

West Portland Town Center Plan



What we heard:
Discussion Draft Engagement Summary
February 2021

Introduction

This WPTC Plan Discussion Draft Engagement Summary is a recap of public engagement and feedback received during the October 20 – December 3, 2020 engagement period. An appendix includes all the survey responses.

The October 2020 *Discussion Draft* of the WPTC Plan was the *first* public draft of the Plan. Staff will consider feedback on this draft as we prepare the next draft of the plan, the *Proposed Draft*, expected in Spring 2021. The *Proposed Draft* will be considered by the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC), which will take public comments/testimony and deliberate on the proposal. The PSC will then deliberate and make a recommendation on the Plan to City Council, which will be the *Recommended Draft*. City Council is expected to take public testimony on the WPTC Plan starting in Fall 2021.



This graphic provides an overview of the project's engagement timeline through Fall 2020.

Engagement Overview

This section summarizes public engagement activities for the WPTC Discussion Draft including general quantitative results and observations. BPS staff engaged with community members during this period with the following approaches:

- An online open house (opened Oct. 21, 2020, and still viewable online: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b376ba274a024d868d5fdfebc39460cd
- An online survey (opened Oct. 21 and closed on Dec. 3, 2020; see results below).
- Informational presentations and conversations at standing community meetings and BPS-hosted/co-hosted events, including a Neighborhood House Forum, Somali Youth Conversation and Neighborhood Association meetings (13 in total; see table with details below).
- Newspaper and online articles about the project promoting the online open house and presentations/meetings.
- Social media posts on Facebook, Twitter and NextDoor.
- Staff office hours.

Centering racial equity in engagement

The project team considered racial equity and accessibility in the development of the design and content for the online open house and survey. The virtual open house was created with the Story Maps interface and highlighted some of the project's equity-oriented goals and "big ideas", including some that originated from engagement with community based organizations. This approach allowed the team to break down the proposal into meaningful sections and illustrate the ideas effectively, successfully preparing participants to answer the survey questions from an informed standpoint.

Online open house, survey response and email correspondence

Around 480 people visited the online open house and 190 of these filled out the online survey. Of the 190 survey entries, 113 also provided comments as part of their responses.

Twenty six (26) emailed letters/comments were received; 19 from individuals and 7 from organizations.

Demographics

The survey included a series of demographic questions to help us understand whether the engagement strategies reached a fair cross section of the population, particularly underrepresented communities, as well as any difference in responses by demographic characteristics. While this data is available for the survey, it is not for emailed responses/feedback nor for comments made during community presentations. Therefore, the demographic information is helpful to understand the audience and feedback, but it only applies to the online survey responses.

In general, the demographic responses showed that a broad range of community members participated, including lower income and BIPOC community members. (Find all the demographic responses in the last pages of the overall survey results in Appendix A – WPTC Plan - Discussion Draft - Survey Results.) Relative to citywide demographics participant representation showed there was:

- Over representation of homeowners, higher incomes, and single-dwelling residents.
- Under representation of renters or apartment residents, and low income.
- Respondents were racially and age diverse; however, Arab and Latinx households were under-represented.

Other demographic highlights include:

- The age of respondents was well distributed between the ages of 18 to 74, with the majority of respondents in the 25-34, 35-44 and 45-54 categories.
- English was by far the language most spoken at home (81.5%) and Somali was the second most noted (10%). Other languages such as Swahili, Spanish and Arabic were also represented but in smaller percentages.
 - Note that the survey did not allow for selection of more than one language, making the results potentially less representative.
- The majority of respondents identified as white (67%). Seventeen percent (17%) identified as Black or African American, 5.75% as Latinx/Hispanic 5.75%, and 5% as "other." Arab, Asian, Native American/Alaskan and Pacific Islander were also represented in smaller percentages.
- Household incomes in all categories were represented, but a majority were in the higher income brackets, with 39% reporting "\$90,000-\$199,999" and 13% reporting "over \$200,000."
- 12% live with a disability.
- 71% own their homes, and 28.9% rent.
- 73% live in a house while 24% noted they live in an apartment.

