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DESTINATION: LENTS

*A Portland State University Masters of Urban Studies Workshop Project
Spring 2006*

C R O S S R O A D S C O N S U L T I N G

DESTINATION: LENTS

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Prepared for:

Lents Neighborhood Association

Portland State University - Master of Urban and Regional Planning Program – Spring 2006

Planning Workshop provides graduate students with a professional planning experience both in the public and private sector. Student teams develop consulting contracts with clients for planning services that address local and regional issues and the students' personal and professional interests. The Workshop provides experience in planning for constructive social and environmental change, while considering the planner's ethical responsibility to serve the public interest.

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Kate Mytron, Vice-Chair

Kris Nord, Chair

Jeff Rose, Communications Chair

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LENTS

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DESTINATION: LENTS

Introduction

For more than a decade, Lents residents have participated in many planning efforts to develop an attractive, vibrant Lents Town Center. This area in outer Southeast Portland consists of the blocks around Crossroads Plaza at SE 92nd and Foster Road. The Town Center is generally bound by I-205, SE 88th Ave, SE Harold, and SE Woodstock. Map 1 shows the general location of this Town Center within the Portland Metro region.

The prospects of tax increment financing (TIF) from the Lents Urban Renewal Area (URA), established in 1998, attracted many stakeholders who might not otherwise get involved in planning, and their expectations were raised. The Portland Development Commission (PDC) launched implementation efforts, but progress slowed due to uncertainty of TIF funding, a downturn in the commercial real estate market, and communication issues among key stakeholders. This was a frustrating period for all concerned, but especially for neighborhood residents who have historically felt betrayed by the City of Portland.

Three important developments now offer new hope for the long-delayed revitalization. First, the MAX Green Line light rail will open in 2009, and a station will be located in the Lents Town Center. Second, there are signs that private investors are becoming interested in development projects in the Town Center. Third, and most importantly, the community has become increasingly organized and motivated to effect change.

The Lents Neighborhood Association (LNA) has many new energetic members determined to see their neighborhood and their Town Center revitalized. Recently the community established an "I Love Lents" website, which supplements the continued regular meetings and community gatherings, encouraging neighbors to participate in another means of exchanging views and ideas about issues facing their area. This sustained activity indicates readiness for the neighborhood to lobby for community improvements or to take actions independently.



Urban Renewal Area (URA)

The Lents Town Center URA was adopted in 1998. It is bordered by Powell Blvd to the north and the Portland city limits to the south.

The URA is home to several neighborhood associations, the largest being Lents Neighborhood Association which encompasses the Lents Town Center.

Pictured left: Looking South at intersection of Foster Road and 92nd Avenue.

Lents Town Center: 92nd Ave. and Foster Road, Portland, Oregon



Recognizing these promising new developments in Lents, Crossroads Consulting approached LNA Board Officers with an offer to provide assistance through the 2006 Workshop course. A subcommittee representing LNA's board accepted the Crossroads Consulting proposal to identify quickly implementable improvement strategies to create momentum and foster a sense of optimism about Lents Town Center revitalization. Neighbors would like to see improvements made now to help improve Lents' image as a special place. Three areas were selected for attention:

1. Imageability— The sense of being in a unique, cohesive neighborhood
2. Streetscape quality— Pedestrian comfort and accessibility
3. Getting "feet on the street" in Lents Town Center — Increasing pedestrian activity on the street

Highly visible improvements in these three areas would signal positive changes in Lents and improve neighborhood pride. Improvements implemented by the LNA association members and other community stakeholders could create some "quick wins" and

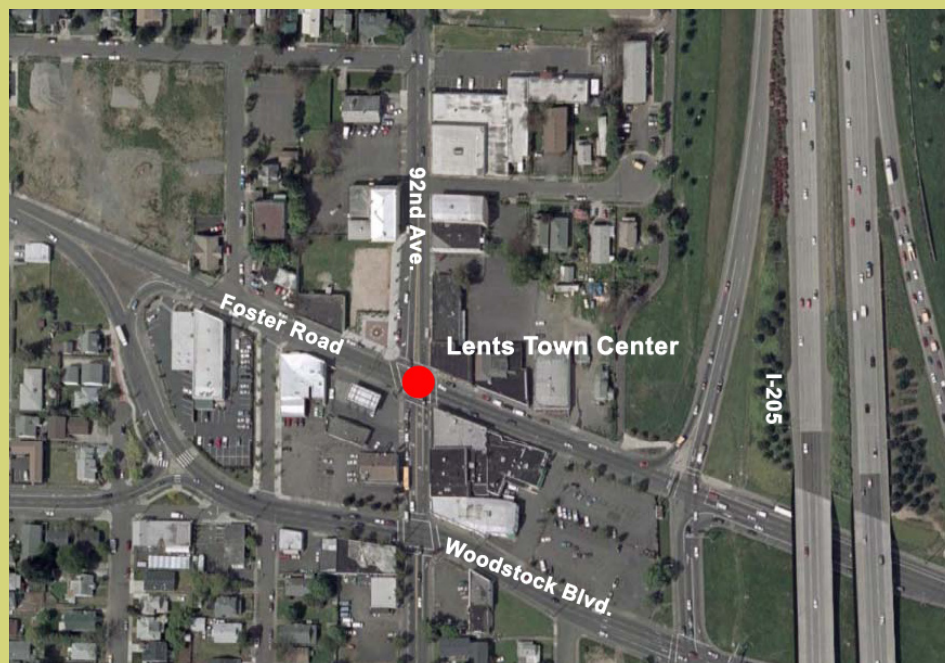
catalyze more efforts. Small efforts add up, particularly as they relate to changing attitudes and expectations. As more people gain confidence that improvements can be made and resources invested in Lents are worthwhile, the area may gather momentum. When critical mass is reached, confidence in the area will prevail. Attitudinal changes of this scale are what make revitalization take-off: places become more desirable. People are attracted to shop, dine, and live in the area. Businesses experience success and larger investors

Auto-Oriented Town Center



Traffic creates an unfriendly pedestrian atmosphere at the intersection of Foster Road and 92nd Ave.

