



West Portland Town Center Plan

April 27, 2019 – Community Kick-off Event Notes

A PLAN FOR “THE CROSSROADS” THAT BENEFITS THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

Information and Input Boards

BPS exhibited boards with information about the West Portland Town Center area, including information on population, traffic crash locations, housing, businesses and amenities in the area.

For each of the four information boards a second board asked the community to respond to two questions, one about existing conditions for each topic and one on what would make this place better related to the topic. This summary transcribes the input written by the community on the question boards under the following topic subheadings:

- Community Health
- Affordable Housing
- Community and Cultural Life
- Business and Jobs

Community Health – *Our health is affected by many things: access to parks and open space; safe sidewalks and roads; clean air and water; healthy food options; quality healthcare and economic security support health and well-being. A West Portland Town Center Plan will include actions for a healthier physical and social environment.*

What do you like about community health in the West Portland Town Center?

- Neighborhood Feeling
- Trees – large Firs
- Environmental areas
- Barbur Foods



- Quiet
- Bus Service
- Tall Trees
- Liquor store and Green Goddess
- West PDX Methodist Church
- Library
- Nice and quiet
- Great access to roads
- Multi-ethnic dining, despite problems accessing due to roads.

What would make the West Portland Town Center a healthier place to live?

- Sidewalks
- Fix 4-way intersection – Taylor’s Ferry - Capital Hwy, Barbur
- Light rail plan is not addressing it
- Plan to eliminate left turns onto I-5S from Capitol going North – the “jug handle” will create more problems than it solves
- The “bridge” – Capitol over the freeway and across Barbur needs redesign and reconstruction.
- Safe passages
- More bike lanes
- Safety for pedestrians/ cyclists
- Narrow or non-existent side-walks
- Community: livability” is also tied to walking for people who are disabled, have access needs.

Affordable Housing - *Everyone needs a healthy and affordable home. Supporting neighbors most vulnerable to displacement pressures and planning for housing for future residents is part of West Portland Town Center Plan.*

What do you like about the housing in the West Portland Town Center?

- Not much affordable house available
- Develop and enhance affordable housing in the area

What would make the West Portland Town Center a place where everyone could find housing?

- Help current low-income residents stay in their homes as rents continue to rise.
- Intentional housing options for marginalized/ those with barriers to traditional housing processes.
- Make the process for engaging more available - in languages other than English - so more can have access.

Community and Culture and Life - *Our sense of community comes from many sources, including the library and parks, culturally relevant social services, community spaces, strong schools and places of worship. These can all serve as community anchors. A town center plan can build on these anchors.*

What do you like about the sense of community and cultural diversity in the West Portland Town Center?

- Barbur Food- helps with this-it is difficult because we don't meet the local immigrants unless you have children at Markham elementary school

What would create a greater sense of community and cultural diversity in the West Portland Town Center?

- Place to meet- to congregate - local Mediterranean restaurant – love Ya ha-la – talked to Barbur Foods owner about opening a restaurant in SW.
- Safe passages – more opportunities to gather - more places to gather
- Create EVENTS and community gathering that focus on the diversity of this community
- Fostering intercultural exchange
- Community Center?

Businesses and Jobs - *A living wage job and access to nearby commercial services are critical to household prosperity and neighborhood vitality. The West Portland Town Center Plan will include planning for commercial areas and/or main streets.*

What do you like about the businesses in the West Portland Town Center?

- Barbur Food- liquor store- Green Goddess, the rest of the businesses, haphazard planning – except Multnomah area.

What would make the West Portland Town Center a better place to shop and run a business?

- Concentration of nice businesses close to Barbur Foods, more nice restaurants – better design of Barbur area. Don't like car shops right at Taylors Ferry & Capitol Highway
- Target destination (It is not)
- Safe passages
- Easier & quicker way for pedestrians between NW portion of circle to South of I-5
- More variety of businesses.