Lower rate of low-income and renter participation

Though Covid-19 and quarantine necessitated online engagement activities – which are less accessible and engaging for lower income residents – there was still a good level of participation across the community. The level of participation in the survey by BIPOC communities reflects the early engagement by Community Alliance of Tenants, HAKI Community Organization, and Unite Oregon during Phases 1 and 2 (see How We Got Here graphic above). Community engagement in these earlier phases was funded to specifically include direct engagement of local renters, lower income households, and BIPOC communities. That early engagement helped shape the resulting Community Goals and some of the big ideas.

This phase of engagement did have resources for engaging tenants of nearby apartment buildings, but Covid-19 response required that our partner organizations re-allocate time to meeting more urgent needs of residents, e.g., HAKI began providing food boxes for residents

every Thursday afternoon. The project team is still hoping to fill in gaps with additional focused outreach to renters through HAKI's membership network.

Presentations and community meetings

The following table shows the public presentations provided by the WPTC Plan team during the engagement period. All the presentations and community meetings were conducted online, as necessitated by the State and City's Covid-19 pandemic health guidelines. Generally, the online community meetings were better attended than the BPS-hosted online events.

Group	Date
SWNI LU Committee	10.20.20
Neighborhood House Community Forum	10.27.20
Tryon Creek Watershed Council	11.9.20
Ashcreek Neighborhood Association	11.9.20
Multnomah Neighborhood Association	11.10.20
Crestwood Neighborhood Association	11.11.20
BPS-hosted WPTC Plan online information session #1	11.12.20
West Portland Park Neighborhood Association	11.12.20
BPS-hosted online office hours	11.13, 11.16 and 11.18.20
BPS hosted WPTC Plan online information session #2	11.18.20
BPS-hosted WPTC Plan online information session #3	11.19.20
BPS-hosted WPTC Plan Somali youth conversation	11.20.20
SWNI Equity Committee	11.23.20

"Office hours" were also offered for people to speak one-on-one with staff about their property, ask questions or share concerns about the proposed plan. During this phase of engagement – despite a strong social media push – these online opportunities were used lightly. However, this meeting type will be offered again during the *Proposed Draft* phase, which will include direct mailings to all property owners, who may want to take advantage of this type of resource then.

Public Feedback

The following sections provide the key take-aways from our engagement efforts, along with a summary of the online survey responses – for both closed-ended and open-ended questions - and the other comments received. Appendix A, which shows the results of the survey questions in bar graph and numeric form, and provides tables documenting all the comments made.

Key take-aways

This section reflects key findings and themes from all the data, including consideration of both the survey (closed and open-ended questions) responses and comments received via email or at meetings.

- 1. Significant support by survey respondents (70%) and commenters for the Shared Growth concept and addition of multi-dwelling zoning to the area.
- 2. Racial equity goals and related big ideas received the most support, including creation of a multicultural hub with affordable housing, human services, and cultural amenities (79%).
- 3. Addressing displacement and affordable housing are still top community priorities, including the plan's tools for encouraging the retention of existing affordable apartments (80% support) and building new affordable housing.
- 4. Lack of funding for street, stormwater, and parks infrastructure was the most frequently cited concern in survey and email comments.
- 5. Desire for more commitment to funding community development and infrastructure, including consideration of timing (early *and* later), who pays (government *and* private developers) and relationship to planned land use changes.
- 6. Desire for the Plan to *more* strongly prioritize safer and better ways for people to get around instead of car-oriented investments.
- 7. The Plan did not articulate the community's top transportation priority ("Crossroads" intersection Barbur/Capitol/I-5) and parking policy or considerations sufficiently.

Online survey results

The survey posed 10 questions, followed by demographic questions and a catch-all "other comments" opportunity. Eight of the questions related to the key elements and goals of the proposal, including ways some elements of these might be prioritized. The other two questions asked about characteristics of the town center area to 1) inform further development of a Design review character statement, and 2) get feedback on the aspirations and amenities in the area.

Questions 1 through 4 each focused on one of the Plan's nine goals and one big idea and asked participants to say whether they liked the idea, could live with the idea, wanted to see it changed or choose "other" with explanation/comments. The results for the first four questions described here reflect both the straight distribution of responses and a second aggregated response. The aggregated "true" result incorporates the responses of those who selected

"other," based on the content of their comments, into one of the three (like, live with, or change this) categories. See **Appendix A** for full survey results.

QUESTION 1 | Safe, comfortable, and accessible ways to get around | **Big Idea:** Green Ring

Of the 190 survey respondents, 186 answered this question. The majority of respondents (67.7%) selected the "like this" response, 10.2% selected "can live with this," 4.8% selected "want to see this changed," and 17.2% selected "other" and provided a comment.

Using the content in the "other" comments provided, the total responses reflect the following aggregated results:

78% "like this," 10% "can live with this," and 12% "want to see this changed"

Some quotes from respondents who provided comments include (see Appendix A for all responses):

- The City of Portland MUST HOLD DEVELOPERS RESPONSIBLE FOR CONSTRUCTING SIDEWALKS ON PROJECTS.
- I like this goal and support it BUT the first word I see is "FUND" and I see no funding planned or guaranteed with the increased density planned for WPTC.
- I realize this is a long-term planning effort, but critical portions of the necessary active transportation system remain vaguely defined with an equally cloudy implementation schedule. For example, how many more years will the city and ODOT kick the Barbur/I-5/Capitol Hwy. can down the road?
- List transit before cars in the Goal.

QUESTION 2 | More housing choices | **Big idea:** Create a shared growth plan to provide more multi-dwelling housing in the area over time.

Of the 190 survey respondents, 189 answered this question. The majority of respondents (59.8%) selected "like this," 5.8% selected "can live with this," 9% selected "want to see this changed," and 25.4% selected "other" and provided a comment.

Using the content in the "other" comments provided, the total responses reflect the following aggregated results:

70% "like this," 5% "can live with this," and 25% "want to see this changed"

Some quotes from respondents who provided comments include (see Appendix A for all responses):

- This addresses our long history of exclusion
- SW must take its fair share of housing. Don't let the NIMBYs stop this again like the SW DISTRICT PLAN!?
- City council should do this everywhere

- WE need economically integrated multi-family housing development, so that people of different classes and races can interminate culturally and economically.
- Very important to consider parking
- Please don't displace residents
- We don't want high rise buildings to replace single homes.
- I like this AND it is critical to protect existing affordable housing and include regulations that new multi-dwelling units have dedicated low-income or affordable units.
- Identify school expansion needs and green space as population density increases
- I do think changing from single family residential will destroy the integrity of Multnomah Village and surrounding areas.
- love this, but people want to live on a "livable street." Add transit, bike lanes and sidewalks AND reduce personal motorized vehicle lanes.
- More concentrated housing without addressing infrastructure issues would be disastrous.
- I agree with the goal, but am not convinced this plan is the way to accomplish this.

An analysis of the of those survey respondents who like (support) or dislike (want to see change) the shared growth plan revealed demographic differences:

- Survey respondents who support the shared growth plan have similar demographics to the town center and citywide population.
- Those who dislike the shared growth plan are more likely to be homeowners, white, live in single-dwelling housing, and older than those who like the plan. They have similar income ranges, but 40% of "dislikes" did not disclose their income.

Age		
Like (N=133)	Dislike (N=33)	
Over 55		
26%	42%	
Under 55		
74%	58%	

Tenure		
Like (N=132)	Dislike (N=35)	
Own		
66%	89%	
Rent		
35%	11%	

Race		
Like (N=130)	Dislike (N=33)	
White		
66%	88%	
ВІРОС		
32%	12%	

Housing Type		
Like (N=132)	Dislike (N=35)	
House		
70%	91%	
Apartment		
30%	9%	

QUESTION 3 | Opportunities for community and cultural spaces to thrive | **Big Idea:** Create a multicultural hub at Barbur Transit Center.

Of the 190 survey respondents, 188 answered this question. The majority of respondents (67.6%) selected "like this," 8% selected "can live with this," 7% selected "want to see this changed," and 17.6% selected "other" and provided a comment.

Using the content in the "other" comments provided, the total responses reflect the following aggregated results:

79% "like this," 8% "can live with this," and 13% "want to see this changed"

Some quotes from respondents who provided comments include (see Appendix A for all responses):

- I like the idea, but as noted above, there needs to be robust improvement for pedestrians and cyclists to support this. Also, it seems a bit contrary to the health objectives to have intense development between the Barbur/I-5 air/noise pollution sources.
- I am on board. Clearly a need to serve these communities with targeted action. But the language in the plan sounds as if these spaces would not be open to other people (I am sure this is not the intention).
- This is very necessary and honestly quite overdue!
- Totally unnecessary there are more than enough community spaces (Multnomah Arts Center, Islamic Center, schools, parks, etc.) already.
- I wholeheartedly support this idea (Multi-cultural Hub). We need more affordable housing, especially for BIPOC communities.
- Can ODOT donate this land to get this great idea (Multi-cultural Hub) going soon?
- love it, but who has the resources to build and sustain it?
- A multicultural hub would also be a destination that could increase parking needs. Please consider creating more parking here.

QUESTION 4 | Address displacement | **Big idea:** Encourage the retention of existing apartment buildings serving low-income households.

Of the 190 survey respondents, 188 answered this question. The majority of respondents (69.2%) selected "like this," 7.5% selected "can live with this," 5.3% selected "want to see this changed," and 18% selected "other" and provided a comment.

Using the content in the "other" comments provided, the total responses reflect the following aggregated results:

80% "like this," 8% "can live with this," and 12% "want to see this changed"

Some quotes from respondents who provided comments include (see Appendix A for all responses):

• Why hasn't this happened yet? The housing strategy was passed two years ago

- The plan should be to assist current renters purchase via co-op, condo conversion, etc.
- Yes low income and minority groups should be protected but also the single family homes that have been there for years.
- A lot of communities that have lived in this area for almost 30 years are currently being displaced because of current development. please address this as well as how you will be supporting people who will have to temporarily leave until more low income housing is available.
- Total pipe dream Support non-profits how? with financial support?
- The careful retention of the existing RM1 where these affordable apartments are now is a good plan. I hope this will help preserve affordability.
- The city should not encourage the slum like living conditions by preserving these
- Again this is a nice idea, but how does it fit with the current model of development, which is the Developers' Profit Maximization Model?
- One very important way to address displacement is through investments in workforce development for residents currently in the area.
- Build public housing. It's that simple.

<u>Questions 5 through 8</u> asked respondents to consider and provide their priorities about transportation projects, public benefits provided by development, and supporting community and economic development efforts. In some cases, respondents did not rank all the options provided but selected a few top choices. (See Appendix A for all responses.)

<u>QUESTION 5</u> - The plan prioritizes public benefits in future privately developed mixed-use buildings, starting with the mandatory provision of a minimum amount of affordable housing and improved infrastructure. How would you prioritize additional public benefits? [The following options were provided]:

- Daycare and community services
- Affordable commercial space to support small, local businesses
- Indoor community event space and meeting rooms
- More affordable housing than currently required
- Outdoor space for community events and gathering

Of 190 respondents, 182 answered this question. The top three public benefit priorities were:

1) more affordable housing than currently required; 2) affordable commercial space to support small and local businesses; and 3) daycare and community services.

QUESTION 6 - Funding for community and economic development projects is currently limited in SW Portland. However, if new funding for community and economic development were secured, how would you prioritize its use? [The following options were provided]:

- Develop affordable commercial space to support BIPOC entrepreneurs.
- Support existing business owners of color, immigrants, women founders, and other under-represented minorities along the SW Corridor.

- Provide residents with financial literacy skills and wealth-building investment opportunities.
- Purchase and retain the affordability of existing apartment buildings serving low-income households.
- Connect residents from the town center's BIPOC and immigrant communities to workforce training programs and opportunities, with a focus on youth employment.
- Develop large community event spaces.
- Develop a multicultural marketplace similar to the Mercado on SE Foster.

Of 190 respondents, 172 answered this question. The top three community and economic development priorities selected were:

- 1) Purchase and retain the affordability of existing apartment buildings serving low-income households.
- 2) Support existing business owners of color, immigrants, women founders, and other under-represented minorities along the SW Corridor.
- 3) Develop affordable commercial space to support BIPOC entrepreneurs.

QUESTION 7 – Funding for transportation improvements is limited. Please help government agencies prioritize their spending. Which of these transportation projects are most important? [The following options were provided]:

- A "Crossroads" intersection plan with solutions for walking and biking safely
- Barbur Boulevard walking and bike improvements
- Taylors Ferry (north of Barbur) walking and biking improvements
- Huber Street walking and biking improvements
- Capitol Highway/South walking and biking improvements
- New "Greenscape" standards to bring more trees and pedestrian-friendly features to key areas of the town center's high-traffic commercial streets
- Collins Avenue re-aligned and built as a commercial main street
- A "Green Ring" route around the town center offering a safe & comfortable way to access schools, parks, shopping, and transit.
- New pedestrian (walk/bike) bridge across I-5 near Luradel Ave.

Of 190 respondents, 173 answered this question. The top three transportation projects were: 1) "Crossroads" intersection; 2) Barbur Boulevard; 3) Taylors Ferry (north); and 4) the Green Ring. The "Crossroads" intersection was also selected first priority in the majority of responses.

QUESTION 8 – Which of these ideas are most important to you for building and maintaining community cohesion? [The following options were provided.]

- A community garden at Jackson Middle School
- A multicultural hub with gathering space (indoor and outdoor) for cross-cultural community events
- Public art expressing the multicultural identity of the area

- A new full service City park
- Community events to build relationships, bringing together neighborhood associations and organizations led by or working with the town center's immigrant communities

Of 190 respondents, 175 answered this question. Overall, "a multicultural hub" and "a new full service park" scored the highest.

Questions 9 through 11 were open-ended questions that asked for input on special community landmarks and places and suggestions for features or materials that would support inclusivity as the town center redevelops, as well providing a catch-all "other" comments opportunity.

QUESTION 9 – Are there special landmarks or places (such as social centers, artwork, buildings or open spaces) in the community that should be recognized or referenced by future development?

Of 190 respondents, 69 answered this question. Many comments noted the trees and open spaces in the area, including those on school sites, the mosques and library, along with Barbur World Foods as landmarks to consider in future redevelopment of the area.

QUESTION 10 - What features, materials or spaces should future development incorporate to foster diversity and inclusivity? Examples could include water features and fountains, murals, or plazas.

Of 190 respondents, 73 answered this question. Many comments pointed to inclusion of murals and cultural art, plazas and welcoming public spaces, community gardens and water features. Other suggestions included open-air markets, outdoor music, outdoor seating, green infrastructure, family friendly spaces and playgrounds, historical signage, recreational/athletic fields (like Duniway Park), wayfinding system, restoration of streams, more but smaller parks, and green spaces. Consideration of existing topography, trees (work sidewalks around trees for example) and co-locating amenities to maximize benefit/impact were noted by some as well.

QUESTION 11: Other comments?

57 respondents provided additional comments. Those comments covered a broad array of topics, and levels of detail. The full text of all responses can be read in Appendix A. A sampling of quotes from respondents that provided comments under the "other" option include:

- Keep it simple with easy ways to walk/bike around.
- This plan is racially biased and chooses to use public funds to specifically benefit one group or races over others. This is just wrong and anti-white bigotry. It should be race and culture neutral. We should not discriminate.
- Commitments to BIPOC and creating affordable housing (land deeds, community organizations purchasing low-income apartments) should be tied to liberalization of zoning rather than requiring that just the minimum number of affordable units be created.

- The idea of offering training options for adults will be important, especially as our neighbors age and the jobs change.
- This plan was developed pre-Covid and it shows. It should be shelved and we should wait to see what the post-Covid world will be like.
- 1-5 created a huge wound across West Portland and I would like to see energy/focus on having ODOT remediate these damages.
- Consider covering a part of I-5 where public space can be built upon.
- Increased green space to improve conditions of Tryon Creek headwaters.
- As long term effort we need to think about the design issues and possibilities created by the non grid character of Southwest Portland.
- This is by far a well intentioned and thought out process. Much more input from diverse communities is still needed.
- Focus on developing employers/employment opportunities in the neighborhood. Does the plan offer a diversity of zones suitable for small fabrication or manufacturers or training for tradespeople?
- Demand that the Barbur TC be reserved for mixed-use hub. A parcel of that size already graded is a valuable asset adjacent to the epicenter of the community.
- Biking and supporting safer modalities of transit that is in line with carbon reduction
 goals is absolutely critical for fostering diversity and economic vitality. We desperately
 need a safer---less exclusively car-centric Barbur and Capital Highway. It's beyond bad.

Email comments summary

A total of 26 emailed comments or letters were received. The majority of emails were from individuals (19) while seven were from organizations, including the SW Equity Coalition, Fair Housing Council and three of the neighborhood associations in the town center area. A number of comments were also noted from 11 community meetings during the engagement period. Both emailed and meeting comments are summarized and excerpted in this section.

The zoning proposal is mentioned in 28 of the 38 comments. Six commenters express clear opposition to the zoning proposal, but the majority (22 out of 28) either support the proposal or link their support for the zoning proposal to infrastructure improvements (e.g., bike/ped facilities, stormwater, greenspace/recreation, transit/light rail).

- We MUST act quickly to protect multi-family affordable housing options and increase access to affordable housing. The WPTC Plan does this.
- The City must follow through on promises of investment. That investment must come in the form of infrastructure--to create safe routes to school, places of worship, and jobs.
- It would be reckless and irresponsible to allow more infill without this important infrastructure and safety improvements.
- This will increase the density in the area, without providing the proper infrastructure to handle all the new people in the neighborhood.
- With the failure of Metro's transportation bond measure in November 2020 we hope the WPTC plan will be revised to acknowledge the lack of high capacity transit service in

West Portland Town Center. This [current] level of transit service is not sufficient to support the density proposed in the Discussion Draft plan.

Infrastructure deficiencies in the study area are mentioned in 22 of the 38 comments—the second most often mentioned issue next to the zoning proposal. The lack of funding to improve infrastructure is repeatedly mentioned.

- Until the Capitol Highway reconstruction is finished sometime in 2022, there's no consistent stormwater management until one gets to Multnomah Village.
- Concerned about funding for transportation and stormwater improvements. Impacts of not making these improvements. Without alternative safe ways to get around, cars will continue to dominate in area.
- There is not adequate public funding for pedestrian and bicycle safety infrastructure.
- Build sidewalks! Along Taylor's Ferry. All the way to 62nd. Think...about bicyclists and bicycle access to WPTC.

Parking is the third most mentioned issue in the comments (12 out of 38 comments). All of the comments about parking suggest that parking is not adequately addressed in the plan.

- Mandate off-street parking if there is not at least standard transit service within ¼ mile of the new development.
- We are concerned about proposals to upzone properties that are far from transit service which results in more car-dependent households. We oppose the lack of offstreet parking that will create more pressures on narrow streets that have no curbs or sidewalks or bike lanes.

Displacement and affordable housing are mentioned 15 and 17 times, respectively. The comments are almost unanimous that displacement (13 out of 15) is a risk and should be addressed, and that more affordable housing is necessary.

- The vision for the area is far-reaching, and I appreciate the goals of equity and inclusion for underserved communities. I also agree with the goal of providing more affordable housing here in Portland.
- The City Council must not let the real threat of displacement of frontline communities be defined and co-opted by those not experiencing these impacts on the frontline and by those who may otherwise benefit based on economic power they may hold in these neighborhoods.
- Help local organizations such as CPAH build more affordable housing in the general vicinity of WPTC. Even if SW light rail never gets built, BTC is still a transport hub.
- Although investments in parks and greenways can accelerate gentrification
 if nearby affordable housing is not protected, the Plan does a good job of
 addressing displacement by protecting and investing in safe and affordable
 housing.

In addition to the lack of infrastructure, some of the comments that express concerns about the zoning proposal relate their concerns to displacement of existing residents or the affordability of housing for existing residents.

- While this plan is admirably focused on addressing an important issue in our city – the general lack of affordable housing in Portland – it is important that it does so in a responsible way which does not harm the residents already living there.
- The WPTC plan for increased density will eliminate most of the single-family zoning along major transit routes. The result is displacement of the current residents.