop the Central Waterfront
- Invest in light rail, the West-lake streetcar, new and improved parks, biotech development, and new mixed-use development



Seattle Waterfront Plan



Composite map of all the parks proposed by neighborhood plans, capital improvements, and other entities.



Blue Ring



Green Streets/Urban Trails

Downtown Zoning adopted by City Council, as part of strategy for Center City Seattle.

Maps on left are taken from "The Blue Ring: Seattle's Open Space Strategy for the Center City."






relevancies for Portland

Seattle's Center City Strategy:

- Guides and shapes the city's urban form and design through background studies, forum, and series of Strategies for Center City (i.e., not plan update)
- Increases height and density limits in specific areas of downtown to provide additional housing
- Creates and synthesizes specific strategies, e.g. Open Space Strategy, Center City Seattle Strategy
- Builds upon an earlier multi-day Mayor/Council-sponsored urban design forum

comparison tables

contemporary case studies




city	document	year	vision	guiding themes	champions of the plan	planning process tools	implementation tools
	<i>Atlanta Downtown: Envisioning Central Atlanta's Future</i>	2005	A City of regional scale but with small-town hospitality and a distinct identity.	Activate a 24-hour downtown through increased housing; integrate/enhance transportation networks; expand downtown's cultural and tourism destinations.	President of Central Atlanta Progress Inc, Mayor Shirley Franklin	On-line survey, Questionnaires, Interviews, Document Reviews	Zoning and development incentives, Tax Allocation District, public/private partnerships, community and stakeholder involvement
	<i>Center City 2010 Vision Plan</i>	2000	Viable, livable, memorable	Walkable neighborhoods with street-level uses; mixed use development that supports working, living, and leisure activities; balanced, comprehensive approach to growth.	City Planning Department	SWOT analysis/existing documents; meet with community, key stakeholders and other agencies; drafted final plan	Development strategy for entertainment facilities; public art program to improve pedestrian environment; parking of express buses during peak hours
	<i>The Chicago Central Area Plan</i>	2005	Downtown of the Midwest; Crossroads City; the Greenest City in the U.S.	Business success depends on quality of life; the best of the past is the foundation for the future; downtown is everyone's neighborhood; a green city is a healthy city.	Mayor Daley	24-member steering committee/7-task-force drafted plan; public meeting to gather comments; final plan	Allow zoning for vertical mixed-use; Incentives/education/outreach about historic preservation; seek funding for transportation systems; implement green policies
	<i>Milwaukee Downtown Plan</i>	1999	The gathering place by the river	The City as an entertainment district; A balance of transportation; Catalytic projects that spur activity	Mayor John O. Norquist	interviews, analysis of Areas of Change and Areas of Stability, Visual Preference Survey informed a 3-day citizen workshop and 8-day professional workshop	Transportation investments; Public/private partnerships; Zoning/Land use to reflect mixed-use; Adopt Downtown Plan and distribute to property owners and downtown developers
	<i>Milwaukee Downtown Plan</i>	1999	The gathering place by the river	The City as an entertainment district; A balance of transportation; Catalytic projects that spur activity	Mayor John O. Norquist	interviews, analysis of Areas of Change and Areas of Stability, Visual Preference Survey informed a 3-day citizen workshop and 8-day professional workshop	Transportation investments; Public/private partnerships; Zoning/Land use to reflect mixed-use; Adopt Downtown Plan and distribute to property owners and downtown developers

impetus behind the plan	urban design -related goals	district-level approach	
New projects have brought in over \$3 billion worth of new investment and development and have generated momentum for new activity in the center city. The plan seeks to take the next step and refine previous plans for Downtown Atlanta with a more detailed and strategic focus to guide future public and private investment.	Walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods on Centennial Hill; bridging gaps created by Interstate; reestablish Peachtree as premier street; connect Georgia through multimodal transportation hub; invigorate center of African-American culture, heritage, and advancement; unite Downtown and Midtown; support Centennial Olympic Park district as Atlanta's showpiece *IDENTITY	Goals include: connectivity, transition, activity, housing (where appropriate), and comfortable, walkable, livable places. Emerging priority projects include: redevelopment opportunities; street improvements; infill of parking lots; revitalization of historic buildings	Audrita's Imagine Downtown Plan includes: A citywide Illustrative Plan approach; a focus on current and future land uses, public spaces, and transportation systems; neighborhood visions and emerging priority projects; online survey with multi-media imagery; identifying and targeting catalytic projects; defining neighborhoods within a walking distance radius of 1250 feet; identifying/reinforcing premier street(s)
To help guide the growing amounts of development activity occurring in the downtown and provide a formal public development strategy.	Center City should pursue the following: serve as focus of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County; encourage centralized density; focus density to function as node for transit destinations; support unique uses and activities that serve region; provide laboratory for inventing Charlotte's twenty-first century architecture; offer urban living *DISTINCT ARCHITECTURE	Goals for the Neighborhoods: Encourage development of pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods that provide goods and services within a 10-minute walk; Mix of uses to promote 24-hour activity; Unique neighborhoods, primary uses with supportive uses for each district	Promote "uniquely Charlotte" architecture; Create linear park next to freeway as spine of park network; Identify key catalyst projects and implementation; Sustain image of premier address; Address 'edge conditions' around Center City; Recognize Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
The downtown plan had not been revised since 1958. The new plan was created to foster "urban greatness" and guide economic and cultural expansion and development.	Emphasize connections between three guiding themes: Development Framework, Transportation, and Waterfronts/ Open Space Physical Connections: Facilitate walk/bicycle along waterfront; live near jobs or public transit; Connecting People: Central Area as meeting place for people from city, region, nation, and world.	The three districts reflect the following: Natural features, streets, parks and buildings organized to respect and recognize each other; New open spaces must be visible, accessible and usable by all; All streets should have pedestrian friendly and attractive sidewalks; Maintain diversity and density; Emphasize environmental sustainability *SUSTAINABILITY	Envision the city across scales of development: globally, regionally, and as hometown to many; Create 3D models as visual tool for discussing and illustrating urban form; Develop new strategies for changing workforce; Provide better access to transit and places of interest; Use historic preservation to attract tourism *SIMULATIONS
Early 1996 saw construction begin on several highly visible projects in downtown Milwaukee. Key Downtown planning and policy documents reflect the new projects and the changing conditions in local and national markets for retail/office space and downtown housing. A new plan was needed to provide a blueprint for the further development of Downtown and to identify the specific actions which should be taken to foster that development.	Visual Preference Survey (VPS) indicates the following principles: Animate pedestrian realm; Define Downtown with identifiable architecture; Infill/ retrofit vacant/ underutilized spaces; Use water as signature features for events and recreation; Create continuous open space network; Treat streets as most important public spaces; Create Pedestrian Priority Streets; Emulate traditional pattern for new housing; Include wide variety of housing; Make transit more inviting; Create a safe and secure Downtown *URBAN FORM	Neighborhoods defined by 1500-foot radius. Centers should accommodate mix of uses, remain walking distance to extend walking network downtown; Multiple centers are expected/ encouraged; Special recognition for areas where concentrations of particular types of development (e.g. theaters) are distinctive to help make destinations easy to find	Focus on Areas likely to Change for development; Use VPS/ photographs to clarify desired character of City; Define neighborhood centers as a 1500-foot radius; Encourage overlapping neighborhood boundaries to extend walking network; Support special uses and recreation along waterfront; Create a network of open space; Promote an identifiable architecture *IDENTITY
Downtown was growing and important issues came to light such as access and transportation challenges, the health of downtown retail, and the health of neighborhoods. The City of Minneapolis created the Downtown Plan to help answer three main questions, "What should downtown Minneapolis look like in 2010?", "How should it grow?", "How should people get there and move about?"	Downtown should support compact development for retail and transit, concentrate high-density office development adjacent to transit; Downtown should offer entertainment and cultural attractions; Downtown to add housing for all incomes, focusing on empty nester market; Transportation system should balance needs of all users; Create a downtown image. *IDENTITY, DISTINCT ARCHITECTURE	Downtown Core is focus; neighborhoods/ districts not within plan scope. Goals include: Locate High-density office near transit; Retail District as center of shopping; Downtown is location for region's professional sports; Facilitate pedestrian movement; Education institutions to share resources by locating near downtown's primary functions; High to medium-density housing for all incomes, capitalizing on well-suited sites; Improve quality of transit stops.	Focus plan on the Downtown Core only; Create and market a Downtown image; Focus Downtown's importance as a regional draw; Commit to high-density office, housing, transit, sports and entertainment, retail, and quality of streets; Create indoor and outdoor open space networks; Use systems maps to understand relationship of uses, e.g. retail and entertainment, street-level retail and office, etc

