

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Anna Slatinsky, Principal Planner  
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MEMO DATE: April 19, 2018

WORK SESSION: April 25, 2018

SUBJECT: Downtown Design Project

At the regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting on April 25, city staff and SERA Architects will present a progress report on the Downtown Design Project as well as an overview of the Urban Design Framework Alternatives developed to date. When adopted, the Urban Design Framework will act as the guidebook for the future evolution of downtown, including informing changes to the Development Code, street hierarchies, and urban open space strategies. Staff seeks Planning Commission questions and comments regarding the Downtown Design Project and the Urban Design Framework Alternatives.

### BACKGROUND

The Beaverton Community Vision identifies the creation of a vibrant downtown as a major city goal and describes two major actions: establish an identifiable downtown and stimulate downtown redevelopment.

In fall of 2017, the city began working with a consultant team and community stakeholders to develop a plan for the area with the following goals:

- Define mini-districts so strategies and development rules can be more fine-grained.
- Remove obstacles to development.
- Encourage new buildings, jobs and housing.
- Promote vibrant, active places.
- Rethink site and building design rules.
- Promote safe and inviting streets and sidewalks that work with adjacent development.
- Develop implementation actions.

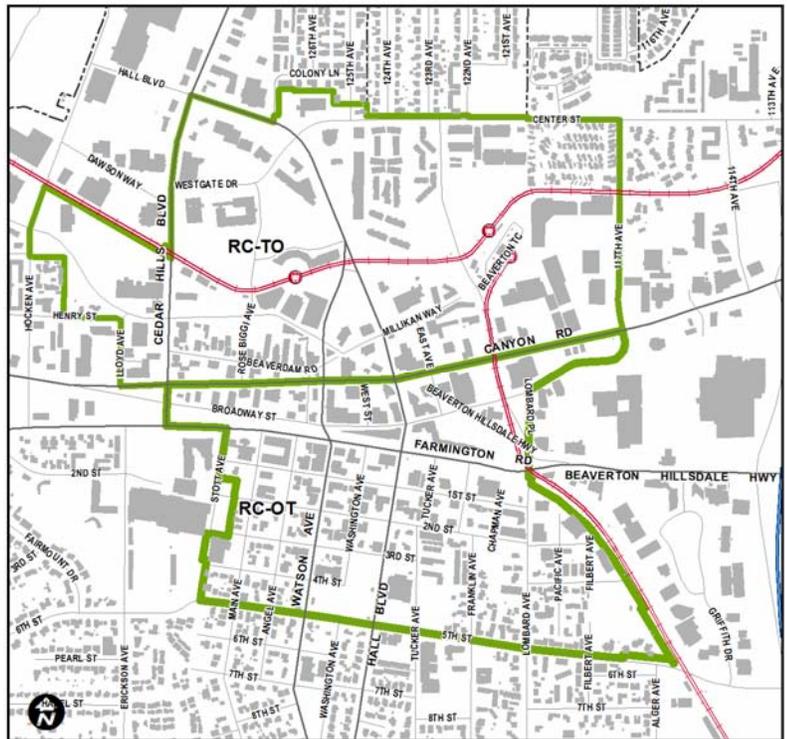


Figure 1: Downtown study area made up of Regional Center – Old Town (RC-OT) and Regional Center – Transit Oriented (RC-TO) zoning districts.

To gain a better understanding of the strengths and challenges in downtown Beaverton, city staff and the consultant team researched the history of downtown, including previous planning efforts conducted by the city. The consultant team conducted an analysis of the existing conditions in downtown, reviewing built form, mobility, market conditions, and basic development standards in the city’s Development Code. Following this analysis, the consultant team conducted an opportunities and constraints assessment to begin looking towards the future of downtown. The opportunities and constraints assessment considered core districts, existing and planned activity areas, infill opportunities, landmarks, barriers, connections, open spaces, and flood plains.

Using the information gained from the above-mentioned research, as well as feedback learned through community engagement (see Public Engagement section below for more information), the consultant team began to develop different urban design approaches. This work includes the formulation of design principles that act as a foundation for more detailed design strategies. To develop these strategies, the project team has explored several urban design topics, including character and identity; built form; connectivity; and urban open spaces. The Urban Design Framework Alternatives (Exhibit 1) present different approaches to address these topics that show different ways to guide the development of an even more vibrant, thriving city center. The design concepts outlined in the Framework Alternatives are informed by community ideas, developer interviews, city staff input, and partner agency feedback.