Responses on “We Are Welcomers” comment cards

As part of the event materials packet attendees received a large card that said “We are Welcomers” on one side. During the event they were encouraged to write their thoughts or responses on the following questions on the back of the card:

1. *What are you proud of in your community?*
2. *What are you worried about?*
3. *What will make it better?*

Below are the responses written on those cards.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This neighborhood is close to the mosque and my community. It relays their religion and practices. It makes great schools, close to PCC 2. Displacement
Multi-cultural school, Halal
Halal market, Mosque
Safety, accessibility, convenience
Ninge pendelea tusikose utamaduni wetu kama maduka yetu msikit laibrary markham school
There will be safe crossings across Barbur Blvd. that make the Town Center more walkable and inviting for shopping and community building.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growing cultural diversity in our neighborhoods so my son can grow up with greater understanding and appreciation for other cultures and languages 2. New Portlanders/non-english language speakers not getting their voices heard-they're so often not at the table but are affected most by displacement 3. More complete engagement-increase improvement re: walkability
Halal shop, Multicultural support school
To create a visible, beautiful “center” for the SW community with welcoming features (benches, gardens?) – close to transit...that is open to all; and enhances community Safe sidewalks, Economic security, Cultural community services
My hope is that everyone has decent housing, adequate access to healthy food, and efficient transit to school, work, etc.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amount of services offered for members 2. Cost of living, increasing displacement 3. Opportunities for community members to collaborate

<p>A community with easy access to all livability requirements with a diverse population of people across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *income, *ethnicity, *age, *LGBTQ, *any other under-represented folks <p>And a complete infrastructure to support it all</p>
<p>That it uplifts and builds from, not over, the communities that it serves</p>
<p>I want it to be a real place that naturally draws many people rather than cars to the area, aka a SW PDX living room (like Pioneer Courthouse Square). It needs to become highly walkable, with many things to buy, i.e., produce markets etc. that cater to neighbors rather than tourists. It needs to become a true urban village. And the land use needs to be efficient, as opposed to empty parking lots and non-place, people of ALL incomes should be walking, biking, and taking transit between home, work, play, shops, dining, etc.</p> <p>International marketplace, Food carts</p> <p>Also: need local businesses that hire locals for our highly diverse community</p>
<p>My greatest hope and aspiration for the West Portland Town Center is for the center to be inclusive, a true public space where children can just be without police harassment and with a sense of safety and joy</p>
<p>West Portland is a beautiful place that I spend most of my time because of my community I want to see more affordable housing, food market, community center</p>

Small group discussions – notes

The central activity during the event was a series small group discussions. In each group attendees discussed and posed questions around the central questions of the event but focusing on one of the four topics at a time.

- Community Health
- Affordable Housing
- Community and Cultural Life
- Business and Jobs
- *What are you proud of in your community?*
- *What are you worried about?*
- *What will make it better?*

Group A

Affordable & Healthy Housing

- Stabilizing: People already here
- Hold companies accountable for gentrification/ displacement
- Hold elected official accountable
- Stabilize/ help most vulnerable – temporary rent assistance
- Ensure new development includes: Affordable housing

- City: Right of first refusal to purchase naturally occurring affordable housing (N.O.A.H)

Jobs & Businesses

- Halal Markets: Protect existing assets
- Need transport to jobs
- Job training: Important
- At PCC – Sylvania, Combine with ESL training
- Affordable rental space. Missing services:
 - Basic necessities
 - Healthy food (carts/ retail)
 - Clothing
 - Daycare
 - Gardening Store / Culturally specific
 - Open Market Place
 - Outdoor market Multi-Cultural (Middle Eastern, N African, SE Asian*International*)
- Cultural anchor/ destination
- Values: Mosque
- Multi-Cultural Neighborhood
- Not a corporate glass tower
- Keep local dollars circulating locally
- Opportunities for children
- Stay and pursue economic opportunity
- Facilitated Development
- Coffeeshop: Ethiopian/Somali/Yemeni
- Cultural Hub/Marketplace – near/ associated with affordable housing
- Walk to shopping- sidewalks
- Cultural/ Health opportunity

Group B

Community & Cultural Life

Proud of?

- PCC Campus- Head Start
- Diversity of Neighborhood (the People)
- Library
- Mosque
- Diverse businesses that exist here – many examples given

- Let others experience new culture (gathering places)
- Barbur World Foods
- Halal Groceries
- Community organizations offices

Worried about?

- Point of view matters when talking about diversity
- Some groups feel isolated and lack of inclusion
- Traffic impacts quality of life & divides community
- Displacement leads to losing your community and the trust you've built.
- Lose the help you get from community
- Leads to loneliness and isolation
- Increase in Hate Crimes is worrisome
- Need to take steps to create safety in the community
- Need to build acceptance
- Deficit of safe places to play in the neighborhood.

Better?

- Parks
- Safety programs
- Better counting of under-represented groups
- New multi-culture Center in the neighborhood (offices, comm. Space, biz space)
- City Community Center
- Better walkability/ multi-modal – safety (SW 45th)
- Food Court (as cultural opportunity)
- Farmers Market
- Better transit access
- Enhance Barbur Transit Center
- Community development focused on Barbur
- Better gathering spaces (commercial) along Barbur. No sense of community right now along that street.

Group C

Community & Culture

Proud?

- Supportive Community outreach
- Changing and growing in diversity
- Welcoming
- Energy of youth/ multicultural/accepting

- Inclusive
- Diverse
- Mosque and religious organizations
- Resources
- Collaboration/ neighborhood days
- Dialogue
- Complex partnerships

Worried?

- Are people at the table?
- Neighborhood representation
- Displacement w/ infrastructure
- Outreach to all
- Crossroads intersection (ODOT)
- Earthquake protection
- Traffic congestion
- Isolation
- Bisected neighborhoods
- Rideability
- Walkability
- Infrastructure

Improve?

- Connection
- What would enhance cultural life?
- Somali community cultural center – honor, learn
- Homeownership
- Culturally specific Minnesota Community home ownership program example

Housing Solutions

- Housing for large families
- Rental cost/affordability
- Barrier in interest for Somali community
- Rent to own
- Different models to ownership
- Co-op – cities & nonprofits
- Out of the box solutions
- Homelessness – developments of resource centers
- Strong infrastructure/ earthquakes
- Helping those in need/ safety net
- Vocational training/workforce programs = opportunity
- ? Community values & tools strategy

Health

- Healthcare
- Equity planning
- Land trust
- Readiness/ preparedness
- Planning assistance
- Emergency response
- Education
- Share & access resources
- Efficiency
- Medication
- Food/Water

Establishing Community

- Economic benefits at the town center
- Embracing diversity
- Construction impacts to local businesses (noise, parking) access
- Small businesses
- DBE/SBE/WBE goals/requirements
- Enterprise zones
- Urban renewal funding
- Community benefit agreement when planning
- Business & neighborhood associations
- Example of positive urban development
- Practical optimism
- Learning from yellow line/ examples

Group D

Hope/Aspirations?

- Safety/ Access
- Opportunities/Investment
- Intentional Planning
- Build on Strengths
- Focus on Affordability
- Housing & Transportation

Concerns?

- Pedestrian Walkways
- Dangerous for Peds
- Traffic Congestion
- Need Better Access

Proud of/ Strengths?

- Neighborhood & Park Access
- Barbur Foods
- Mosque (Other faith communities (ST Clair's))
- Library (Capitol Hill)
- Looking for potential partnership opp. For affordable housing,
- Not enough Community meeting space
- Community Garden
- Programming
- Creative Learning

Community/ Cultural Life

- So many moving parts. How do we stay connected and informed?
- Millennials have hard time finding housing
- Opportunity for property ownership
- Seniors are vulnerable - senior housing
- Cost/ unit size are barriers
- Don't see families or POC
- Difficult to make a decision not to own a car – improve active transportation
- Safe route to school – improve
- ADA Access

Living Wage Jobs/ Access to Business

- Walgreens – Good addition
- More of a short stay area
- Need more activities/ services/ local business/ Jobs
- Les Schwab is valuable / convenient
- Missing Workforce housing
- Challenge – Topography, stormwater, makes development difficult

Central Idea

- Better connectivity/ Walkability
- Safe passages / TOD
- Political will to repair crossroad bridge
- Get to know SW Portland – understand challenges and be creative
- Need developments but preserve community feel/ character
- Community gathering space
- Frequent/ affordable transportation service
- We live in a great location/ good access