comparison tables

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN: URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

contemporary case studies

city	document	year	vision	guiding themes	champions of the plan	planning process tools	implementation tools
	Pittsburgh <i>The Pittsburgh Downtown Plan</i>	1998	A 24-hour city fueled by significant numbers of new employees, residents and visitors	Active environments that attract people; A 24-hour city; The use of rivers and riverfronts as central features rather than dividers of the central city	Downtown Planning Collaborative	6 task forces, 3 oversight committees, Planning Group, Core Group; Focus Area + Plan District	Retail strategy, work with regional marketing associations, benchmark to assess needs, work with developers and realtors, implement Adaptive Building Code Study, selective application of tax abatement, aggressive public/private financing
	San Diego <i>San Diego Downtown Community Plan; Working Paper #5; Working Paper #6</i>	2006	Rising on the Pacific	Distinctive downtown/center of the region; Intense/livable/sustainable / diverse; Connection to the water and the climate; Waterfront is 'front porch' of downtown	Centre City Development Corporation (Urban Renewal Agency)	2 year process with 35-member Steering Committee of civic and neighborhood leaders, 1500+ people participated in public workshops	Regulation, policy, and permit process; New streetscape master plans; New neighborhood design guidelines; FAR transfers; Urban renewal agency
	Seattle <i>Center City Seattle; Center City Mosaic; The 100-Year Vision</i>	2004 -	Livable... Walkable...24/7	Sustainable transportation and development; Diverse housing and mobility for residents; Good design and connectivity as priority; Reinforce historic preservation policies/regulation	Mayor Nickels	Urban design forum (charrette) sponsored by the design and planning commission (previous mayor); Advisory groups for specific projects to recommend actions to Mayor; Public open houses	Greater heights (unlimited for the main office core); Greater maximum floor area; A new program for market-rate housing to contribute to affordable housing; Greater transferable development rights for historic structures downtown

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impetus behind the plan	urban design -related goals	district-level approach	
It's been 35 years since Pittsburgh last undertook a comprehensive Downtown planning process. Since then the City and region have undergone major economic and social changes including the diversification of its employment base, from manufacturing to one driven by technologies and knowledge-based enterprises. The plan was aimed to address issues such as a vulnerable retail corridor, negligible residential population and limited riverfront access.	Reinforce the traditional pattern of key block patterns and streets as primary public spaces; Capture potential amenities present in the extensive and beautiful riverfronts; Encourage the rivers to unite the greater Downtown, not divide and separate it; Build upon existing conditions that have guided development: Landform created by intersection of rivers and the building heights that mimic it; Pittsburgh's Downtown skyline as an iconic image; Large and architecturally significant stock of buildings and bridges *DISTINCT ARCHITECTURE, SIMULATIONS	Goals include: Enhancement to public infrastructure, in particular streets and public transit to be more pedestrian-friendly and supportive of public transit usage; Expansion and development of riverfront park system and its connection to the core of the city; Establishment of Urban Design Guidelines and a review process to insure that new projects are high quality and conform to Downtown Plan principles	Maintain and enhance skyline as iconic image of the city; Refine relationship of heights to landform/river; Direct key area investments to student populations; Promote waterfront as a uniting feature of downtown, not dividing; Recognize bridges as important physical assets to take cues from; Use 3-dimensional modeling to illustrate potential new development densities; Use sun and shade studies to determine best uses for undeveloped parcels *SIMULATIONS
To create a Downtown visioning and land use/development policy that ties into the Urban Renewal Areas.	Maximize advantage of climate and waterfront setting by emphasizing public realm; Foster active streetlife; maximize sunlight into streets and open spaces; Build upon natural features and historic assets; Ensure development has a pedestrian orientation; Promote fine-grained development while enabling desired development intensities; Provide direction for more detailed guidelines and capital project designs	Neighborhoods and Districts shall have: A Main Street or Neighborhood Center with a mix of uses that reinforces distinctive neighborhood traits; Significant park or open space feature; Linkage to the rest of downtown and neighborhoods via Green Streets; Urban form that protects sunlight in major parks and the finer grain Neighborhood Center/ Main Street area. *URBAN FORM	Promote waterfront as main attractor; Use 3D models to illustrate urban form and potential development; Determine civic/core activity centers, open space, connections, and desired structure/form for each district; Invest in preliminary studies, i.e. 'Working Papers' to assess Case Studies, demographic/market review, opportunities/ challenges, etc *SIMULATIONS
Initiated in 2004, Nickels' Center City Seattle strategy will address major changes affecting this area, including recently proposed downtown zoning changes, redevelopment of the central waterfront, replacement of the viaduct, light rail, the Westlake streetcar, new and improved parks, biotech development, and new mixed-use development.	Create a multi-modal transportation system with "world-class choices" that will allow the city to grow; Create a vibrant economy; Enhance and build urban neighborhoods within the Center City; Provide additional housing by increasing height and density limits in specific areas of downtown Seattle	Common principles for each geographic area and Center City as a whole: Balance pedestrian access with other transit modes; Follow/ build upon neighborhood plans; Connect city to water; Promote sustainable projects; Incorporate range of housing stock and supportive amenities; Create an open space system with physical and visual connections, from a macro to a micro scale; Encourage chaos, congestion *SUSTAINABILITY	Guide/ shape the urban form and design through Background studies, forum, and series of Strategies (i.e. not Plan update); Increase height/density limits in specific areas to provide additional housing; Develop 'Gaps and Opportunities' as a background piece to create and support long-range urban design goals for the Center City; Invest in multi-day Mayor/Council-sponsored Urban Design Forum (charrette)

findings

Although each of the eight cities studied vary in terms of their physical attributes, history, political landscape and culture, each provides new insights and demonstrates the range of strategies adopted to achieve its desired downtown goals. The following aspects are applicable to a new Central Portland Plan:

- **urban design strategy.** The range of urban design approaches varies considerably. Some plans emphasize key corridors (such as Atlanta's Peachtree Street). Others such as Charlotte focus on their districts and related spheres of influence. Pittsburgh and San Diego define their districts by function and character. Still other downtowns such as Seattle's Blue Ring Strategy or Chicago's new South Loop infill vision focus on catalytic projects. A few downtowns such as Atlanta rely primarily on illustrative plans with added detail to implement intent or determine investment priorities.
- **urban form drivers.** Elements intended to inspire good urban form vary. Some downtowns such as Pittsburgh lean toward physical form (i.e. skyline) to express identity. Chicago's uses detailed three-dimensional studies to understand its development potential while San Diego considers its waterfront focus. Cities like Milwaukee concentrate more on their social environment, by using Visual Preference Surveys to capture desired city character. Atlanta considers economic criteria such as targeting and identifying investments to identify and realize catalytic projects.
- **identity through design.** Each city studied pursued uniqueness differently. Approaches include establishing a coherent identity of the city through the architecture of buildings (Charlotte, Milwaukee), creating distinct skylines through form and massing (Pittsburgh), and emphasizing the open space network rather than the buildings themselves (Minneapolis).
- **distinct architecture.** The role of design, though always considered important in each city studied, varies by scale. Some cities place importance on celebrating local architectural styles (Charlotte), or by enhancing architecturally significant buildings and bridges (Pittsburgh). Others like Minneapolis pursue iconic buildings or spaces in a downtown with a mix of high density office, residential, and sports and entertainment.
- **technical analysis as basis (simulations).** There is an increasing reliance on new technological tools to better understand urban design issues. Chicago, Pittsburgh, and San Diego all use three-dimensional digital models to illustrate and define their approaches to massing, height, skyline, and urban form. Pittsburgh also uses simulations to understand its climate and views. Cities are increasingly using their growth scenario models to arrive at urban design visions. These simulations are effective in discussing associated urban design implications with stakeholders.
- **district or site-specific urban form expressions.** While there is increased use of district-level three-dimensional modeling to illustrate urban form (Pittsburgh, San Diego, and Chicago), there is also a marked shift away from developing detailed city-wide urban design expressions common in the past. City scale urban design plans such as those developed for Philadelphia (Ed Bacon) or the Regional Plan Association of New York (Urban Design Manhattan's) comprehensive systems analysis are more difficult to accomplish today. This reluctance towards big, comprehensive urban design plans can be explained in part by the current complexities of obtaining public consensus.

recommendations

The above analysis indicates a few distinct areas where Portland can learn from and remain distinctive compared to the downtown plans formulated by other cities. These include:

- **a clear urban design framework plan.** Such a plan could establish the urban design "bones" of Portland in an unambiguous manner. An easy to understand diagram would help identify the most important existing and desired elements (places, corridors, buildings, open space, etc.) – their interdependence as well as their critical city and downtown role.
- **emphasizing portland's identity.** It is clear that the competition between cities to stay relevant and attractive is increasing. Identifying, pursuing and enhancing identity is but one important aspect. Thus far, Portland's visual identity has primarily come from its relationship with Mt. Hood. A new Central Portland Plan should include a vigorous debate about Portland's present and future identity-giving elements. In addition to Mt. Hood, Portland could consider a distinctive skyline, iconic buildings, or other creative approaches.
- **raising the sustainability bar.** Portland continues to be a leader in all aspects of sustainability. Yet leadership in this role is increasingly threatened by other cities. Urban Design can assist in maintaining Portland's edge in this area by considering: building orientation, district and subdistrict level stormwater and watershed management systems, integration of open space networks, and creating special places at the nexus of transit and activity. This list is not exhaustive, and other relevant urban design aspects should be discussed as part of a larger discussion on the challenges ahead.
- **the role of distinctive architecture and design.** Portland has historically oriented its design emphasis to the quality of public rather than private spaces and architecture. Although this strategy accounts for the high quality of the city's public spaces, such quality does not always extend itself to civic buildings or prominent sites that could contribute to the city's image. The role of iconic buildings such as libraries, museums, post offices, community centers, police stations and other civic or community related structures and spaces should therefore be considered more carefully.
- **an increasing use of simulations.** As technological tools become cheaper and easier to use, a new Central Portland Plan should use urban simulations to better understand and debate the necessary urban design and planning trade-offs for the future.
- **setting high standards and aspirations.** Portland's great competitive advantage as a city has been its ability to push known planning and urban design boundaries and pursue high standards. For example, there are great gains in creating a detailed and interlaced network of city amenities to ensure rich urban experiences. Although more challenging, integrating urban design throughout the Central Portland Plan will be more rewarding than addressing narrow aspects of urban design.

... next steps

mapping central portland's urban design “bones”

The essence of creating vital and great public spaces and places in any city is the ability to capitalize on the reasons why people gather. These can be inadvertent, like the convergence of transit, or deliberate, like Portland's Pioneer Square, the city's “Living Room.” These places and spaces, together with the elements that connect them, constitute the “bones” of the city. When done right such a framework can provide great confidence that despite change and growth, the most important places in the city or its very identity are not lost.

The material generated in this assessment will be distilled into a concentrated map that will identify the most important locations and related urban design elements of the central core of Portland. These elements will be the places and spaces the city should preserve, enhance and create. They can be described in terms of edges (i.e. district, river, urban, historic or movement), corridors or links (i.e. primary movement, connectors, green corridors or major axis), nodes (i.e. urban and transit plazas, bridgeheads or places of commemoration) or attractors (i.e. civic institutions, activity centers, public event spaces or iconic structures).

In order to understand future potential of Portland, an analysis of areas that are attractive because of their unique geography, demography, existing use, historical significance or particular urban form is being undertaken. Each of these locations has unique opportunities but also particular constraints. Ranking and prioritizing the places and spaces of highest value allows them to become part of the city “bones.”



creating an urban design framework

The urban design framework of Portland's Central City will describe a combination of the places that must be most protected, enhanced or created. These elements will need to be bound together with a big overarching idea. Such an organizing idea will emerge from consideration of a variety of spatial arrangements and policies yet to be articulated.

Finally, there are many ways to understand a city. Regardless of the method, if a city can recognize and then carefully use its greatest and most unique assets (past, present and future), it has the best possible chance of becoming timeless and enduring. In the face of growing global uncertainty, shifting balances and global consequences, cities need every advantage possible to become safe, happy, productive and wonderful places for their citizens. It is hoped that this effort will bring Portland closer to these objectives.

Online report: www.portlandonline.com/planning/urbandesign

... next steps