Aerial View of the Lents Town Center



Source: Google Earth

The Lents Town Center is located at the intersection of 92nd Ave. and Foster Rd.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Lents Town Center sees a lot of traffic! 2003 Lents Town Center traffic counts:

15,000 vehicles/day on 92nd

17,000 vehicles/day on Woodstock

20,000 vehicles/day on Foster

view investments as less risky. With Lents Urban Renewal tax increment funds, grant funds, and other public financing resources available, PDC, the Portland Office of Transportation (PDOT), and community organizations are well-positioned to leverage the private investment that will ultimately take revitalization efforts to the next level.

Change Underway in Lents

New developments in the Lents Town Center have heightened the level of discussion around revitalization of the struggling urban core of Lents.

New construction such as the mixed use building (pictured below) off of Woodstock Blvd. and 93rd Ave, Assurety Northwest, another mixed use office and retail development on PDC property at Foster Road and 91st Ave., and the four new MAX light rail stations mirroring Interstate 205 promise a new future for Lents.

Residents have mixed feelings about new development as they remember past planning efforts which divided the community through the construction of I-205 (left), and further widened the divide between community members and planners. Efforts to revitalize Lents have been slow due to economic factors and the highly residential nature of the Urban Renewal Area.

New Mixed Use in Lents

A new development currently under construction at 93rd Ave and SE Woodstock.



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Lents began as a rural community that grew up along farm-to-market roads in the 19th Century, and Lents was formally platted in 1892. By the time it was annexed into the City in 1912, the Lents Town Center had developed into a compact, vibrant downtown serving a thriving rural community. Among the early twentieth century buildings still standing today are the former pharmacy and movie theater and the Mason's Lodge. These buildings, and a few others constructed in the late 1920s, remain the most architecturally distinct and charming structures in the Lents Town Center.

Key Dates in Lents History

1892 Town of Lents established
1912 Lents annexed by Portland
1983 I-205 Freeway opens
1998 Lents Urban Renewal Area formed

In the decades after WWII, Lents Town Center began to decline as lifestyle and travel patterns changed nationwide. In the Portland Metropolitan area, regional highway commercial strips, such as nearby 82nd Avenue, and enclosed shopping malls shifted business away from the Town Center. When plans for construction of a new freeway were announced in the late 1970's, some heralded the news as an opportunity to bring new businesses and residents into Lents.

Instead of economic stimulus, the construction of I-205 accelerated the decline of the Lents Town Center. The freeway was routed immediately through the Lents Town Center, and at least 500 homes and businesses were demolished to clear the path. By the time the freeway opened in 1983, the eastern portion of the Town Center was destroyed and an enormous physical barrier stood between two halves of the neighborhood. To facilitate efficient freeway access, Foster Road and Woodstock were turned into a "couplet" of one way streets—one west, one east.

Lents: Past and Present

With the couplet came super-blocks that disrupted the traditional grid network and reduced connectivity for both pedestrians and local traffic.

Daily traffic volumes along Foster, Woodstock and 92nd are high. The daily traffic counts, as measured in 2003, in the Lents Town Center are approximately:

15,000 vehicles/day on 92nd
17,000 vehicles/day on Woodstock
20,000 vehicles/day on Foster

Map 2 shows the location of these vehicles in relation to the Town Center. The 15,000 vehicles per day on two lane 92nd is roughly equal to the volumes seen at SE Sandy Blvd at 11th Ave, which accomodates four lanes of traffic. Although SE Sandy at 11th Ave is not very pedestrian oriented,

Historic Buildings in Lents



The original Lents Pharmacy operated until 1945 in this building that still stands at the northeast corner of 92nd and Foster. Many historic buildings in the Town Center are vacant or in poor condition. The Portland Development Commission (PDC) offers storefront improvement grants for interested business or property owners.

Vehicle Trips Per Day, 2003 Estimates



the area serves both local and regional commuters, much like SE 92nd Ave. In Lents, 92nd Ave is designated a "neighborhood collector."

The 17,000 vehicles on SE Woodstock through the Lents Town Center is similar to the volumes seen on the four lanes of SE Hawthorne Blvd between 39th and 41st Aves. The bustling Hawthorne business district capitalizes on this exposure. It also has on-street parking and posted speeds of 25 mph through the busy pedestrian shopping area. Foster Road has 20,000 vehicles per day, which is similar to the counts on SE Powell at 39th Avenue, which has five lanes and no on-street parking. The area sees many pedestrians, as it serves as a key transit route in SE Portland and is home to a grocery store. The Foster-Woodstock couplet is designated a "district collector."

Of the streets in the Lents Town Center, 92nd has the scale and building forms that make it inherently comfortable for pedestrians. It was once called "Main Street" in Lents, but the name changed in 1930 when street names were standardized across Portland. Foster and Woodstock, given their role as district collectors, would be much more difficult to reclaim as traditional main streets.

This traffic could be an opportunity for Lents Town Center instead of a barrier if a portion of the thousands driving along the Foster-Woodstock couplet and 92nd could be attracted to stop and shop rather than just rush through their commute. But instead, the pedestrian environment along the couplet is characterized by little parking, much noise, car exhaust, and narrow sidewalks unprotected from the multiple lanes of traffic. In addition, it is difficult to stop and maneuver in this area, especially during peak traffic. Such an environment is not conducive to a healthy, pedestrian-friendly business district. Drivers along Foster, Woodstock and 92nd encounter few visual cues that signify entrance to a pedestrian-conscious town center where they should slow down and be prepared to stop.

The I-205 overpass and the New Copper Penny Restaurant are well-known landmarks in the Town Center. The freeway overpass stands out as a beacon to drivers as they drive east along Foster and come

Interstate Traffic Through Lents



Speeds in the Town Center are roughly 35-45 miles per hour. The Foster - Woodstock Couplet and proximity to I-205 contribute to the high vehicle speeds in Lents. Foster Road is westbound with three lanes of traffic. Woodstock is eastbound with three travel lanes. Although there is on-street parking in the Town Center, it is seldom utilized.

Physical Barrier of I-205



Interstate 205 (seen in the background) runs through the Lents Town Center. Construction of the Interstate physically divided the community in the early 1980s. Much of the east side of the freeway remains underdeveloped and single family residential. The construction of the MAX Green Line will parallel the Interstate and serve to reinforce this edge of the community.

out of the curve onto Woodstock. Drivers have commented that they barely notice the Town Center until they are passing the large parking lot at the New Copper Penny. In the years since the freeway was built, the New Copper Penny has replaced doctors' offices, a florist, a local movie theater, and other neighborhood-serving businesses. The New Copper Penny, though successful in bringing non-residents to Lents, lacks very active daytime uses. Although lunch and dinner meals are served at the New Copper Penny, its regional draw comes from the bar and nightclub.

Lents Town Center carries a stigma as an area with deteriorated or underutilized properties and marginal businesses. It was precisely these problems that prompted creation of the Lents Urban Renewal Area in 1998. Many properties were acquired by public agencies (see Map 3). Many properties were cleared to make way for redevelopment, and many remain vacant today. The Town Center features a substantial amount of vacant land, as well as parking lots and auto-serving uses, shown in Map 4. These uses create "gaps" in the pedestrian environment along the street, which, in turn, make it more difficult for retail businesses to succeed. While a number of property owners have used PDC's storefront improvement program to improve the appearance of their buildings, vacancies remain high. The few retail businesses remaining in the Town Center, including Wishing Corner Antiques and the Tidee Didee, have limited and sometimes irregular operating hours. Overall, there is not much to attract pedestrians or impulse shoppers to the Lents Town Center. By their independent nature, destination businesses such as Lents Auto Body, 92nd Street Dancers, the New Copper Penny, and Architectural Ironworks Products can do well anywhere with good access and publicity. However, these businesses usually demand low rents because there are many locations that could meet their requirements.

More than 40% of the ground floor retail space in the Lents Town Center is currently vacant and available for lease, as shown in Table 1. The median retail lease rates are about \$5.54/square foot, per year, and range from \$2.30 to \$13.68/square foot. These rates reflect both market demand and building

Parking in Lents



Parking lots and vacant lands are located throughout the Lents Town Center. On-street parking is available on some streets but not clearly marked, as shown here.

Storefront Improvements



Lents Auto Body is one of the Town Center businesses who has taken advantage of the PDC's Storefront Revitalization program.

Their make-over gives the entrance to the west side of the couplet a new face. Other vacant properties have been revitalized by the program and are awaiting new tenants.

**Publicly Owned Land Parcels, Lents Town Center
(as shown by shaded areas)**



**Parking Lots and Vacant Land, Lents Town Center
(as shown by shaded areas)**



TABLE 1

QUOTED RETAIL LEASE RATES – SELECTED PROPERTIES LENTS TOWN CENTER - MAY 2006

BUSINESS	STREET	Square Feet	Monthly Lease Rate	Per SF Cost Monthly	Per SF Cost Yearly
Professional Car Care	9104 SE Woodstock	1,300	600	0.46	5.54
Professional Car Care	9112 SE Woodstock	1,729	900	0.52	6.25
Trillium Artisans	9119 SE Foster	2,500	1,250	0.50	6.00
New Breed Brazilian	9213 SE Foster	5,070	1,800	0.36	4.26
VACANT	9217 SE Foster	4,505	1,600	0.36	4.26
VACANT	5716 SE 92nd	22,500	7,500	0.33	4.00
Carpet Outlet	5716-B SE 92nd	10,000	1,920	0.19	2.30
VACANT	5812 & 5814 SE 92nd	2,720	2,500	0.92	11.03
El Pato Feliz	5824 SE 92nd	878	1,000	1.14	13.68
Other retail SF in LTC		20,300			
Total SF Retail in LTC		71,502	Averages:	\$ 0.53	\$ 6.37
Percent Vacant		42%	Median:	\$ 0.46	\$ 5.54

Source: Figures based on information provided by PortlandMaps and Kris Lake-Nord of Meadows Group, Inc.

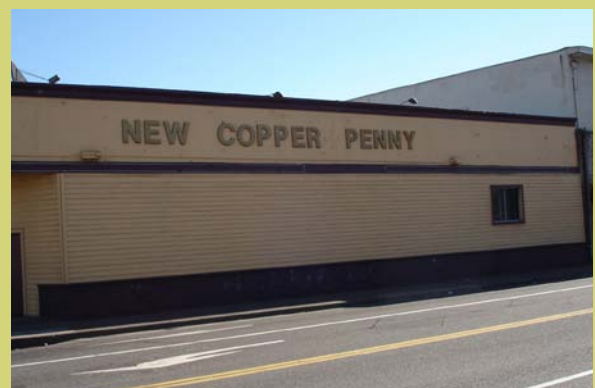
conditions. In a 2004 market analysis by Johnson Gardener for the 122nd Corridor Study Area, which is relatively close, retail rental rates for community/neighborhood retail range from \$7.20 to \$30.00/square foot. It is fair to assume those rates have since risen since 2004.

Two new mixed use developments are currently under construction: one condo-retail project on Woodstock at 93rd and an office-retail project on Foster at 89th. PDC owns the Foster property and attracted Assurety Northwest Insurance to redevelop and occupy the site. The Woodstock project is an independent, private redevelopment effort. These are promising indications that the market is beginning to see investment in the Lents Town Center as less risky.

As illustrated in Map 5, several property owners have assembled smaller parcels into large lots over the years. This increases and improves options for future uses on the sites and tends to increase the economic feasibility of potential development projects. However, these properties are currently underutilized, and it is not clear what it would take to get current owners to sell or undertake major redevelopment. Each owner has unique interests and circumstances. The Tzantamas family, owners

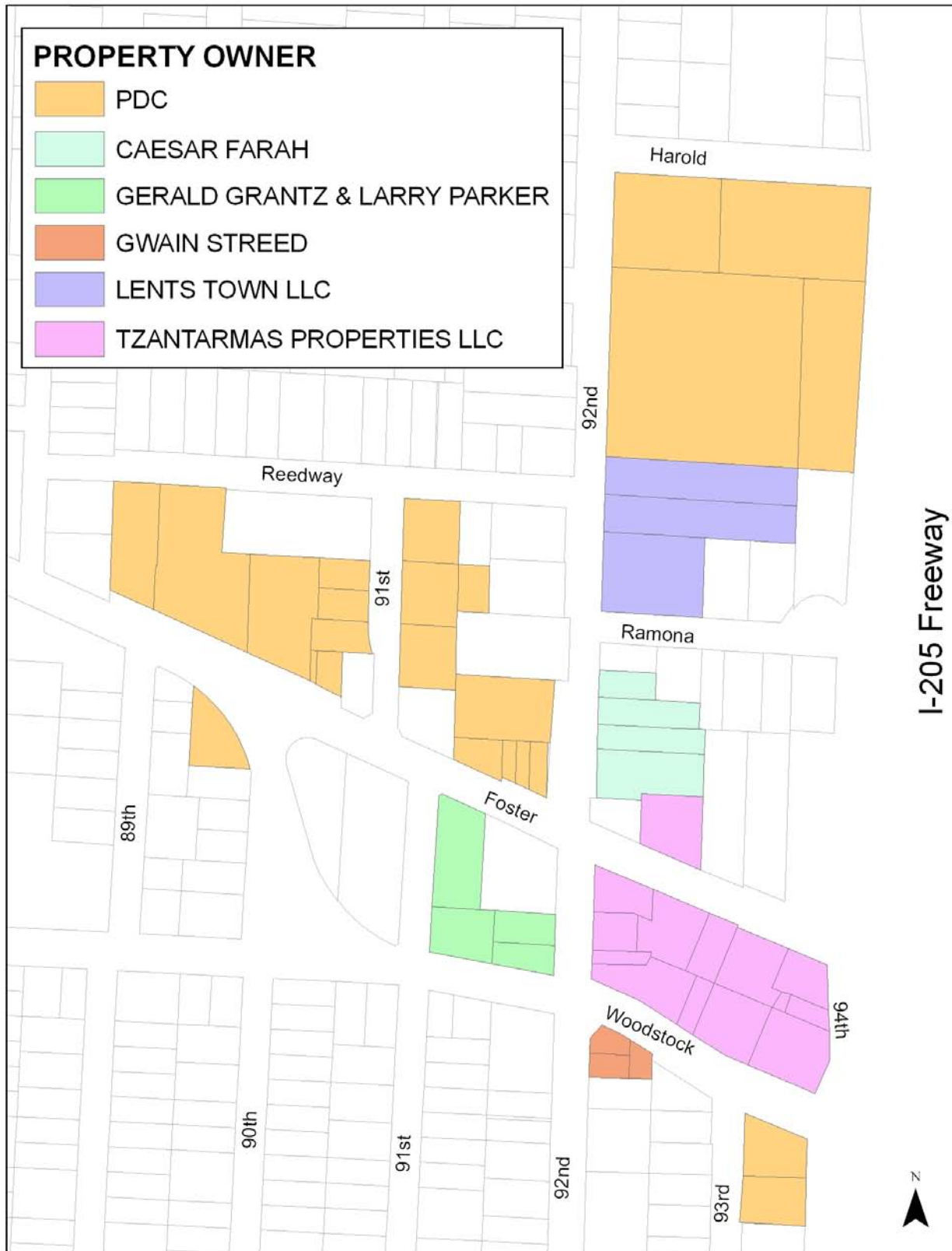
and managers of the New Copper Penny and another nearby property, has reportedly expressed interest in redeveloping their property on their own. Randy Dagel, owner of the Lents Auto Body property, has also reportedly expressed interest in redeveloping or selling his property for redevelopment at some time in the future. As in

The New Copper Penny as a Destination



The New Copper Penny is one of few destination businesses in the Lents Town Center. Open seven days a week, the club is most active on the weekends and serves as a draw for young people from the east side of Portland.

**Property Owners with Three or More Assembled Parcels of Land
(as shown by shaded areas)**



other communities, the Masonic Lodge (pictured below) has reportedly indicated they might sell if they were provided another suitable facility, at lesser or equal cost. On the other hand, the Farah family, who owns most of the block on the east side of 92nd north of Foster, includes several family members in the ownership and control of the property; consensus would be needed before any major redevelopment or sale were undertaken.

Redevelopment Potential in Lents



*Architectural Ironworks,
on Foster Road*

The number of vacant lots and buildings in the Lents Town Center makes the area prime for redevelopment. The Portland Development Commission and Rose Community Development built affordable housing (bottom left) in 2001 and Assurety Northwest plans to build on the remaining space in that block (see Map 6 for plans).

New businesses such as Architectural Ironworks (pictured left) are relocating in the Town Center.



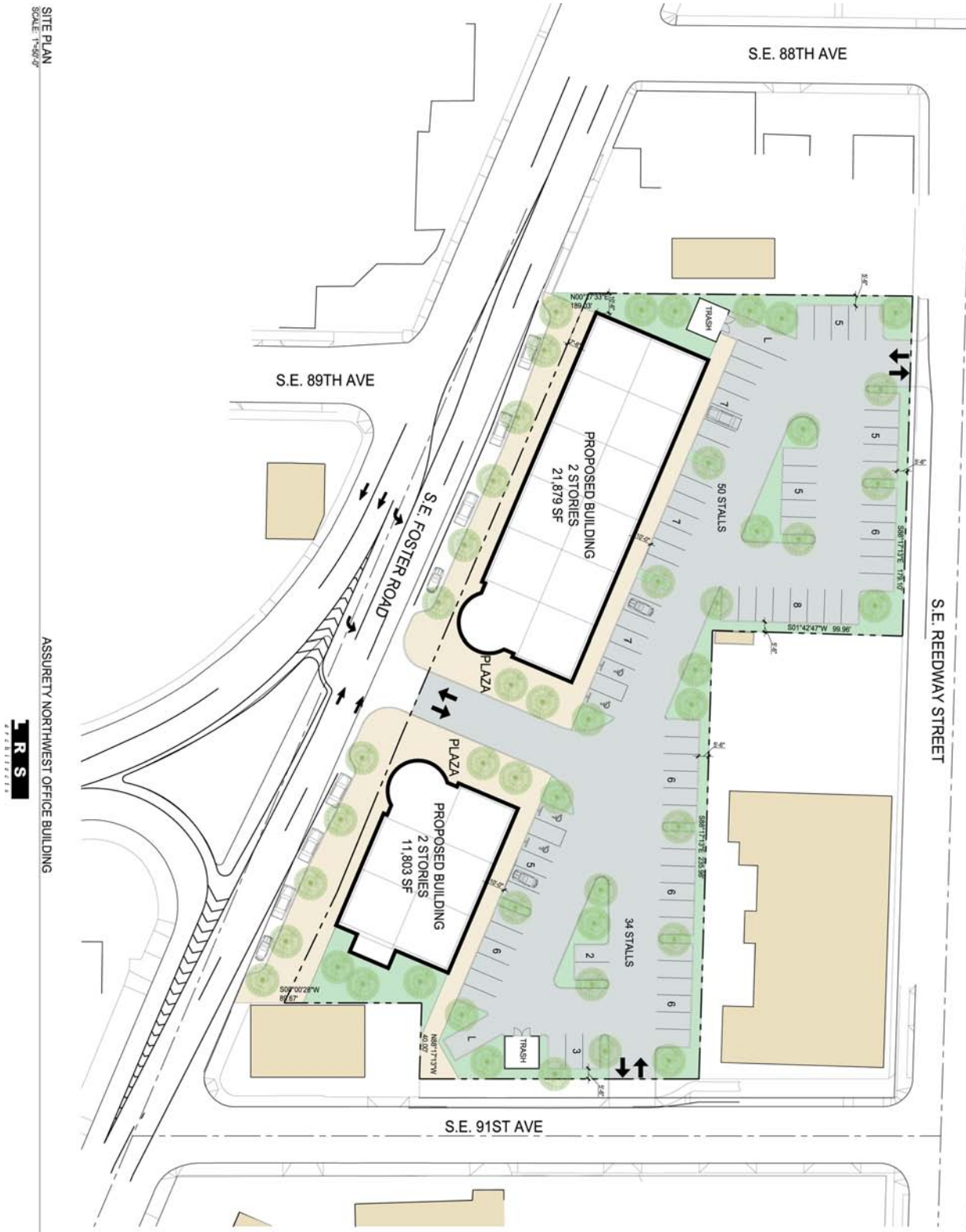
Lents Masonic Lodge, on 92nd Ave.



Rose CDC Housing

Assurety Northwest Development Plans, Foster Road and 91st Ave.

source: LRS Architects, provided by Portland Development Commission



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After reviewing the existing conditions of the Lents Town Center, Crossroads Consulting developed a summary of problems:

- Vehicles travel too fast in the Town Center and create an unpleasant atmosphere for those outside of a car. It is noisy, malodorous, and lacking in pedestrian comfort and safety.
- High traffic volumes along the couplet, especially at peak periods, make the area feel more like a place to pass through rather than a destination or place to linger in a leisurely manner.
- The location of I-205 causes the Town Center streets to serve as on/off ramps to the freeway. Few destination or neighborhood convenience businesses remain in the Town Center core.
- The Town Center lacks identity; no landmarks, other than the location of I-205, identify this place to outsiders or even to neighbors.
- Residents generally live at least 2 blocks from the Town Center core.
- Public rights-of-way in the Town Center are insufficient to make obvious and immediate streetscape improvements. Any type of beautification efforts would require acquiring property from private owners prior to installation of permanent features like trees and other plantings, street furniture, and additional on-street parking. As understood from past planning efforts, condemnation of property is not acceptable to many community members.

Summarizing the Problem



Various views of the Lents Town Center depict problems such as high traffic volume, lack of identity and little pedestrian activity.

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Methodology

The Crossroads team committed to listen to the community, stay action focused, respect past planning efforts, work to understand current barriers to revitalization, and strive to empower the LNA to achieve its goals.

The first step was to understand the history and context behind the challenges currently facing Lents Town Center. Historically, Lents has undertaken many planning efforts that have included community visioning and resulted in products that generally still await implementation. Crossroads Consulting reviewed these planning documents, consulted agency staff, and attended neighborhood meetings. The Lents Neighborhood Association Board, the client for the project, also provided critical insights.

With this information, Crossroads Consulting assembled a list of potential improvements for the Lents Neighborhood Association to pursue and implement independently, or lobby for jurisdictional assistance within the next few years. The list of improvements was drawn from conversations with the client, past planning efforts, and best practices from other communities. Responding to what had been learned and what would be most useful to the neighborhood client, Crossroads Consulting focused on improvements that would enhance neighborhood imageability, create a more comfortable streetscape, and get “feet on the street” to help integrate the MAX Green Line Station and strengthen Lents Town Center as a destination for neighbors and the region. Specifically, the project focused on improvements the community could promote or implement independent of private redevelopment. Consultation with agency staff and research of best practices highlighted feasibility and implementation paths for each potential improvement.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Analyzing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) facing an area can provide insight for development and revitalization. As a necessary foundation for this project, a SWOT analysis was conducted for the Lents Town Center to gain valuable information with regard to resident perception of existing conditions and future possibilities.

To gain this broader perspective of residents’ views, Crossroads Consulting attended the March 28th, 2006 Lents Neighborhood Association (LNA) general meeting and encouraged attendees to contribute ideas related to the SWOT analysis. The exercise resulted in a concise and insightful analysis, summarized on the following page.

At the meeting, it was apparent that many community members have a common understanding and perception of the constraints, barriers and possibilities for the Town Center. There were common themes about the current and desired characteristics of the Town Center that mirrored many of the preliminary findings and perceptions of Crossroads Consulting.

Many of the comments reflected enthusiasm for the new positive energy and direction of the LNA. Attendees readily listed weaknesses and threats, but most also took time to contribute ideas about strengths and opportunities. The SWOT analysis exercise provided a starting point for conversations with the Lents Neighborhood Association client subgroup, which allowed for

analysis and recommendations grounded in the observations of the community.

Some of the items noted in the SWOT analysis, such as housing, crime and recreation, were outside the scope of this project; nonetheless, they should be noted as concerns and hopes of Lents residents as their community continues to develop.

TABLE 2

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis	
STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-standing community history • Historical buildings • Interesting architecture • Pedestrian scale • Increased public involvement • Light rail on the way • Bike paths • Easily accessible by various modes • Central location for mid-southeast Portland • Well established residential base 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic noise • Boarded windows • Garbage • Vacant, run-down buildings • Insufficient parking • Lack of architectural detail • Incomplete/unwelcoming plaza • No place to gather • Lack of viable businesses • Businesses that are seldom open • No place to get coffee or see a movie • No anchor retail • I-205 and Foster/Woodstock as barriers • Dangerous pedestrian/bicycle crossings • Little vegetation and landscaping
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Renewal District funding • Construction of new buildings • Mix of old and new structures • Opportunities to increase community involvement • Progress toward establishing a formal business association • Affordable rents • Incoming light rail • Empty space leaves room for potential growth and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clearly defined vision for revitalization and community • Road noise and traffic speeds • Increasing crime and drug dealing • Garbage, graffiti, vandalism • “Throw away” attitude • Need for a Lents Business Association • General sprawl development close by

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Analysis of Constraints and Barriers

Before developing recommendations for the LNA, Crossroads Consulting analyzed the constraints and barriers that inhibited prior revitalization efforts.

Physical Barriers to Retail Revitalization

Creating an active, interesting retail district is key to successful revitalization efforts, but there are several physical barriers to retail revitalization in Lents. Significant, new destination businesses typically lead the way for retail revitalization and act as magnets to draw people into a town center or main street. The ReBuilding Center on N. Mississippi or exceptional local restaurants on NW 23rd and NE Alberta are prime examples. In Lents, the thriving destination uses are either auto-oriented or nightclubs that attract people at the wrong time of day.

Attractive streetscapes and clusters of interesting cafes, shops, and galleries that invite people to walk along the sidewalks, exploring the next storefront and adding activity to the street, are needed to launch community revitalization. The many vacant properties, parking lots, and auto-serving uses in the Lents Town Center physically separate retail buildings and create barriers to revitalization. It is difficult to cluster complementary business alongside or across the street from one another to create “double-loaded” retail corridors where both sides of the street house shops and restaurants. Locating along “single-loaded” streets creates a strong impediment to successful retail. Preliminary examination shows that Lents offers mainly single-loaded streets at this time because of vacant lands, parking lots and underutilized property.

The new retail spaces in the mixed-use projects now under construction on Woodstock & 93rd

Vacant Lands in Lents



The Lents Town Center in its current state has many vacant lots and storefronts. Businesses in the Crossroads Plaza area are either auto-oriented or of an adult nature.

This combination makes the Town Center core uncomfortable and people have no real reason to stop while passing through unless their destination is one of the unique businesses in the area.

and on Foster at 89th offer promise for retail in the Lents Town Center. However, both projects are relatively isolated at some distance from the center of town. Physical separation alone, especially at the Assurety site, makes direct spillover effects for retail in existing buildings unlikely. The projects will most likely be seen as important signs that private investment is being attracted to the area, but will not be enough to spark reinvestment on a broad scale; experience shows that successful retail clusters are responsible for broad scale revitalization. Still, retail success at those locations and visible signs of community investment serve as a start to the desired redevelopment.

Looking to the next few years, the opportunity to break through the constraints of single-loaded retail streets will come with redevelopment of the large parcel of PDC owned land northwest of the intersection of Foster Road and 92nd Avenue surrounding the current Crossroads Plaza. This could anchor a retail main street in Lents, with the potential for a double-loaded retail corridor and a sizeable cluster of retail spaces on 92nd Ave.

Market Conditions

Relatively low land values and housing prices have been a barrier to redevelopment in Lents. The urban style developments envisioned for the Town Center have not occurred, even with substantial PDC assistance. Despite the affordability of Lents property, investors have chosen to go elsewhere in the city to build housing and start new retail. However, for good and for bad, prices are going up as the supply of affordable homes tightens across the region. The question now is not whether, but when, the Lents market will be strong enough to create a self-sustaining cycle of reinvestment.

Narrow Rights-of-way

Existing plans for Lents Town Center call for an improved streetscape with amenities such as wide sidewalks, trees, street furniture, bike lanes, and additional on-street parking to buffer pedestrians from traffic. Such improvements would make Lents Town Center's sidewalks more inviting and comfortable for residents, workers, and shoppers to walk and linger.

Existing rights-of-way widths are too narrow in most of the Lents Town Center to allow these desired streetscape improvements. Portland standards recommend that sidewalks be 12 feet wide and dictate a minimum of 9 feet to install street furniture and trees. Available rights-of-way fall short of those standards on most streets in the Town Center.

The 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Transportation Plan assumed streetscape improvements would be made concurrent with redevelopment. Funding limitations and

unwillingness to use condemnation authority have left the City with little choice but to wait until properties are privately redeveloped. Plans provide that the streetscape improvements would be required as a part of each redevelopment project. Since redevelopment activity has been slow, limited progress on implementing streetscape improvements has occurred.

In the recent months, PDOT has shown a willingness to reassess strategies regarding streetscape improvements. PDC and PDOT are now working closely to address LNA's desire to implement improvements.

Streetscape Improvements



Wider sidewalks and other improvements are necessary for the Lents Town Center to house such amenities as street trees and furniture.

In many areas of the city, the right of way requirements dictate that 12 feet of sidewalk be available for planting street trees.

This is not possible in Lents without significant acquisition of private land. Since condemnation is not a tool utilized in the Town Center, it seems unlikely that traditional street trees and furniture will be installed throughout the area.

Assurety NW plans to install street trees and furniture with the construction of their new development.

Condemnation Policy

Some of the constraints on redevelopment and streetscape improvements stem from a formal understanding that the Portland Development Commission (PDC) not use condemnation as a tool to acquire private property in the Lents Urban

Renewal Area. Having condemnation available, even merely for negotiation, would make it easier for PDC to assemble large parcels of land for redevelopment projects. Redevelopment projects would, in turn, trigger long-delayed streetscape improvements. Lingering resentment from the construction of I-205, in which dozens of Lents homes were condemned and demolished, continues to affect many neighbors' views on this issue. Regardless of its potential benefits, many Lents neighbors insist that PDC not hold condemnation power for fear of abuse and misuse.

The Couplet Decision

Given the high traffic volumes discussed earlier, the Lents Town Center will have difficulty becoming a pedestrian friendly environment for businesses to thrive. Something must be done about the traffic. In 1999, the City adopted a transportation plan for the Town Center that maintained Foster and Woodstock operating as two one-way couplets but added streetscape enhancements and on-street parking. Based on the assumptions and alternatives analysis, this was the most promising option for the area. However, implementation of those streetscape enhancements have been hindered by various barriers and constraints. With new people becoming active in the LNA and with many wondering why redevelopment has not occurred, the question is raised again as to whether or not to decouple these key streets. Many would like to see traffic, a serious barrier to the revitalization of the area, be addressed. The LNA is requesting that PDOT revisit the 1999 transportation plan with new assumptions about how Foster and Woodstock are used and what level of capacity should be provided. Until the debate over whether to keep Foster and Woodstock as they are today or to decouple is decided, the community may not be able to move forward. The final decision should be one that everyone can understand and support in the long-run, regardless of the outcome. Only then can the City and its neighbors move forward with implementation of long-term improvements.



Crossroads Plaza, pictured here is located in the middle of what is now the Lents Town Center.

But what if the "center" changed?

If the couplet remains, the focus of the Town Center could be on 92nd Ave. redevelopment opportunities. If Foster and Woodstock are decoupled and become two, one-way streets the focus could be placed on Foster Road and related retail potential.

Vision:

Lents Town Center 92nd Avenue Focus

Continuation of the Foster/Woodstock Couplet scenario will likely result in Lents Town Center redevelopment north of Foster Road along 92nd, between Foster and Harold. The area will feature the intimate quality of a village main street. Neighbors and visitors will enter the main street with distinctive gateway features, such as Crossroads Plaza, a gateway art piece at 92nd and Harold, or a decorative Intersection Repair treatment in the cul-de-sac that will act as the future MAX station entrance on Ramona. On the main street, neighborhood identity will be reinforced by unifying elements such as sign caps, banners, and art embedded in sidewalks. One or more murals painted onto building walls will bring interest and local culture to the streetscape. The 92nd streetscape will be further unified, softened, and beautified by blooming flower boxes hanging outside windows and attached to building walls.

Neighborhood character will be enhanced by well-designed new buildings that stand alongside historic structures. Greater numbers of visitors will bring 92nd Avenue's sidewalks to life. Lents Town Center will be a convenience and amenity that Lents neighbors will enjoy for years to come.



In this vision, 92nd Ave would be the communities' Main Street. Historic buildings that exist today would serve as a focal point for activity.

Vision:

Lents Town Center Foster Road Focus

Under the Decouplet scenario, many of the same goals can be achieved as with the couplet, but with increased geographic scope and coverage. Decreased traffic volume and speed, along with increased on-street parking, would help return Foster and Woodstock to their historic function as neighborhood main streets, rather than regional thoroughways. New development projects would spring up along Foster and Woodstock, as well as along 92nd. Crossroads Plaza will be the centerpiece of an expansive Town Center that radiates out from it in all directions. Gateway art will serve as highly visible "bookends" to the Town Center, perhaps including a sculpture where Foster currently meets Woodstock and a dramatic art piece integrated with the MAX bridge east of 94th. Adornment of the MAX bridge, along with new plantings on that parcel, would visually screen the I-205 freeway just beyond and block some of its noise as well. Public art projects, sign caps, banners, sidewalk planters, and street trees would harmonize and beautify the streetscape while improved crossings at intersections would create a comfortable and safe pedestrian environment. These investments would, in turn, create fertile ground for new pedestrian-oriented businesses.



In this vision, Foster Road would become the communities' Main Street.

Trillium Artisans, shown here is currently located on Foster in the heart of the Town Center.

DESTINATION: LENTS

Implementation Framework

It is clear that one question in particular greatly influences the future of Lents Town Center:

Will Foster Road and Woodstock Boulevard be decoupled and restored as two-way main streets?

This question frames the manner in which Crossroads Consulting's efforts aim to help the neighborhood consider implementation of community improvements. It raises questions as to where the location of the heart of the Town Center will be and influences the timeline for making improvements. Given the importance of the issue to the neighborhood and in future planning discussions, the strategies that follow are based upon this critical question and two possible choices regarding the future traffic patterns. The recommendations fall into three categories:

- **Immediate improvements that can be pursued regardless of changes to the transportation network**
- **Improvements that are compatible with a Foster/Woodstock Couplet**
- **Improvements that are compatible with a de-coupling of Foster/Woodstock**

This structure provides the LNA with a document that can be used well into the next phases of discussion with public agencies regarding transportation and revitalization in Lents Town Center.

The Couplet Decision



The decision of decoupling is a difficult one for the Lents neighborhood. The couplet provides capacity to help vehicles access I-205.

Decoupling would result in more traffic congestion and diversion of traffic onto surrounding.

DESTINATION: LENTS

Improvement Strategies

Recommendations for Immediate Action: Requires no decision on couplet

The following elements can be implemented throughout the Town Center in the short term, regardless of traffic schemes on Foster and Woodstock.

- Utility poles with unique local character
- Delineation of existing parking spaces along Foster with paint
- Moveable container plants
- Moveable/temporary public art
- Banners
- Community events
- Conversion of southernmost travel lane on Foster to on-street parking
- Renaming Foster Road MAX station to call attention to the nearby Town Center
- Inclusion of lilacs in MAX station landscape plan



Before



After

A moveable container plant and plantings transform the Crossroads Plaza at 92nd Ave and Foster Road.

UTILITY POLES WITH UNIQUE LOCAL CHARACTER

Aging wood utility poles around the Town Center detract from the attractive historic buildings, but these eyesores could easily be transformed into an imageability asset for the neighborhood. Applying and maintaining uniform or thematic paint to the poles would convert them to street art. Attractive, artistically painted poles would visually define the Town Center area, and create a memorable impression for people driving through the area. It is important that the selection of colors and design be of professional quality. An onsite artist could coordinate and direct the efforts of volunteers from the community, much like the common approach to creating community murals. This would be an inexpensive, easy strategy to implement. Lents should consult the Regional Council for the Arts for support and guidance. As with banners, the painted poles would add year-round interest and would require very little maintenance.

First step: Contact the City of Portland to identify ownership of poles and request permission for the project. Follow-up with utility companies may be required.

DELINEATION OF EXISTING PARKING SPACES ALONG FOSTER WITH PAINT

Cars rarely park along the north side of Foster between the I-205 off-ramp and 92nd, making the unmarked parking strip seem more like a traffic lane. Using paint to delineate each parking space would keep traffic out of that space and create a buffer zone between pedestrians and traffic. Appearance of available parking may also encourage passing drivers to stop and shop. There may also be a slowing effect on traffic, as reduced widths are perceived and cars pull into and out of parking spaces.

First step: Contact Rich Newlands at PDOT to pursue.

MOVEABLE CONTAINER PLANTS

Healthy and colorful plantings quickly and easily improve the streetscape's appearance and signal investment of time and money in the Lents Town Center. The use of moveable containers allows plants to be introduced now and relocated as new sidewalks and permanent plantings are installed with redevelopment. Concrete planters, large flower pots, hanging baskets, and flower boxes are good alternatives to consider. LNA should also consider hanging flower baskets from poles to elevate plants and make them visible to passing cars and pedestrians and increase visual impact.

The City will want assurance that the planters will be well maintained. A common approach is to guarantee funding of a maintenance service by nearby businesses. Given the current business climate, this may not be feasible in Lents. As such, the City may choose to approve a plan that relies upon a neighborhood agreement and volunteer efforts, such as an "adopt-a-block" program, to promise engagement of businesses and nearby residents in a working partnership. It may be

On Street Parking



Painted lines mark parking spaces on a Portland street. Delineated parking on Foster Road or Woodstock Blvd. could help slow some of the vehicle traffic.

advantageous to propose this as a demonstration effort; if the plants are not tended, the planters can be removed. It would even be beneficial to place container plants outside of vacant or non-pedestrian oriented businesses to give the area a sense of life.

First step: Inquire with local businesses and neighbors to explore various types of agreements for maintenance. Ask PDC Lents Town Center URA Project Manager to determine if URA funds could purchase boxes or other containers.

MOVEABLE/TEMPORARY PUBLIC ART

Public art enhances the imageability and streetscape quality of a neighborhood. In the near term, moveable and temporary forms of public art could be installed throughout the area. Following a final decision on the couplet and potential subsequent changes to infrastructure, temporary and moveable public art pieces can be re-sited as needed or relinquished altogether in favor of permanent pieces in appropriate sites. The Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC) coordinates public art projects in the Portland area, overseeing virtually all details including funding, project management, and cooperation with public agencies such as PDOT and PDC.

First step: Contact Kristen Calhoun at RACC with project ideas.

BANNERS

Creating a sense of identity for Lents has long been discussed among community leaders. Colorful and unique street banners could adorn utility and/or light poles and provide a simple and moderately priced solution to heighten imageability. These are highly visible solutions to a lack of identity or image and can range from a simple vinyl installation strapped to existing poles, to more elaborate cloth or metal banners featuring decorative fixtures or separate, banner-specific poles. The banners are temporary

Community Banners



Banners are an inexpensive, temporary addition to a neighborhood that foster a sense of image and community.

Banners and holders can be changed for special events or promotions.

and may be moved or changed seasonally or as appropriate. The low cost allows the community to change designs; special community events can be advertised using this community based imaging. Involving the community in designing or even painting banners could serve to improve both neighborhood aesthetics and pride.

First step: Collect banner ideas from neighbors and local businesses. There may be many artists or metal fabricators (welders, auto shops, etc) that can help design an interesting banner. Include the community in the discussion of how to create frames for the project. The Lents area does have many talented craft people. Consider talking with Architectural Iron Products, Inc on SE Foster Road to design and/or fabricate metal banners or decorative banner frames. If not feasible, employ a, low profile frame that simply straps on to poles. Talk to PDC Lents Town Center URA Project Manager to determine if URA funds could purchase banners and frames and pay for installation. Investigate various types of maintenance agreements.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Marketability and livability can be affected by the main street level of activity in the Town Center. Active uses and/or local events cause traffic to slow down and encourage residents to venture to the area. Although loud, the central location of Crossroads Plaza at 92nd and Foster avails itself to community events and gatherings. In past years, the Plaza has hosted the Lents Farmers' Market and after a few vacant years, activity is reappearing with events like the Lents Lilac and Plant Sale in April 2006. Crossroads Consulting recommends that the LNA continue to program activities in the area or encourage other organizations to host events in the Crossroads Plaza. Another prospective center for community activity is the Assurety Northwest site at 91st and Foster. Plans for Assurety include widened sidewalks, street furniture, and retail storefronts. Community activities can occur in the Lents Town Center regardless of the couplet decision. However, the community's decision about the couplet may impact the level and location of activity. