



## Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

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November 30, 2020

Mayor Ted Wheeler  
Commissioner Chloe Eudaly  
Commissioner Amanda Fritz  
Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty  
Commissioner Dan Ryan  
Commissioner Mary Hull Caballero

Dear Mayor Wheeler and City Commissioners:

We are pleased to return to you with amendments to the Macadam Character Statement. These edits are in response to requests from both Commissioner Fritz and Commissioner Hardesty, as well as the South Portland Neighborhood Association (SPNA). On November 13, staff met with the SPNA to discuss revisions to the Macadam Character Statement, and on November 24, staff received additional comments from Commissioner Hardesty. These amendments are detailed (using track changes) in a draft of the revised Macadam Character Statement (Attachment A).

### **Summary of changes**

Overall, there are 21 amendments to the document. These result from testimony provided at the November 4<sup>th</sup> hearing by the SPNA, a joint meeting held between BPS and the SPNA on November 13, and comments from Commissioner Hardesty on November 24<sup>th</sup>.

Aside from the more specific changes to language made in the document, staff wanted to specifically address 4 issues raised on the document's content:

1. ***Clarify the character of the three distinct sections of the Macadam area.*** To address this, staff included more descriptive language within the second paragraph of the Community Character section. The intent is to clarify why these areas are distinct and how development should respond to each, without limiting height or FAR allowed by right.
2. ***Provide more specifics on how development should respond to the riverfront and greenway.*** The SPNA was primarily concerned about how the character statement directed development to respond along the riverfront, greenway and setback. This also included how development allowed for views and access to the resource throughout the district. The majority of the amendments made, in collaboration with the community, address these concerns.



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3. **Clarify that these amendments are not intended to “preserve views” in Macadam at the expense of building more housing.** To address concerns from Commissioner Hardesty, staff included additional language to clarify that guidance to “preserve views” in the area, refers to public viewsheds and streets, not private views. The intent of the language is to make the riverfront area more inviting for everyone (not have one’s experience feel boxed in by development) and to preserve views down streets to the waterfront. Since the Macadam Character statement does not regulate height or FAR or density, it should not have any impact on housing.
4. **Add an intersection symbol at the intersection of S Richardson Street and S Macadam Blvd.** The SPNA requested a change to the map, to identify an existing pedestrian trail along S Richardson that also provides access across S Macadam Avenue. It is not meant have a substantive effect on development but is intended to support Citywide Design Guideline 01 by identifying where and how development can support and recognize community assets, like the riverfront and trails. They signal that development at these intersections, and along the corresponding streets, should provide access for pedestrians to help strengthen east/west connections within the district.

As a reminder, the City Council will be recommending the repeal of the Macadam Corridor Design Guidelines, and the adoption of the Macadam Character Statement to be applied with the *Citywide Design Guidelines*. The effective date will coincide with the effective date of the Citywide Design Guidelines.

We look forward to discussing this work more with you at the coming work session. In the meantime, please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

Thank you,



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**Links:**

[Macadam Corridor Design Guidelines \(1985\)](#)  
[draft Design Overlay Zone Amendment \(DOZA\) Citywide Design Guidelines](#)  
[River Plan/South Reach Proposed Draft](#)

**Attachments:**

- A. Draft Macadam Character Statement (word document)



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Recommended Draft: Updated to reflect testimony provided at the November 4<sup>th</sup> hearing by the South Portland Neighborhood Association (SPNA), a joint meeting held between BPS and the SPNA on November 13, and comments from Commissioner Hardesty on November 24<sup>th</sup>.

## **Attachment A.**

### **REVISED MACADAM CHARACTER STATEMENT TEXT**

#### **BACKGROUND: HISTORY AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Located between Portland’s West Hills and the Willamette River, the Macadam area is shaped by its proximity to the river, abundant natural resources, and the Central City. For centuries Native Americans, primarily the Calapooya peoples, lived and thrived here. The Willamette River was a primary transportation corridor and the riverfront area that is now Willamette Park was part of a large network of wetlands and a popular camping location during the salmon runs. Native Americans also hunted and collected berries, nuts and plants along the riverfront for sustenance and medicinal and cultural purposes. These activities remain central to Native cultures, but development has degraded vital resources and adversely affected Tribal customs, wildlife habitat and watershed health. Buildings have been located too close to the river, vegetation has been removed and the use of impermeable building materials has been unchecked.

From the mid-1800s to the early 1900s, European Americans settled along the north-south S Macadam Avenue and constructed a parallel railroad line. During Portland’s early growth much of the land between the Willamette River and S Macadam Avenue was occupied by industries that benefited from easy access to the river and the railroad. Commercial businesses emerged along the west side of S Macadam to support the industrial uses and residential neighborhoods developed to the west of the commercial corridor—in the hills with views of the river. As a result, the east side of S Macadam Avenue has large, irregular shaped lots and the west side has a traditional, well-connected block pattern.

Following World War II, much of the industry in the Macadam area relocated as technology improved and demand declined. Building boomed in the flat land between S Macadam Avenue and the river, as it was doing downtown and other close-in residential neighborhoods. In the 1970s and 1980s former industrial sites were transformed into multi-dwelling residential buildings, commercial office spaces and small shopping centers. These large sites focused their attention on the river and very few provided east/west connections that improved the district’s riverfront access.

Planning policies of the period emphasized new residential and commercial uses and encouraged auto-oriented, “campus-like” environments with many trees, deep street setbacks and public access to and along the river. This led to the creation of several significant waterfront residential developments, the greenway trail and Willamette Park, but it also resulted in buildings oriented toward large surface parking lots rather than the street and an unsafe, unwelcoming pedestrian environment.

#### **CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The *2035 Comprehensive Plan* (2018) identifies the Macadam area as a Neighborhood Center and part of the River Pattern Area, and S Macadam Avenue as a Civic Corridor. These designations recognize the area’s opportunities for growth, redevelopment, a safe and attractive pedestrian environment, and strong riverfront access.

Recommended Draft: Updated to reflect testimony provided at the November 4<sup>th</sup> hearing by the South Portland Neighborhood Association (SPNA), a joint meeting held between BPS and the SPNA on November 13, and comments from Commissioner Hardesty on November 24<sup>th</sup>.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following resources offer more background information on the history of this district.

- [Willamette Greenway Plan \(1987\)](#)
- [Macadam Corridor Design Guidelines \(1985\)](#)
- [River Plan/South Reach Proposed Draft \(January 2020\)](#)
- [River Plan/South Reach Draft Existing Conditions Report \(May 2018\)](#)

*The following sections align with and are derived from content in the Portland Citywide Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 01. They will each focus on characteristics specific to this Neighborhood Center.*

## COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The riverfront is culturally significant to the regions' Tribal Nations and the local Native community. Nearby residents and visitors enjoy the nearly two miles of accessible Willamette River shoreline with an accessible greenway trail, Willamette Park, Heron Pointe Wetlands and the Cottonwood Bay natural area. New development should acknowledge and address the cultural, social, ecological and recreational value of the riverfront.

~~Topography and proximity to the river has led the community to recognize three very distinct geographies: 1) Northern S Macadam Avenue, which maintains a boulevard character and is defined by steep topography and large lots; 2) Southern S Macadam Avenue (south of S Boundary), which exemplifies a more main street character where lots are generally flatter, extremely narrow and constrained by steep hills to the west and the highway and river to the east; and 3) the Willamette River Greenway. Future development should respond to each site's distinct topography, lot size, density, heights and uses.~~

~~South Portland provides residents and the city with a green gateway to downtown. It's topography and proximity to the river creates three distinct geographies: 1) Northern S Macadam Avenue, 2) Southern S Macadam Avenue (South of S Boundary) and 3) the Willamette Greenway. Future development needs to respond to each area's distinct topography, scale, lot size, density, heights and uses. The northern section is dense and mid-rise, providing a ~~rational~~ transition from the high-rise South Waterfront. It is characterized by multi-family residential and office commercial buildings. In contrast, the south section exemplifies a more main street character with small-scale residential areas and businesses. This area is constrained by steep hills to the west, and the river. New development here should be designed to limit scale impacts to the residential community to the west.~~

S Macadam Avenue, along with the train tracks, surface parking areas and large irregular lots have created east-west barriers to the river. New development should improve both the quality and quantity of public connections – both physical and visual ~~physical and visual connections~~. Strategic access points should be based on the typical Portland block pattern of 200 feet and should align with streets on the west side of S Macadam Avenue. Alignment will provide unimpeded ~~access~~ visibility from public streets and sidewalks to the riverfront and ensure it is accessible to everyone in the district.

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## ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DESIGN CHARACTER

Past City policies envisioned S Macadam Avenue as a tree-lined boulevard with safe routes for both pedestrians and cars. Existing development—a mixture of river-oriented businesses, suburban-style shopping centers, office parks, and apartment buildings—does not support a public realm focused on the comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists. Future site and building design should be responsive to this vision for S Macadam Avenue and the context of the Willamette Riverfront.

On S Macadam Avenue, a few buildings from the area's industrial past have been renovated with high quality, durable materials, such as masonry or stucco. New buildings should use texture, color, scale and proportion to complement this existing fabric. Features such as ample glazing, covered entries and integrated landscaping are appropriate to this environment. When ~~they are~~ used at corner sites, they strengthen and solidify the connections across S Macadam Avenue, and down to the river. Appropriately scaled Successful landscaping is particularly important along identified public view streets and where rights of way have limited planting areas.

Along the Willamette Riverfront, existing development has traditionally used balconies, terraces and communal open spaces to promote safety and create visual interest along the greenway and river. To enrich the experience of all residents, new development should incorporate these elements along the riverfront and throughout the district, reinforcing public views to the greenway, wildlife and the river. Locate significant outdoor spaces contiguous with the greenway trail. Transition buildings away from the river setback, using ~~and Use~~ step downs and step backs to erode building mass, along the riverfront and greenway, and to to preserve access to light and air along sidewalks and the trail and create a pleasant pedestrian experience. Design and orient buildings to facilitate east-west connections to the riverfront and promote its accessibility within the district.

## NATURAL + SCENIC RESOURCES CHARACTER

The Macadam area's location along the Willamette River's South Reach is a key factor in the continued health of endangered and threatened fish, wildlife and plants. This riverine corridor is part of the Pacific Flyway for migrating and nesting birds. Future development along the river and trails should both activate the river frontage and minimize impacts from noise and lighting on the trail and riverfront habitat. Include climatic responsive plantings to enhance wildlife habitat, soften building edges, and screen parking areas.

Natural features along the riverfront are valuable community assets, central to the cultural practices of local Tribal Communities and with lush vegetation and views of the mountains, hills, and river. Pay special attention to landscaping within the river setback and ~~New development should~~ protect natural areas by preserving and planting trees along the Willamette River, ~~and~~ Development should capitalize on this unique ~~geographic~~ location by incorporating environmentally friendly building practices and techniques to preserve and protect the defining riverfront environment of the district.

Residents and visitors' value direct public access to the Willamette River from neighborhoods and businesses to the west. To strengthen this access, use landscape features to emphasize east/west connections between the greenway, the river, and the interior of the neighborhood. Scenic view streets can strengthen their visual ties to the river by becoming "green" streets. ~~Views~~ Visual connections to the Willamette and other natural features from both sides of S Macadam Avenue allow

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Portlanders to appreciate the area’s scenic beauty. Given the steep topography of the district, in response, building roofs and rooftops need to be carefully designed to enhance these public views. Maintaining these connections ensures permeability within the district and improves air quality, health, and livability. Preserve pPublic viewpoints close to the river and view streets that are referenced in the Macadam Plan District and the South Reach Scenic Resource Protection Plan.

**IMAGE CAPTIONS**

**Image 1.**

*Development should respond to the varied topography and built environment of the district, particularly along S Macadam Avenue, which varies from a boulevard (northern end) to main street (southern end) in character.*

**Photo Image 2.** *Communal open space along greenway at Heron Point Wetlands.*

**Photo Image 3.** *Adaptive reuse of the old Water Tower building as a commercial business center.*

**Photo Image 4.** *Step back of buildings from the greenway to allow for view looking south along Willamette Riverfront.*

**REVISED MACADAM CHARACTER STATEMENT MAP**

