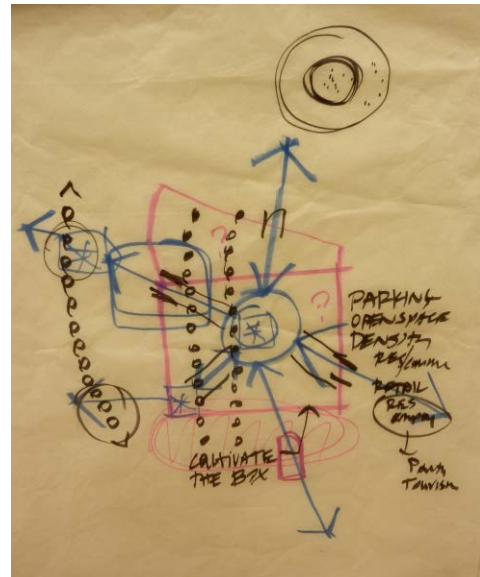


# Old Town/Chinatown Planning Events

March 8 and 15, 2013

## Summary of Results

Revised June 4, 2013



Bureau of Planning and Sustainability  
Innovation. Collaboration. Practical Solutions.

City of Portland, Oregon  
Charlie Hayes, Mayor • Susan Anderson, Director



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**Appendix: Notes and Sketches** (under separate cover)  
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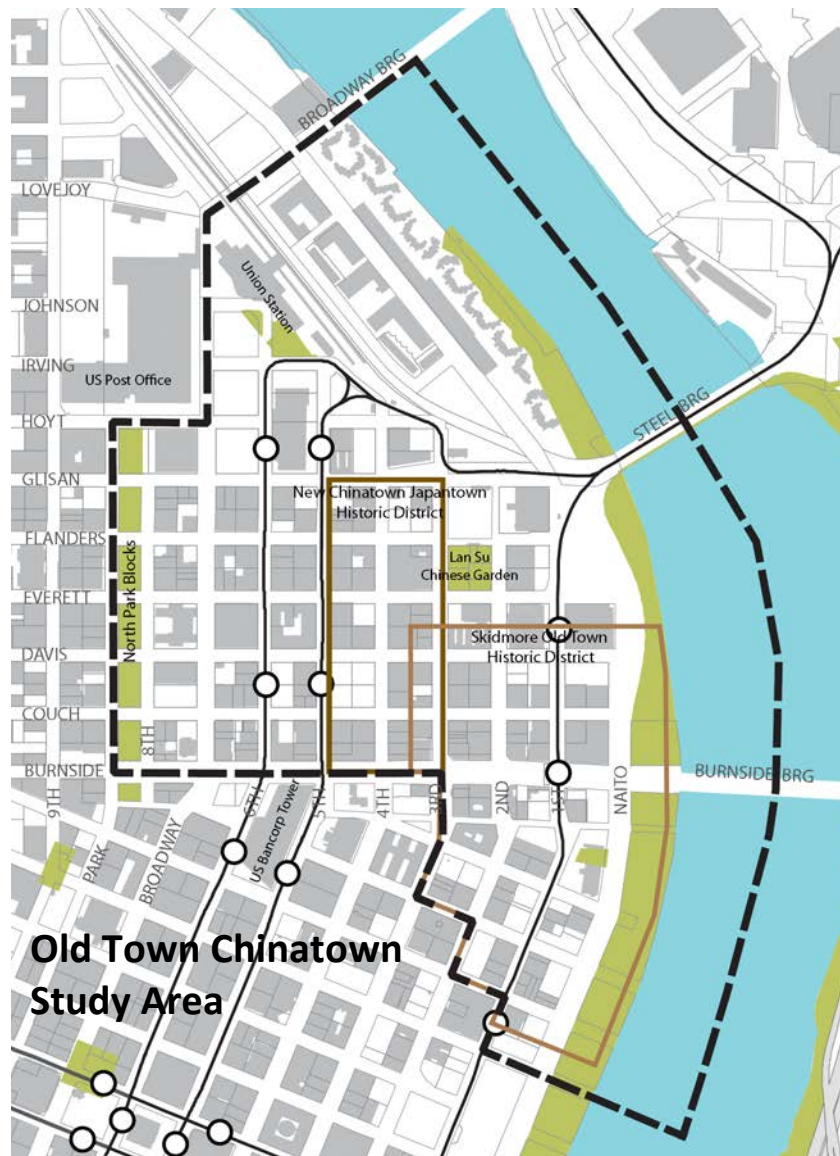
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## I. Introduction

The City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) is working on the West Quadrant Plan, which will provide detailed planning for Central City areas on the west side of the Willamette River. This effort is part of the broader Central City 2035 project to update the 1988 Central City Plan, leading to an update to the City of Portland’s Comprehensive Plan.

As part of the West Quadrant Plan process, BPS has undertaken intensive outreach and planning work in certain areas, including Old Town/Chinatown, to confirm long understood neighborhood issues and opportunities to generate new ideas to inform the development of planning and urban design alternatives for the larger quadrant planning process to consider.

This document summarizes the results of two events held in early March 2012 focused on Old Town/Chinatown.



## Purpose

The goal of Old Town/Chinatown events was to work with the community to identify today's issues and opportunities based on progress since the 1988 plan and generate ideas about how the area should evolve over the next 25 years. The input gathered in these events will be used in the preparation of preliminary concept diagram that illustrate future scenarios for the district, as well as potential policy and implementation tool recommendations to be included in the West Quadrant Plan.

## Results: Key Planning Themes

Several key themes emerged from the March events in Old Town/Chinatown and the work leading up to them. These themes provide direction for the West Quadrant Plan process and the actions that the plan should consider in Old Town/Chinatown.

1. **Harness Creative Energy**, especially east-west along NW Couch and north-south along NW Broadway, using the higher education institutions as lasting anchors to attract creative companies.
2. **Support and encourage the nightlife district**, but manage and buffer it well to increase positive impact and reduce negatives.
3. **Continue pursuing housing goals to balance the district housing mix**, especially student and market-rate. Consider high-density housing north of NW Everett along the NW Glisan corridor.
4. **Recognize the Skidmore District as a national architectural gem** and continue to prioritize restoration and complementary infill at a comparable scale.
5. **Reexamine the preservation framework in New Chinatown/Japantown** to recognize the district's unique cultural significance. Identify key cultural and architectural resources, and develop a more flexible and attractive development framework for other sites. Focus the cultural hub of the district between NW Everett to W Burnside and NW 4th and NW 3rd.
6. **Develop and implement an improved parking management strategy for the district** to meet growing demand that encourages surface-lot redevelopment and rehabilitation of historic buildings.
7. **Improve connections** into and out of the district from the west and south. Improve access to Waterfront Park and the Willamette River.

## Planning Process

Old Town/Chinatown community members and stakeholders were invited to attend two events in March 2013. Both events were held at the University of Oregon Portland Center in Old/Town Chinatown.

### **Community Planning Forum**

The first event was a community planning forum held on March 8<sup>th</sup> from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Approximately 70 people attended, including a broad representation of area residents, property owners, businesses and institutions.



The forum began with a staff presentation about the West Quadrant planning process and Old Town/Chinatown’s history and existing policy framework, as well as encouragement to think differently and beyond long held beliefs. This was followed by inspiring presentations from Peggy Moretti from the Historic Preservation League of Oregon and John Jay from Weiden+Kennedy/Studio J on the future possibilities of Old Town/Chinatown as a vital urban neighborhood. The remainder of the forum was devoted to small group discussions at tables staffed by a facilitator and a note taker. To kick-off the discussion, “big picture” questions were asked about community assets, aspects of the district that should be preserved and enhanced, and aspects that should be changed or improved. The input from the forum is summarized in Section III of this report.

### **Concept Development Charrette**

The second event was a concept development charrette held on March 15, 2013 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. In addition to BPS staff who hosted the event, a broad spectrum of public agency staff participated, including representatives from the Bureau of Transportation, Bureau of Environmental Services, and Portland Development Commission. The charrette was also attended by Old/Town Chinatown stakeholders, including neighborhood residents, property owners, area businesses, and institutions.



The charrette began with a staff review of the community planning forum, current issues and opportunities, and the existing policy and regulatory framework in Old/Town Chinatown. Project consultants from DAO Architecture then presented six potential urban design approaches with illustrative case studies intended as starting places for the charrette’s work sessions. The remainder of the charrette was broken into two facilitated work sessions during which participants worked in small groups to generate ideas about how Old Town/Chinatown could look and feel in the future. Each table was assigned a note taker and an urban designer to facilitate the discussion and sketch ideas.

The first session focused on developing alternative district-wide concepts, taking into consideration desired land uses, transportation systems, open spaces and the public realm and green systems. In the second session, participants focused on developing more detailed concepts for smaller areas within Old/Town Chinatown, including: 1) the

North Park Blocks, Broadway and Burnside; 2) New Chinatown/Japantown and Union Station; 3) New Chinatown/Japantown and Broadway; and Skidmore/Old Town and the Waterfront.

A number of rough diagrams were produced at the charrette, which have been compiled along with the notes in an appendix to this report (available under separate cover). DAO Architecture and BPS staff used those original sketches and notes to develop the diagrams in section IV of

this report, which illustrate common themes as well as alternative approaches generated at the charrette.

### **Next Steps**

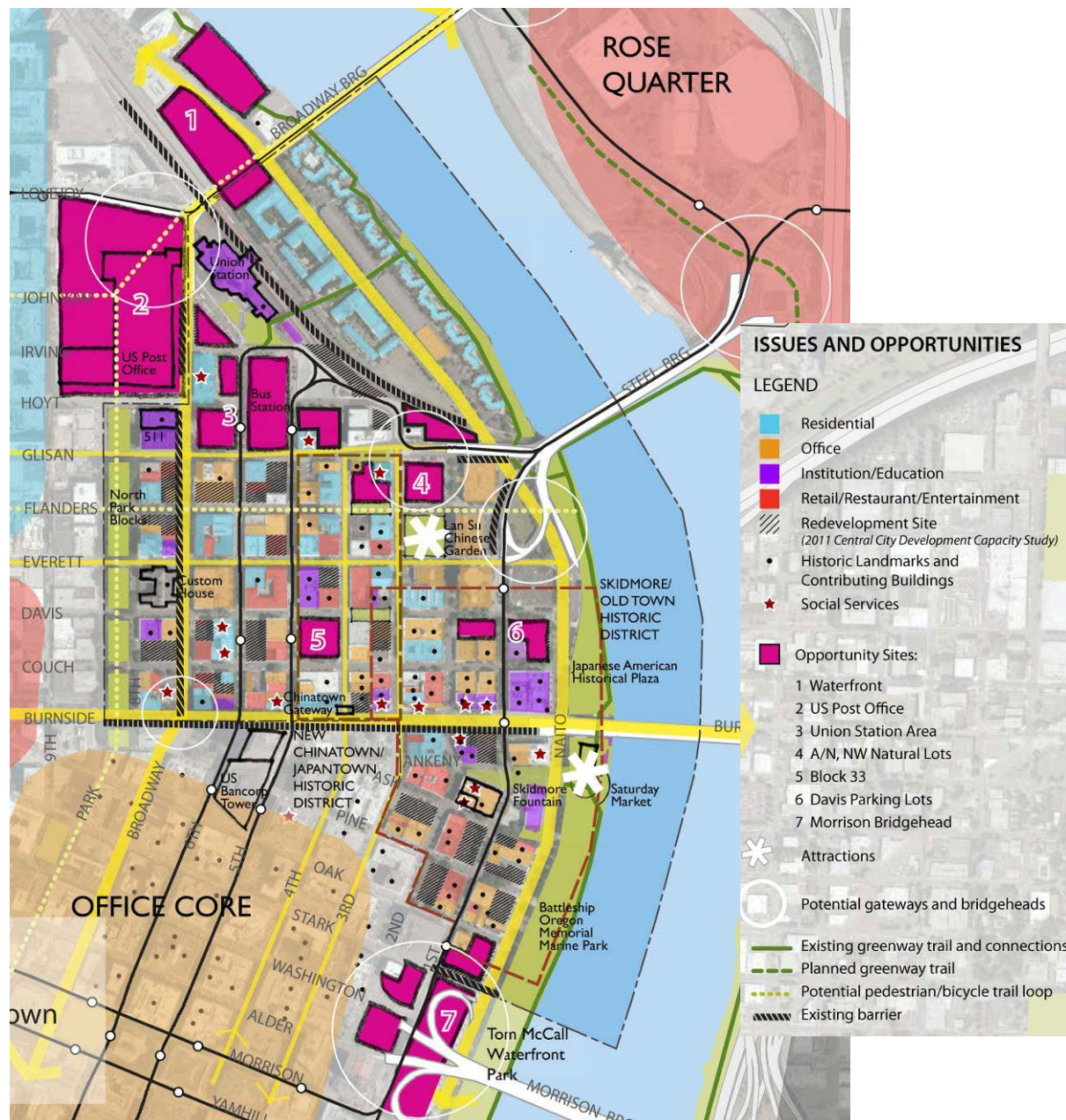
The results of the March 2013 events summarized in this report will be used to develop more refined planning and urban design concepts for the Old/Town Chinatown area as part of the larger West Quadrant planning process, including review and discussion by the West Quadrant Stakeholder Advisory Committee in May and a week-long West Quadrant-wide charrette planned for June 10-15, 2013.

## II. Issues and Opportunities

To begin the Old Town/Chinatown planning process, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability staff compiled information about existing conditions and interviewed community members and stakeholders to identify issues and opportunities that should be considered in the planning process. Identified issues and opportunities are presented below.

### Issues and Opportunities Map

Based on preliminary input, staff prepared a Issues and Opportunities map to serve as a starting point for discussion at the March planning events. The map highlights key features or places that draw people, contribute to district identity, or represent future opportunities or challenges.



## Summary of Identified Issues and Opportunities

Below is a summary of issues and opportunities in the Old Town/Chinatown study area of the Central City. It was compiled by Bureau of Planning and Sustainability staff based on a number of sources, including a series of interviews with Old Town/Chinatown stakeholders, a review of previous planning projects in the area, and the 2010 Central City 2035 Subdistrict Profiles report.

### Historic Districts and Neighborhood Identity

1. The Old Town/Chinatown area includes two overlapping but distinct Historic Districts: Skidmore/Old Town (a National Historic Landmark) and New Chinatown/Japantown, that have some of Portland's oldest commercial structures and evoke Portland's early history.
2. The current planning direction for the Skidmore/Old Town district, most recently articulated in the Ankeny/Burnside Development Framework, emphasizes preservation of historic structures while supporting new development that sensitively responds to the historic urban fabric of the Cast Iron era for which it is known.
  - Recent projects such as the Estate Hotel, Musolf Manor, University of Oregon Portland Center, Mercy Corps and the Oriental College of Medicine have successfully renovated and seismically improved historic buildings and begun to increase the district's vitality.
  - Implementation of some recommended regulatory changes, including the adoption of updated historic design guidelines and proposed height changes, remain unresolved.
3. The overall direction for the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District is not as clear. The identity of the district is more tied to its ethnic and cultural significance, as opposed to historic buildings per se, and it continues to face long-term challenges including disinvestment, lack of infill, complicated ownership structures, and the shift of Portland's Asian communities away from the area.
  - Several new ideas about the future direction of New Chinatown/Japantown have emerged in recent years, including expanding its identity to encompass Pan-Asian themes, modern Asian design aesthetics and the promotion of entrepreneurship.
  - It's not clear how these concepts fit with a more traditional approach to historic preservation and they could imply the need for changes to the regulatory framework in the district.

### Neighborhood Vitality and Development Energy

1. Old Town/Chinatown has a large number of older and historic buildings that are underutilized (particularly on upper stories) and in need of seismic and fire-life-safety upgrades and other significant reinvestments. In many cases, achievable rents in the area do not support rehabilitation of these structures without significant subsidy.
2. Surface parking lots consume a significant portion of the two historic districts. These "missing teeth" in the built fabric reduce street-level activity and negatively impact the area's identity and sense of place.
  - Redevelopment of vacant and surface parking lots is an important component for revitalizing the area. Additional strategies and incentives may be needed to encourage redevelopment of these lots while also addressing the parking needs of businesses, residents and attractions such as the Lan Su Chinese Garden, Portland Saturday Market and the nightlife entertainment.
3. A number of buildings in new Chinatown/Japantown have multiple, often absentee, shareholders, complicating efforts to renovate the structures.



4. Development regulations, including height and floor area ratio (FAR) limits and historic design guidelines, appear to be inconsistently applied in Old Town and may be discouraging new development. Current maximum heights and would extend very tall buildings from downtown north through parts of Old Town/Chinatown and across the Willamette River into the Lloyd District.
  - Within Old Town/Chinatown, this pattern raises the issue of whether this is the appropriate scale within and adjacent to the two historic districts.
  - On the other hand, some property owners have indicated that existing entitlements within the historic districts are too low to justify new development on vacant parcels, many of which produce stable, low-risk income streams as parking lots.
5. A vibrant entertainment and nightlife scene has emerged in Old Town, enlivening the area late at night (particularly on Fridays and Saturdays) but creating inactive storefronts during the day.
  - Currently Old Town pedestrian activity is very episodic, with the greatest activity during weekend nights. This area lacks sufficient density and diversity of activities to support both active daytime and nightlife.
  - The nightlife scene creates public safety concerns, contributes to problems with vandalism, and generates conflicts with nearby housing.
6. There is a large supply of affordable housing in Old Town. Market-rate housing is limited and little new housing has been constructed in recent years. A number of stakeholders have indicated that a more diverse mix of housing affordability would improve Old Town's livability, public image and business environment.
7. Most of the major public and private development and infrastructure projects in the past decade have relied significantly on the use of Urban Renewal funding. However, the availability of urban renewal funds will decrease dramatically and will be more narrowly focused in coming years. The need for new and creative funding mechanisms has been identified.
8. Block 33 (Jack's Chinatown Parking site) is a full-block redevelopment site in the center of New Chinatown/Japantown. New development on this lot could have a catalytic impact on investment in the district.
9. The Old Town/Chinatown Business Association hasn't been active recently, although the recent reincarnation of the Old Town/Chinatown Neighborhood Association into the Old Town/Chinatown Community Association may reinvigorate business participation in the association, similar to the successful model used by the Lloyd Community Association. Previous studies have identified the need for an additional management entity or entities that could assist with public space programming, district advocacy and marketing, security, parking and transportation coordination and small business assistance.
10. Old Town/Chinatown is a part of the Central City's emerging "Creative Corridor," a collection of synergistic creative businesses and institutions anchored by higher education institutions such as the University of Oregon and Pacific Northwest College of Art.

### **Public Perceptions and Safety**

1. A variety of social services are located in Old Town, providing critically important services in a highly-accessible location. However this concentration attracts elements that present challenges to the area's residential and business environment and makes attracting new private investment more difficult.
2. Many of the area's social service providers, with significant public investment and critical collaboration have improved their buildings and operations in recent years, solving some of the problems of large queues awaiting services on the streets. However, some providers of

services to the homeless still attract crowds of clients on the street creating a negative environment for retail and commercial activity.

3. The active entertainment and nightlife scene has increased concerns about public safety in the area, including pedestrian-auto conflicts, noise, public intoxication and vandalism.

### **Broadway and Union Station**

1. The development energy of the highly successful Pearl District has not spread east of Broadway into Old Town/Chinatown.
  - Some stakeholders have noted that NW Broadway doesn't feel like it is a part either Old Town or the Pearl District and have identified the need to better connect the two districts while improving the character of Broadway.
  - Others have indicated that Old Town and the Pearl District each have assets that the other doesn't have and that planning and public investment should look at these two areas holistically.
2. Union Station is one of Portland's signature landmarks and an important intermodal hub. The 1972 Downtown Plan recognized Union Station as the transportation hub for inter- and intra-city transportation travel. Over the last 25-years, this hub function has been reinforced by the Greyhound Bus Terminal, Transit Mall, and improved rail service between Eugene and Vancouver, British Columbia. However, Union Station is in need of significant renovation and Greyhound has greatly diminished its service resulting in an under-utilized facility.
  - The Union Station area has significant redevelopment potential, including Block R (former Trailways bus terminal site), and potential redevelopment of the Greyhound terminal and the Post Office sites.
  - The Clock Tower at Union Station is an important visual landmark in the district.

### **Parking**

1. Historic buildings in this area were generally built during the streetcar era, without on-site parking. Surface parking lots scattered throughout Old Town provide parking for workers and visitors. As these lots are developed, parking demand will increase and supply will be reduced.
  - Parking demand has already increased as redevelopment has proceeded in the Skidmore area and stakeholders have suggested that a publicly owned parking structure (or structures) could alleviate this problem as new development occurs over time.
2. Unlike in parts of Downtown and the Pearl District that have larger numbers of residents and workers and a different balance of housing affordability, the restaurant trade in Chinatown relies primarily on customers from outside the district, especially for the after work and early evening periods.
  - The extension of metered on-street parking until 7:00 PM and on Sundays has hurt the restaurant trade in the area. Stakeholders have indicated that one of the reasons many Chinese restaurants have relocated to 82<sup>nd</sup> Avenue is the availability of free parking there.

### **Open Space**

1. The Lan Su Chinese Garden is an import asset for the Chinatown area and many stakeholders feel it is the "jewel" of Old Town, an important public attraction that needs

supportive new development around it. However, the garden is an inward-looking facility that does not meet all of the open space needs of the area.

- Stakeholders have identified the need for a new, more publicly accessible open space, such as a public plaza and/or pocket parks that could be created as part of new development proposals.

### **Connectivity and Transportation**

1. Over time, road projects have reduced access to the area north of Burnside and impacted the pedestrian experience along W Burnside. The widening of W Burnside in the 1930's created a barrier with downtown. The remnants of Harbor Drive highway, which was removed in the early 1970's still exist, including the ramps at the west end of the Steel Bridge, and the Everett-Glisan couplet.
  - In 2007, City Council adopted Resolution No. 36499 approving the Burnside-Couch streetcar couplet project. Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) is proceeding with smaller improvements to W. Burnside, which suffers from difficult pedestrian crossings and high traffic volumes, but the long-term future of the streetcar couplet project is unclear.
  - Potential street and ramp modifications at the west end of the Steel Bridge could provide new redevelopment opportunities, additional/improved crossings of NW Natio Parkway, improvements to the visual quality of the area, and increased overall activity in the area.
  - The completion of the NW 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Streetscape project improved the character of the Chinatown area, with added street amenities and the innovative Festival Street design for NW Davis and NW Flanders (between NW 3<sup>rd</sup> and NW 4<sup>th</sup>). However, vandalism, poor maintenance and a lack of consistent management and programming of the streetscapes have been a problem and the project has not stimulated economic development to the degree desired.
  - The MAX line on SW/NW 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. creates access issues for other modes of transportation on portions of the street.
4. Improving physical connectivity between Old Town/Chinatown and adjacent areas, including Downtown, the Pearl District and Waterfront Park can strengthen the vitality and economic health of the area. Opportunities could include:
  - Improvements to Davis and Flanders to reinforce connections with the Pearl District and Waterfront Park.
  - Strengthening 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> avenues to reinforce connections with the downtown area.
  - Implementation of the "Ankeny Walk of Fountains" concept to reinforce the connections between the Skidmore area and Downtown.
  - Improved pedestrian crossings and additional left turns on Burnside (interim improvements prior to full implementation of the Burnside-Couch Streetcar Couplet).

### III. Community Planning Forum Summary

The March 8 planning forum began with a brief staff presentation summarizing Old Town/Chinatown's history and existing policy framework. This was followed by two presentations meant to inspire participants to think about the future possibilities of Old/Town Chinatown. Peggy Moretti from the Historic Preservation League of Oregon discussed the value of historic preservation in defining the area's livability, sense of place and future success as a unique and historically rich part of the Central City. John Jay from Weiden+Kennedy followed with a presentation that explored the potential for Old Town/Chinatown to embrace the energy of contemporary Asian urbanism and design and the Central City's emerging "creative corridor," anchored by nearby institutions and businesses such as the Pacific Northwest College of Art, the University of Oregon, Weiden+Kennedy and others.

The remainder of the forum was devoted to small group discussions at tables staffed by a facilitator and a note taker. To kick-off the discussion, participants were asked to think about the following "big picture" questions:

1. What are most important community assets in Old/Town Chinatown? What distinguishes it from other parts of the Central City?
2. What elements of the past should be preserved and enhanced as the neighborhood grows and evolves?
3. What aspects of Old Town/Chinatown would you change or improve? What is missing?
4. What specific themes should we embrace in moving forward? What will make a real difference in the district?
5. What are the most pressing long-range issues the plan update should address?

#### Summary of Community Planning Forum Themes

The major themes of the discussions are summarized below. The notes from the individual tables are included in the appendix to this report.

#### District Strengths

1. Diversity of businesses, interests, cultures
2. History: cultural and architectural
3. Neighborhood soul/character/authenticity
4. Central location
5. Many stable, responsible social service providers

#### Opportunities

1. Much redevelopment potential—vacant lots and rehab opportunities
2. Broad (and international) appeal to creative sectors: arts, education, design, start-ups
3. Nightlife activity
4. Draw of Lan Su Chinese Garden

#### Issues

1. Access, Isolation - barriers: W Burnside, NW Broadway, NW Naito, railroad tracks
2. Financial infeasibility of building rehabilitation – inadequate incentives to close gaps-- new building is cheaper – surface parking lots are more profitable (and much easier).
3. Lack of pride of ownership – dirty, smelly, "unloved"

4. A few overcommitted, poorly-managed social services – contributing to street cueing and camping
5. Homeless and mentally ill on the streets
6. Crime: real and perceived.
7. Competition with Central Eastside?

### Ideas

1. Preserve cultural history:
  - Build on rich history, create “living” museum in district.
  - Need gathering space. (Or use festival streets more?)
  - Rehabilitate historic buildings
  - Create self guided walking tour
2. Foster economic development and investment:
  - New, Creative Asia – but what does it mean?
  - Heritage tourism focus: French Quarter, Disney, International Travelers
  - Capitalize on uniqueness in Portland: treat the two historic districts differently (i.e., 4<sup>th</sup> Ave restaurant corridor is key to Chinatown).
  - Preserve visible symbols, e.g. Chinatown Gate, signage
  - Address problem social services – reward/embrace responsible ones.
  - Marketing – change image
3. Diversify activities, go true 24/7, multi-generational, full-spectrum, etc:
  - Housing – market: workforce, middle and upper income. Ownership housing? Student housing? Risk of gentrification seen as fairly low since most social services providers and affordable housing is owned by agencies and much has been rehabilitated and preserved.
  - Get nightclubs to activate storefronts during the day.
  - Night market
  - Late night, all-night dining.
  - Need more activity, more of the time on the waterfront. Access, moorage, buildings?
  - Food market needed.
4. Encourage redevelopment:
  - More Catalytic Projects: attractions, such as a market, importance of Block 33
  - Identify what to preserve – most significant assets including architectural, cultural, symbolic... then let the rest be available for redevelopment.
  - Parking Strategy – required to allow development on surface lots
  - Seismic and other building rehabilitation incentives for existing structures

### Tools

1. Has to be organic. Don't mess it up by trying too hard or controlling it too much.
2. Organizational capacity – establish BID? Someone needs to manage the district.
3. In New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District, consider different approach: cultural and use approach to whole district, building approach only to select set of buildings to preserve.
4. Land assembly assistance on difficult blocks.

5. Development regulation flexibility – remove barriers (do we need rigid height and design requirements everywhere?)
6. Seismic assistance and investment in existing structures before new development.
7. Better pedestrian crossings of Burnside, Broadway and Naito to River.
8. Explore foreign investment.
9. City policy to stop concentrating very low income housing and social services in this district.
10. Replace parking, and phase-out surface lots.
11. Need to find new models of public-private partnerships.

## IV. Charrette Ideas and Concepts

The Old Town/Chinatown Concept Development Charrette took place on Friday, March 15, 2013. City staff and participants shared an overview of the Community Planning Forum that was held the week before. Following the discussion, staff highlighted issues and opportunities and the policy framework that guides the physical development of the area today. Six “Urban Design Approaches” and examples from comparable districts and places around the world were presented to help to inspire concept development during the breakout sessions.

Two breakout sessions took place where four tables of five to ten people generated concept alternatives for land use, transportation, and open space systems with an urban design facilitator. During the first breakout session, participants were asked to think broadly about the entire district, either using any of the “urban design approaches” that were presented or developing their own. Participants discussed and drew concepts based on the following questions:

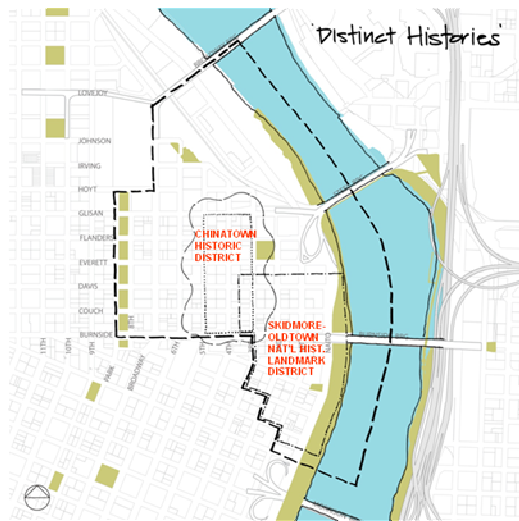
1. What/where is the land use mix that should be encouraged?
2. What/where is the desired character and scale of development?
3. Where/how should the districts/ history be emphasized and strengthened?
4. What/where are the community priorities for private development that should be encouraged? Examples: open space, desired uses, green/sustainable development
5. What/where are the community priorities for streets? Examples: quieter, busier, more parking, gateways, flexible open space/festival
6. What/where are the community priorities for public spaces? Examples: open space, streetscape, gateways, connectivity, safety
7. What/Where do other physical challenges present opportunities in the district?

During the second breakout session, participants focused on small areas within the district to refine concept alternatives and discuss potential priorities and implementation ideas.

### Urban Design Approaches

The urban design approaches were intended to serve as a starting point for discussion and perhaps suggest new ways of looking at the district. They were generated prior to the charrette to convey and build on ideas from stakeholder interviews, existing policy, issues and opportunities, as well as the Community Planning Forum. While each of these approaches conveys a distinct idea, none of them are mutually exclusive.





**Distinct Histories.** This approach recognizes the historic architecture and patterns of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District and highlights the cultural history, identity and energy of the New Chinatown/Japantown Historic District. Each place conveys separate and distinct histories that tell their own unique stories. The idea builds on Peggy Moretti’s presentation during the forum, as well as many of the prior stakeholder interviews in Old Town.

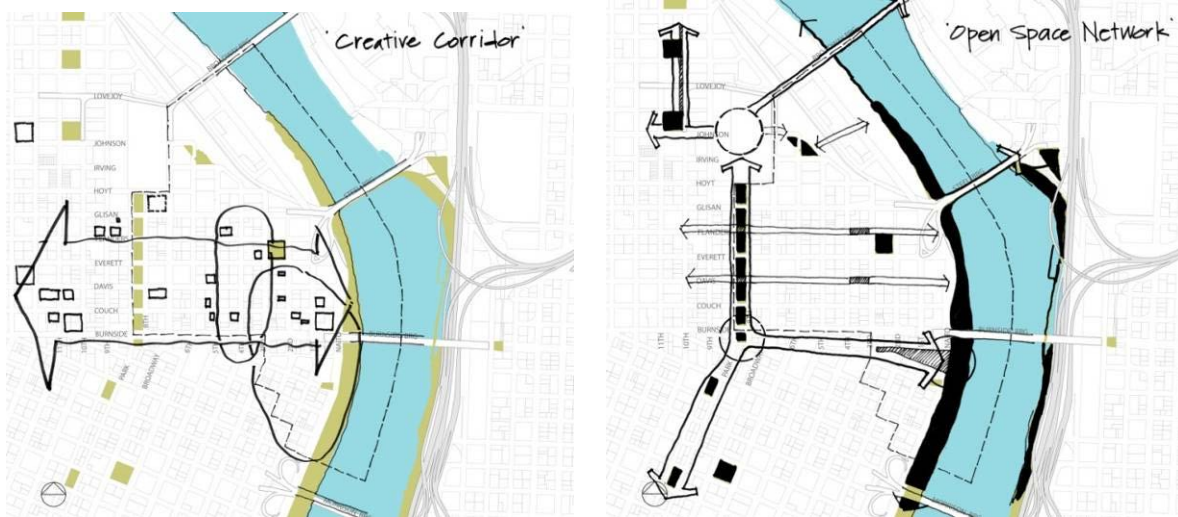
**Catalytic Opportunities.** This approach points out that several opportunities exist within the district and along its edges for major catalytic development. Underutilized and vacant parcels which today create gaps in the urban fabric can have the potential to define, shape, and transform the smaller areas that comprise the district as a whole.



**Westside Hinge.** Old Town/Chinatown is currently entitled with height and development intensity that was intended to visually bridge the two highest and most intense districts in the Central City: the Downtown core and the Lloyd District. It is also surrounded by many distinct areas: the Pearl District to the West, the Downtown to the south, and the Central Eastside and Rose Quarter east of the river, begging the question of whether the Old Town/Chinatown district will assert itself as a uniquely defined district in its own right or be absorbed by the forces that surround it.



**Nightlife District.** This approach highlights the area’s unique role as a nightlife location for bars, clubs, restaurants, and energy well into the late hours. This attraction brings opportunity by serving as a hub for nightlife and urban vibrancy, while creating a challenge of balancing the needs of businesses and residents and extending the district’s activity during the daytime hours.



**Creative Corridor.** Building on John Jay’s presentation of Portland’s “intangible brand” and the collection of creative businesses and institutions in and near Old Town/Chinatown, this approach offers a more focused framework along NW Couch Street to support the creative energy while helping it to grow and survive organically.

**Open Space Network.** Old Town/Chinatown’s signature open spaces: Lan Su Chinese Garden, Tom McCall Waterfront Park, and the North Park Blocks are poised to better connect to each other and beyond the district to attract more visibility, wayfinding, and gathering into the district. SW Ankeny, with its “Walk of Fountains,” and the NW Davis and NW Flanders Festival Streets can help to weave these spaces together and provide a “park-like” setting for the neighborhood where the potential for more future park space is uncertain.



## Charrette Results

The diagrams presented in this section were developed based on the rough conceptual sketches and discussion notes produced at the charrette. They were created by grouping common themes and ideas that were generated during small group discussions. A compilation of the original charrette diagrams and notes are available in the appendix to this report (available under separate cover).

The diagrams are organized into two categories: 1) district-wide concept diagrams that cover overarching themes for the whole district and 2) small area diagrams that illustrate more specific ideas for smaller geographic areas.

The diagrams include:

### District-Wide Concepts

- Uses
- Connections
- Open Space and Green Systems

### Subarea Diagrams

- Broadway / North Park Blocks / Union Station
- Burnside
- Skidmore
- Chinatown / North Waterfront
- North Chinatown



**District-Wide Concepts: COMMON THEMES for Uses and Connections**

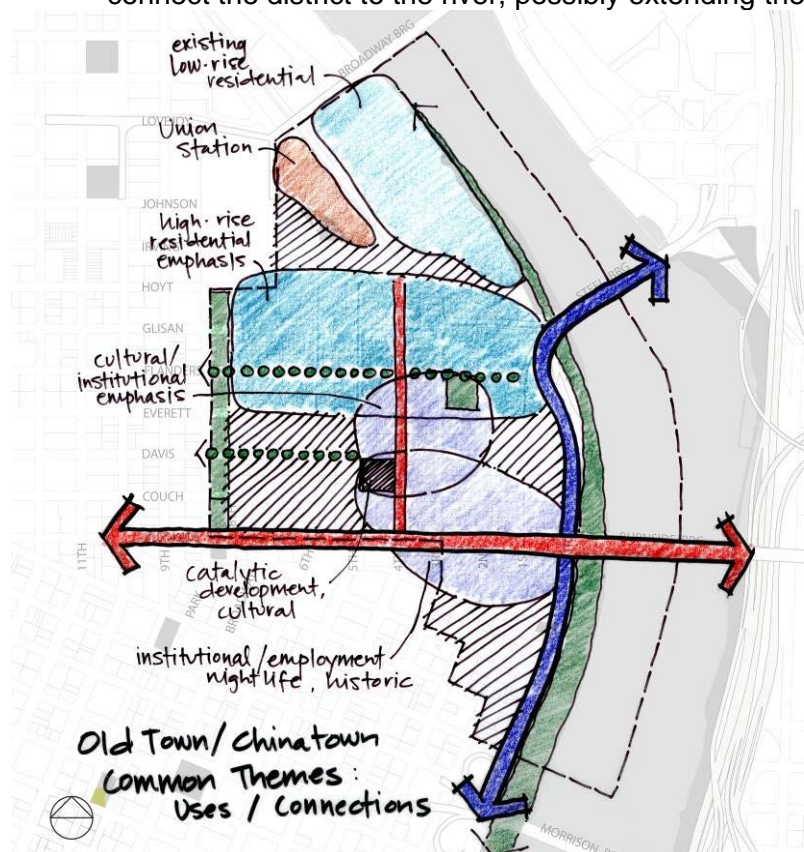
Small group discussions generated several alternatives for a mix of uses and street character in Old Town/ Chinatown. Because charrette participants discussed several different choices, these alternatives are summarized on the following two pages. Below is a list and map of common themes from each of the discussions.

**Uses:**

- Areas west from the Steel Bridge along NW Glisan and north of NW Everett should contain a high density residential emphasis
- A cultural “hub” includes areas around New Chinatown/Japantown’s Lan Su Chinese Garden and NW 3<sup>rd</sup> to NW 4<sup>th</sup> and Block 33 (surface parking lot at NW 5<sup>th</sup> & NW Couch).
- Block 33 is a key catalytic parcel that should include a cultural emphasis
- The nightlife hub in the area of Skidmore Old/Town north and south of W Burnside into New Chinatown/Japantown should be buffered on the north side with uses compatible with nightlife activity
- Skidmore/Old Town District should reflect the historic cast iron character
- Uses surrounding the six higher-education institutions such as PNCA’s future home at 511 NW Broadway and U of O should leverage them and include a student housing mix

**Connections:**

- W Burnside is an important commercial corridor
- NW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue should have a district-scaled retail main street emphasis
- NW Davis, NW Flanders, and SW Ankeny should be strengthened in their roles to connect the district to the river, possibly extending the Festival Street character.



The map highlights areas where common themes arose. The hatched areas depict places where broader consensus was not reached. Several ideas and alternatives were discussed and explored, and those areas will need further exploration.

Alternatives for Uses and Connections are shown on the following pages.

**District-Wide Concepts: *COMMON THEMES for Open Spaces***

Small group discussions generated many ideas for open spaces in Old Town/ Chinatown. The choices that charrette participants discussed are combined and summarized below.

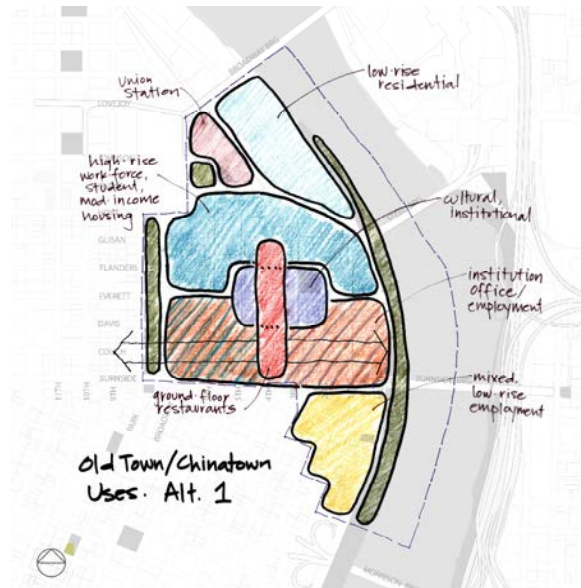
**Open Spaces:**

- NW Davis and NW Flanders should be continued and emphasized as quieter pedestrian and bicycle-focused streets, extending the Festival Streets west to the North Park Blocks and east to the river.
- NW 3<sup>rd</sup> should include a pedestrian emphasis from the entry court of the Lan Su Chinese Garden to the potential new Living History Museum, along Davis and to the Chinese Gate on NW 4<sup>th</sup> and W Burnside.
- Block 33 should include an open space feature through either a courtyard or wider setbacks to allow for gathering.
- NW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue should consider wider setbacks on new development to allow opportunities for gathering.
- SW Ankeny should continue its pedestrian emphasis, linking Saturday Market to the southern end of the North Park Blocks
- The North Park Blocks should continue through a redeveloped US Post Office site, west to the Tanner Park Blocks along NW Johnson

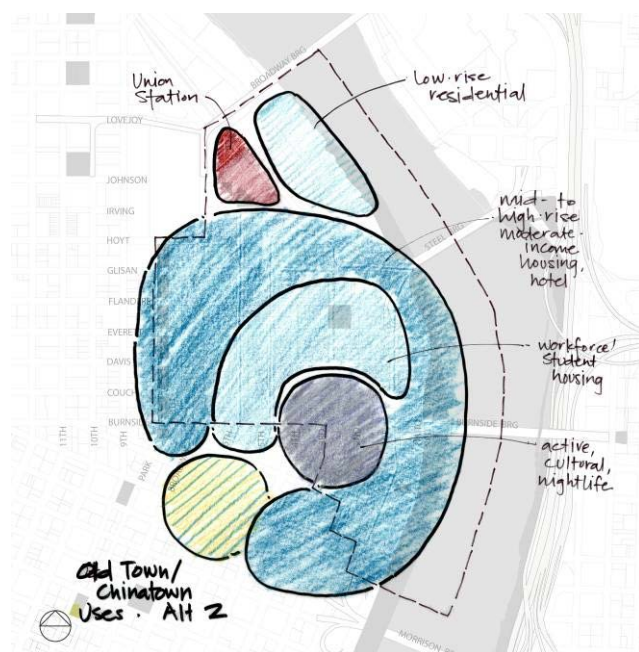


### District-Wide Concept Alternatives: USES

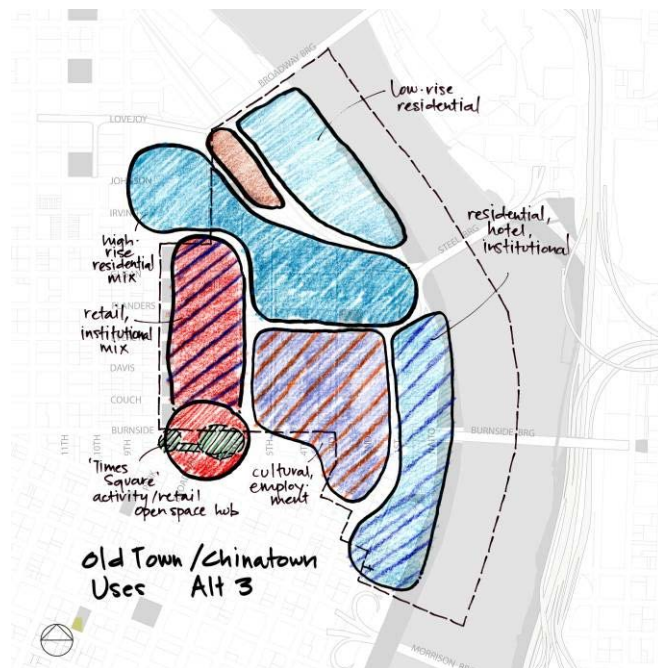
Each of these Concept Diagrams reflects a big idea or grouping of big ideas generated during the charrette for the types of uses desired district-wide.



**Alternative 1** builds on the “Creative Corridor” concept with emphasis on institutional and employment along Couch as a buffer to the nightlife activity in Skidmore/Old Town. High-rise workforce, student, and moderate income residential is a focus for areas along NW Glisan, wrapping around the North Park Blocks and mixing with employment in the Couch “Creative Corridor”. NW 4<sup>th</sup> is desired to serve as a more robust “main street” for Chinatown/Japantown with active uses, such as restaurants and retail, along the ground floors. The area surrounding Lan Su Chinese Garden and the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center to a potential “Multicultural Museum Block” on NW 3<sup>rd</sup> between Davis and NE NW Everett is desired to become a more established cultural/institutional heart of the Chinatown Area. This nexus hinges on a new, active NW 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue at Block 33.



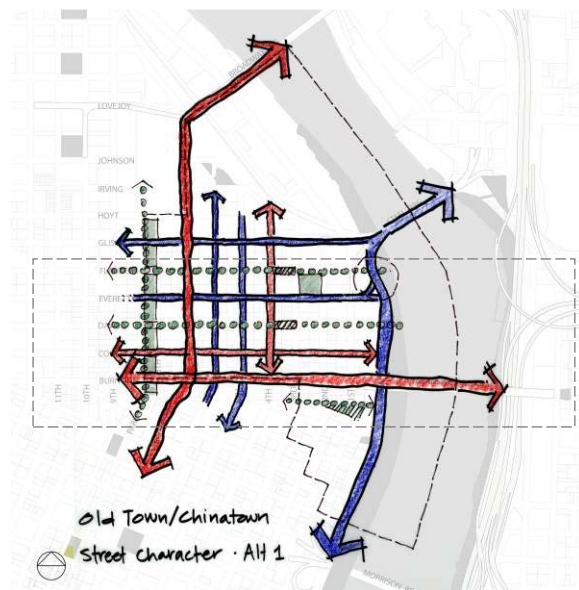
**Alternative 2** offers a more conceptual organization for uses within the Old Town/Chinatown District. The focus for nightlife activity and culture roughly centers on the intersection of the two historic districts and along SW Ankeny. Buffering this active use area to the north and west was envisioned to include workforce and student housing. The next layer of the concentric ring, further from the center of nightlife activity, is mid-to high-rise moderate income housing, reaching from the North Park Blocks north to NW Glisan and wrapping along the waterfront back around to meet housing in the downtown core.



**Alternative 3** illustrates high-rise residential following NW Glisan from the Steel Bridge and through the current US Post Office site beyond the district. Some residential uses follow the waterfront along with hotel, supporting U of O and OCOM. Along Broadway, the focus is retail uses supporting the institutional emphasis of areas around PNCA. The nexus of Broadway, North Park Blocks, and Burnside culminate in a “Times Square” activity node that includes some retail and open space. The historic districts broadly include cultural and employment uses.

### District-Wide Concept Alternatives: CONNECTIONS

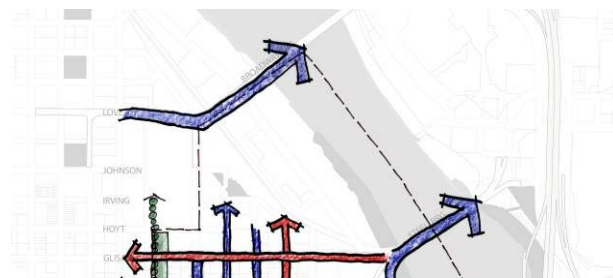
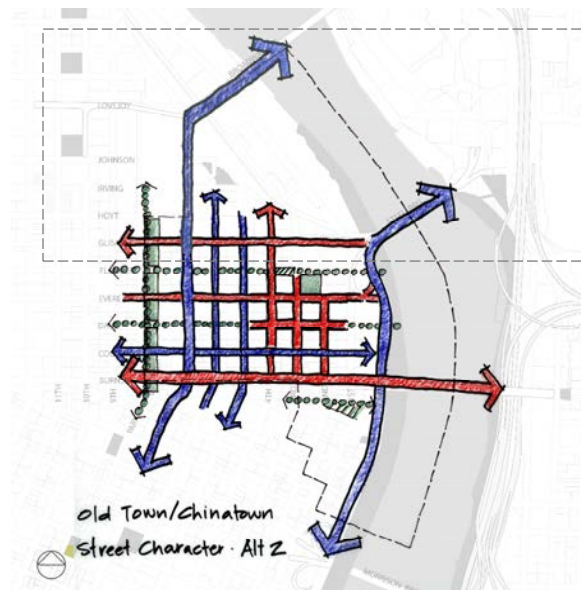
These diagrams reflect big ideas generated during the charrette for types of connections and the street character desired district-wide.



**Alternative 1** shows Burnside and Broadway as large retail/commercial streets that continue beyond the district. On a smaller scale, NW Couch and NW 4<sup>th</sup> are the district’s retail/commercial-focused main streets. NW 4<sup>th</sup> is reestablished as a two-way street to increase visibility and support Chinatown’s ground floor restaurants and retail uses.

NW Naito maintains its large tree-lined boulevard character, and at a smaller scale, NW Everett and NW Glisan are a unified couplet with a greener canopy. New development on NW Glisan may allow wider, greener setbacks, which are compatible with residential uses. NW Davis and NW Flanders are greener, more park-like streets, continuing beyond the Festival Streets to connect the North Park Blocks to the water.

**Alternative 1b** shifts the retail focus of NW Couch to NW Davis at Block 33 as its pivotal point.

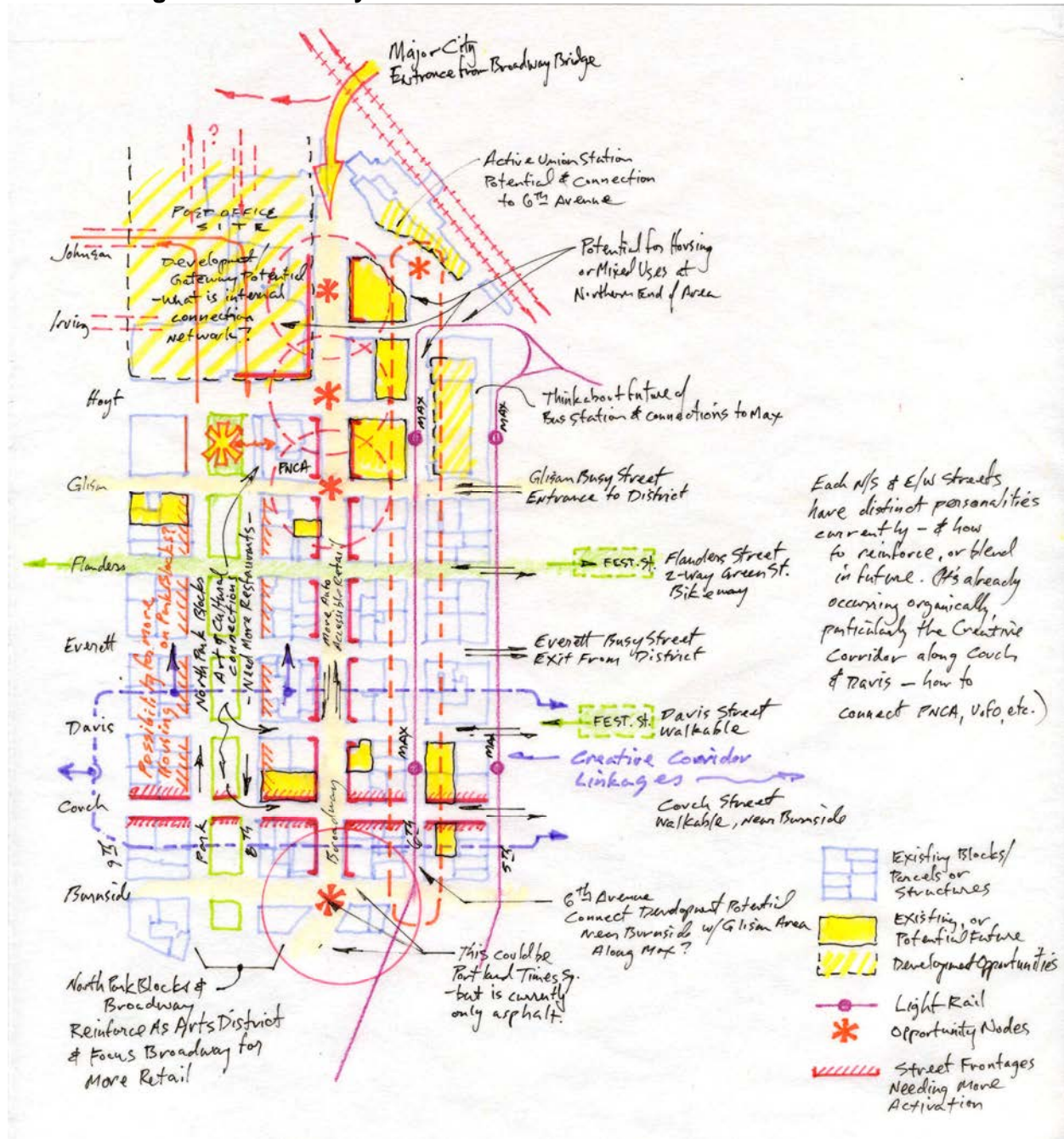


**Alternative 2** shows NW Broadway with less of an active retail/commercial function. W Burnside remains a significant high volume commercial/ retail street. In this scheme, NW Glisan and NW Everett take on a district-scaled retail and commercial character, along with NW 3<sup>rd</sup> and NW 4<sup>th</sup>.

As with Alternative 1, NW Naito maintains its large tree-lined boulevard character. In addition, NW Davis and NW Flanders serve as greener, more park-like streets, continuing their presence beyond the Festival Streets and connecting the North Park Blocks to Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

**Alternative 2b** suggests vacating NW Broadway to the east of the US Post Office parcel and diverting traffic to the west.

**Subarea Diagrams: Broadway / North Park Blocks / Union Station**



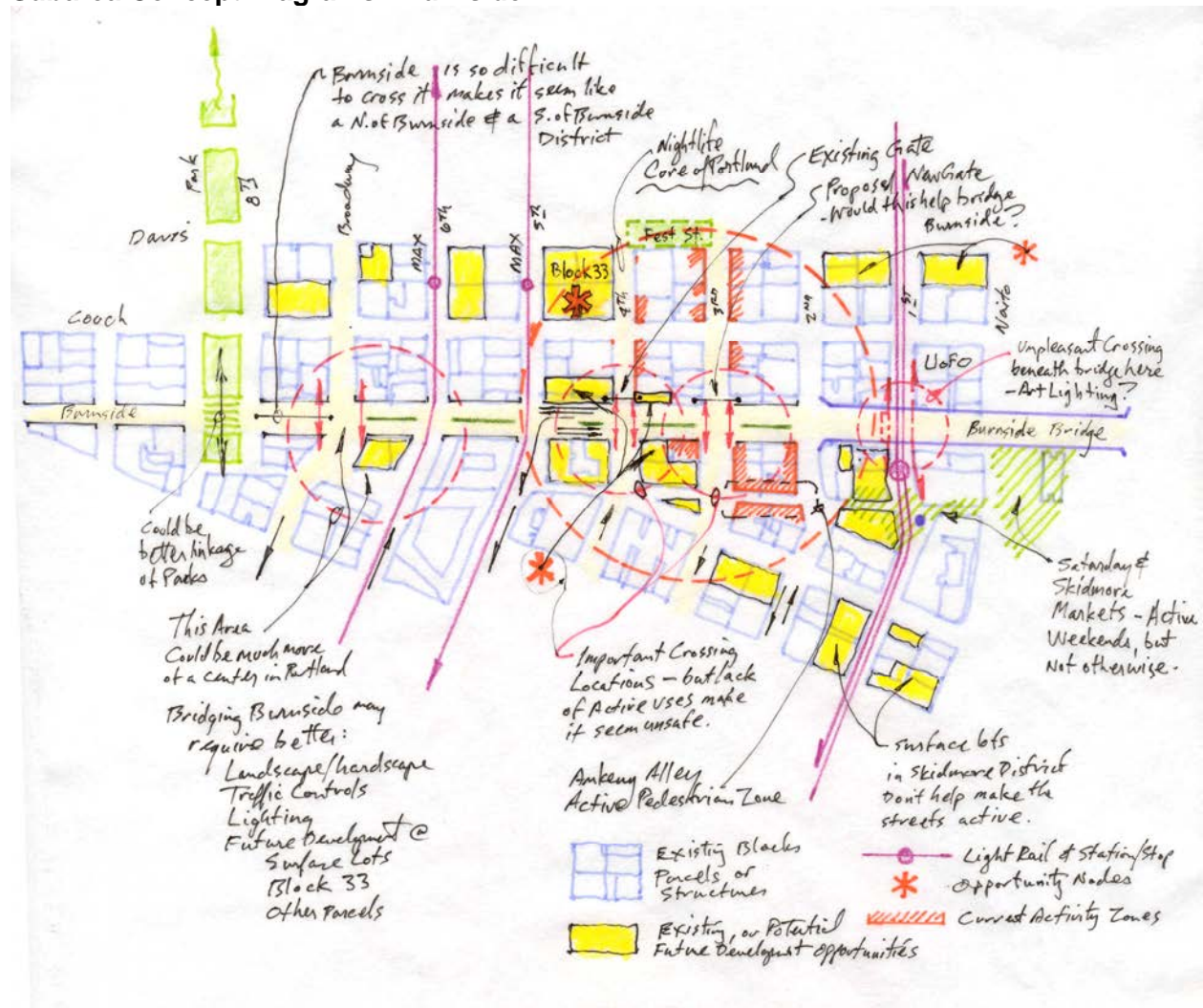
**Broadway / North Park Blocks / Union Station:** This subarea illustration focuses on the north/south avenues and east/west streets surrounding the stretch of Broadway north of Burnside. Each street and avenue currently has a distinct personality, with Broadway serving as a busy, important gateway to the City, parallel to the quieter environment of the North Park Blocks, and the transit mall on 6th Avenue. Currently NW Davis, and especially NW Couch, are hubs for the Creative Corridor, stretching from PNCA Avenue in the north to the University of Oregon and other educational venues in Chinatown to the east.

- Identify opportunities to improve NW Broadway's pedestrian environment, development character, safety, and traffic



- Possibility for NW Broadway to continue the Bright Lights district concept leading from the Broadway Bridge to downtown
- Focus on ways to reinforce the Arts District already occurring organically along Broadway
- Begin to consider how the Post Office site will enable connections to the north and west of this area
- Look at the possibility for higher density housing in the north of this area, among the opportunity parcels surrounding Union Station
- Create more of an ambience at the intersection at Broadway and Burnside, analogous to Times Square in activity and unusual parcels

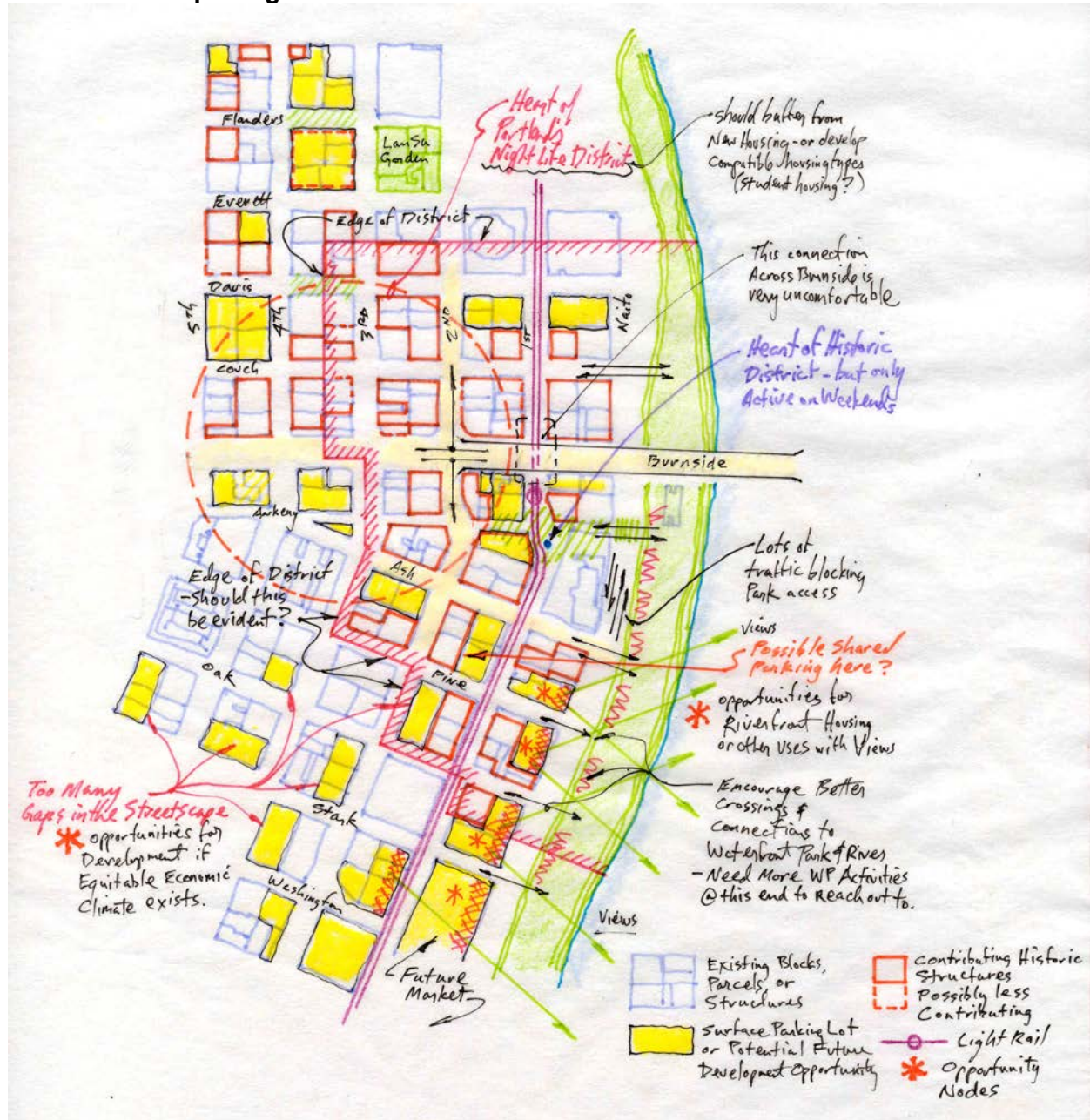
**Subarea Concept Diagrams: Burnside**



**Burnside:** West Burnside is a busy arterial, with difficult pedestrian crossings, creating a clear north-south division in the district. On the north side, there are good activity zones along the NW 4th Avenue Restaurant Row; Ankeny Alley serves as pedestrian zone to the south. Portland’s main nightlife attractors are in this area, both north and south of Burnside. There are many strategic intersections where increased activities could aid in linking the north to the south, but currently vacant parcels, or inactive or unsafe uses make these crossings uncomfortable.

- Burnside’s pedestrian crossings could be facilitated by improvements in the street’s hardscape, landscaping, traffic controls, lighting, etc.
- Look at possibilities for enhancing the important intersection of Burnside and Broadway
- Focus energy on making the most of crossings at 3rd and 4th Avenues, possibly with a complementary Japanese Gate at NW 3<sup>rd</sup>
- The crossing under the approach to the Burnside Bridge at 1st Avenue is dark and feels unsafe
- Redevelopment of the surface parking lot at Block 33 could catalyze development in the district
- There are many other surface parking lots that don’t contribute to surrounding street activity

**Subarea Concept Diagrams: Skidmore**

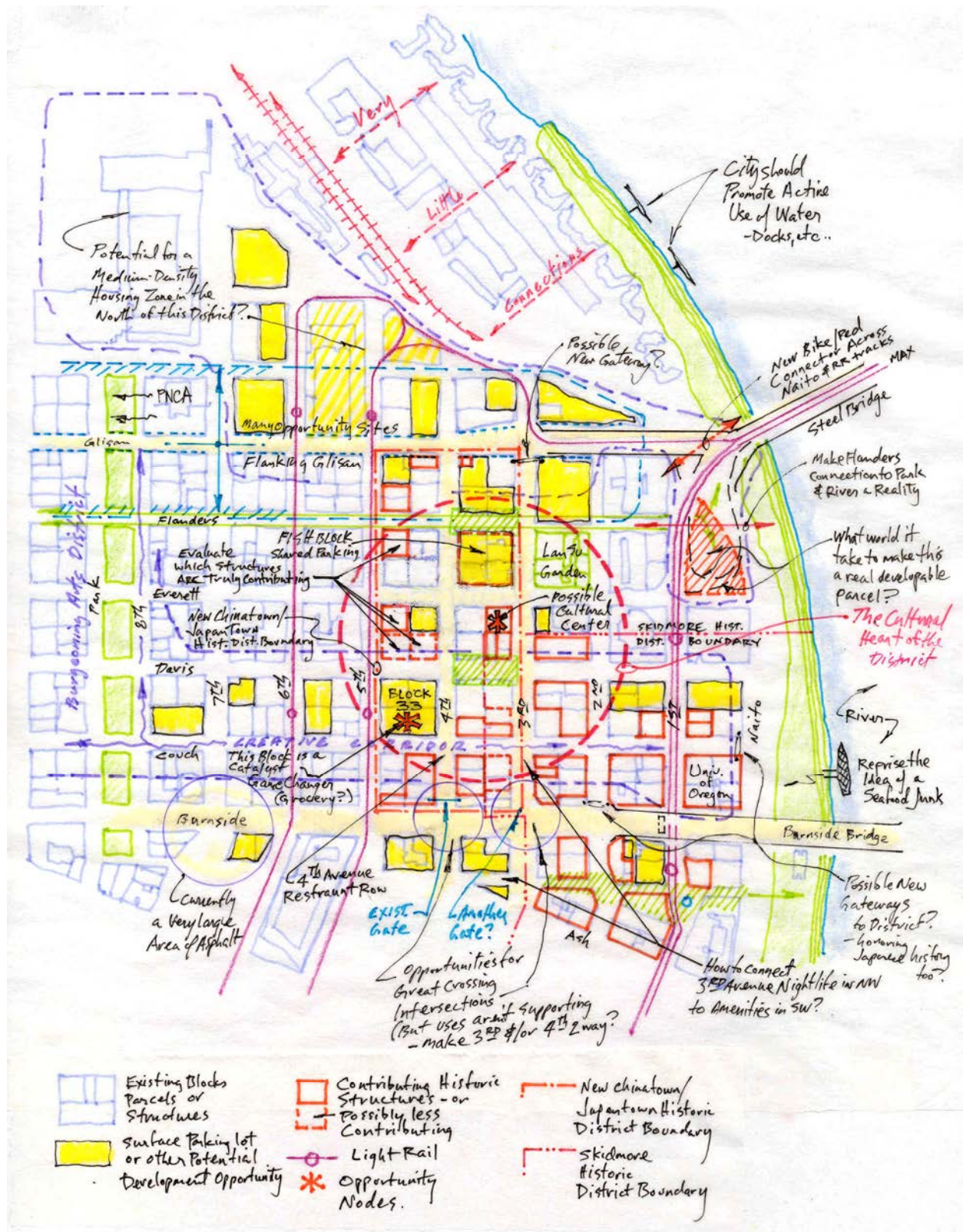


**Skidmore / Waterfront Park:** This subarea diagram focuses on the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, with its many historic structures, interspersed with numerous surface parking lots. Opportunities to entice redevelopment of these surface lots was a focus of the discussions, as the district would benefit from additional housing or other uses to activate the streets. Portland's nightlife center is within this subarea, bisected by Burnside. A parking strategy to replace the surface parking would benefit the area, as well as additional activities within the portion of Waterfront Park adjacent to the historic district.

- A focus was to reinvigorate this once-active walkable neighborhood by filling in the gaps in the fabric (the myriad surface parking lots)
- Changing the economic climate is necessary to redevelop surface lots, as the high income stream from parking use currently discourages redevelopment

- Encourage new development along Naito to take advantage of river views and help bring activities to this portion of Waterfront Park
- Support historic structures by activating surrounding parcels and streets
- Increased height may be a possibility outside the historic district, to make the edge of the district perceivable
- The Skidmore Fountain is the heart of Historic Portland, but the surrounding plazas are only active on portions of the weekends

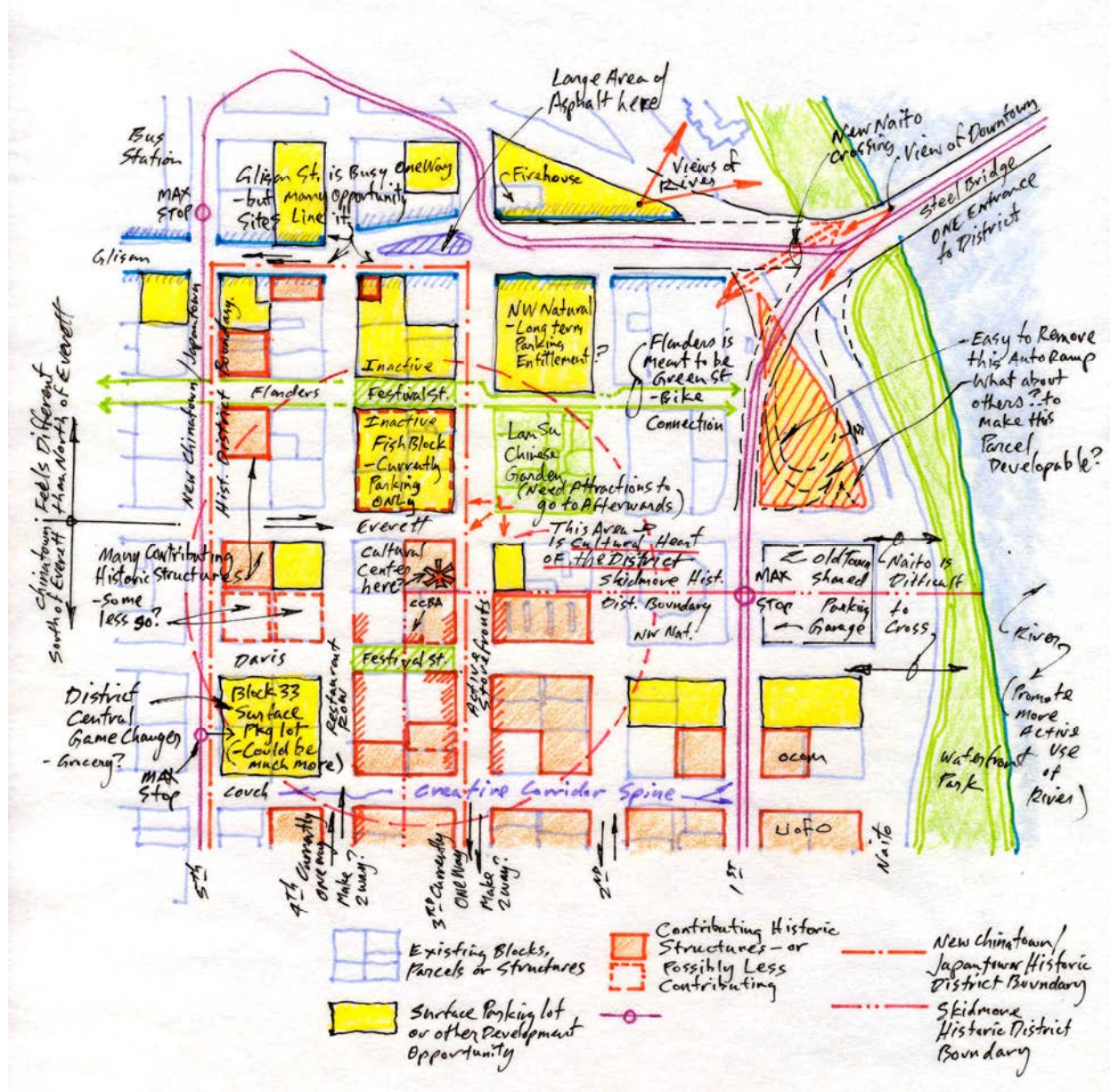
Subarea Concept Diagrams: Chinatown / North Waterfront



**Chinatown / North Waterfront:** Chinatown has long been a culturally rich and diverse part of Portland, and is increasingly becoming a major part of the Central City's Creative Corridor. A goal for redevelopment opportunities will be to create a synergy between these aspects, while reinforcing the district's unique character of small-scale and grain of development parcels. Opportunities for higher density housing occur at the northern portion of this area, primarily north of Everett. The north waterfront, NW Glisan Street, and NW 3rd and NW 4th Avenues all present possibilities for increased development and increased density of activities.

- Reinforce the creative corridor uses naturally moving into the area along NW Couch and NW Davis, anchored and supported by major institutions, and link across W Burnside to activity zones to the south
- Development of Block 33 and the adjacent parcels would make a huge difference to the district; consider cultural uses, a grocery and new open space.
- New development should also be encouraged on the vacant parking lots within the district with fewer economic or code hurdles
- Explore whether changing 3rd and 4th Avenues to 2-way streets would slow traffic, increase visibility and access to and within the district, and enhance pedestrian and retail activity
- Create a better sense of entry to Chinatown from Steel Bridge on NW 3rd and NW Glisan through signage or gate

**Subarea Concept Diagrams: North Chinatown**



**North Chinatown:** The portion of Chinatown north of Everett has a different ‘feel’ than the area to the south, with regards to the scale of development, focus of uses, and percentage of redevelopment opportunity sites, particularly along NW Glisan and NW Flanders Streets. The southern portion of Chinatown, with its activity zones along NW Couch and NW Davis helps support the creative corridor organically occurring and linking the educational venues in the area. Reinforce the existing truly contributing historic structures, but some currently listed may serve the district better as re-development opportunities.

- Increased height may be a possibility on some parcels, whereas some other parcels may be over-entitled (too much FAR or height)
- It may be beneficial to re-evaluate some of the contributing structures within the New Chinatown / Japantown Historic District

- Ways to physically connect NW Flanders to the river while creating a more developable parcel on the site of the Steel Bridge Ramps should be explored
- As a major cultural hub, establish additional activities to reinforce visitors' experience surrounding the Lan Su Garden especially connecting it south along NW 3rd to the potential future cultural museum and along activity along the NW Davis Festival Street and future retail/restaurants on NW 4th
- Old Town Parking Garage and Fish Block covered surface lot are currently well-used. A parking strategy, as well as management entity, or Business Improvement District may be beneficial to serve the area.



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