Following feedback received from Planning Commission and community stakeholders, city staff and the consultant team will revise the Urban Design Framework Alternatives into a single ‘Preferred’ Framework approach. This Preferred Framework will be shared with the community for additional feedback, and will be discussed by City Council and Planning Commission in one or more work sessions.



**Figure 2: Project Schedule**

## FRAMEWORK ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTS

Staff is seeking input and direction from the Planning Commission regarding the Urban Design Framework Alternatives and key concepts below.

### Overcoming Barriers

*While downtown has several established or burgeoning activity centers, they are dispersed through the district. Additionally, Canyon Road, Farmington Road, and heavy rail divide downtown, functioning as a barrier to mobility. How can we best connect these activity centers and overcome these barriers?*

#### ❖ Core / Loop

Utilizing the existing couplet of Hall Boulevard and Watson Avenue as a primary connector takes advantage of the existing travel patterns in downtown. Emphasizing these streets as multi-modal connectors, by adding improvements such as wider sidewalks and bike facilities, could create a safer environment more conducive to walking and biking between downtown destinations. Incorporation of art, landscaping, or other streetscape elements could begin to stitch together different areas of downtown that convey to people that spend time here that this is a special, vibrant area that is inviting to spend time walking around. Secondary emphasis streets could be developed to provide non-arterial east-west connectors that are more walkable and bike friendly than Canyon Road and Farmington Road.

Consideration of available right of way and the size of different elements are important in understanding what amenities can be included in a streetscape. Determining what amenities are prioritized for primary and secondary streets is important in determining how each street functions and feels. Please consider the following questions in relation to the “overcoming barriers” exhibit.

- Is the primary loop approach an appropriate method to connect downtown?
- Are the secondary connectors shown correctly? Are there missing connections that should be emphasized?
- Does the primary loop as shown include the important existing and planned activity centers?
- What street amenities should be a priority for the primary streets?
- What street amenities should be a priority for the secondary streets?
- In cases where existing right of way is limited, should private property frontage be considered for certain amenities such as outdoor seating?

### Developing a Sense of Place

*Downtown Beaverton is a large district regulated by two zoning districts. A more fine-grain division of districts and sub-districts would allow for more context-sensitive development rules, promoting distinct “neighborhoods” and the ability to encourage different built environments and experiences in different areas of downtown.*

The consultant team, with guidance from city staff, have developed three different schemes to define different character areas within downtown. These character areas consider existing and planned conditions, including activity areas, neighborhood identities, surrounding neighborhoods, transit amenities, major thoroughfares, historic resources, and natural resources. The schemes are not intended to present a singular solution, but explore different approaches for each area of downtown and determine how best to define the character of downtown at a finer grain.

When reviewing the three different schemes, please keep mind the following questions:

- How should the character of Old Town change as you move from the residential uses south of downtown to major roads like Farmington Road and Canyon Road? Should the character change between 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Farmington?
- Should the experience of major arterials like Canyon Road and Farmington Road be consistent throughout downtown, or should the character change as you move through downtown on these arterials?
- What is the best way to define the districts in the relatively large area north of Canyon Road?
- Should the Broadway District be limited to properties fronting on Broadway, or should it be expanded to capture the existing historic district and connect across Farmington Road? Should a historic district character be expanded north of Canyon where there are no existing historic structures?
- Should edge streets north of Canyon (Lombard Avenue and Cedar Hills Boulevard) maintain an existing character throughout, or should the experience evolve?

❖ **Collection of Neighborhoods**

This scheme embraces an experience of many different districts, or neighborhoods, within Downtown, each with their own unique character or experience. This approach considers the greatest number of districts, providing the most fine grain approach to neighborhood identification. Bordered by gateway areas on the west and eastern edges, and transition zones north and south, the highest intensity of both residential and office would be focused in the northern Downtown Core (The Round and Transit Center Districts), as well as the Lombard Gateway District forming a distinct eastern edge to Downtown.

❖ **Three Cores and Corridors**

This scheme creates a series of strong corridor experiences, three distinct core neighborhoods, and transition zones in the north and south areas of Downtown. Development intensity is concentrated into one central north core surrounding transit augmented by a medium-scale intensity Old Town District.

❖ **Historic Core Connector**

This scheme bridges significant barriers through neighborhoods of varying and distinct character. It brings Broadway and historic Old Town into a single, central neighborhood. Development intensity extends throughout the northern portion of Downtown with medium scale intensity development throughout the southern area of Downtown. Gateways on the western and eastern boundaries signal distinct arrivals into Downtown.

## **Urban Open Spaces**

*As greater numbers of people choose to live, work, and visit downtown, a variety of urban open spaces should be available for public enjoyment. The city has partnered with Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District to develop strategies for integrating more publicly available open space.*

- ❖ **Community Events and Open Spaces** – What existing spaces can be utilized for new or expanded community events? What types of open spaces are missing that can support desired community events?

- ❖ **Gardens** – Whether they are community gardens growing produce, or more traditional manicured gardens, urban gardens can provide both active and passive recreation experiences. What experiences in Downtown Beaverton are missing that gardens can provide?
- ❖ **Dog Parks** – As the number of residential units with limited or no public open space increases, should downtown Beaverton provide outdoor space for pets and pet owners or should that space be outside downtown but nearby? What is the appropriate scale for an urban dog park?
- ❖ **Children’s Play Areas / Splash Pads** – The community has told us that City Park provides a splash pad and playground equipment for older children. What youth-focused park facilities are missing from downtown Beaverton, if any?
- ❖ **Urban Recreation** – Land availability in urban areas makes large-scale recreation facilities challenging to develop. What active recreation uses are appropriate at scale that is easier to create in urban settings?
- ❖ **Informal Seating / Casual Dining** – Places to linger, rest and take in one’s surroundings is important in an urban area. Where are these uses appropriate in the right of way and where should they be encouraged on private property?
- ❖ **Habitat / Natural Area** – Natural areas in urban environments can be integral to the health and vitality of the neighborhood. Historically, development in downtown Beaverton has de-emphasized creek systems that flow throughout the district. How should these natural spaces be integrated into an evolving downtown?
- ❖ **Multi-purpose Green** – Larger open lawn areas provide urban open spaces that provide flexibility and can be programmed for events that draw large numbers of people to downtown. Does downtown need additional larger open spaces? What purpose should they serve?
- ❖ **Trails / Multi Use Paths** – Promoting walking and cycling in urban areas is key to adding vibrancy. Where should pedestrians and cyclist facilities be improved in downtown, and what ideas do you have? Wider sidewalks? Multi-use paths set away from streets?

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

Public engagement has played a significant role in understanding the community’s preferences for the future of Downtown. The city has formed a Technical Advisory Committee and has utilized an existing internal multi-disciplinary staff team focused on downtown to provide advice, feedback and technical assistance for the duration of the project. To date, the city has hosted four open houses to gather community input on the direction of downtown, and staff has presented the project in various stages to seven different boards and committees. Staff and the consultant team have worked closely with the community and project committees to develop and refine design concepts. Coordination with stakeholders will continue through the life of the project, including upcoming engagement with business owners and property owners. Public engagement summaries that detail what staff and the consultant team heard at each of the three open houses held to date can be found in Exhibit 2.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Staff will incorporate feedback from the April 25 Planning Commission work session, along with feedback from community members and other stakeholders to produce a Preferred Urban Design Framework. The Preferred Urban Design Framework will be circulated in the community for additional feedback and will be reviewed by Planning Commission and City Council, likely in late spring. As the study area falls within the

city's urban renewal boundary, the Preferred Urban Design Framework will be presented to the Beaverton Urban Redevelopment Agency Board as well. City Council is expected to consider the final Framework Plan later this summer.

Following City Council Approval, staff and consultants will begin the final phase of the project. This will include changes to Downtown development rules and processes and identification of other implementation steps needed to implement the Urban Design Framework and otherwise encourage a vibrant Downtown. Those text amendments, along with other implementation actions recommended through this process, will likely be reviewed by the Commission in the coming months and years:

## **EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1. Downtown Design Project Framework Alternatives

Exhibit 2. Public Engagement Summaries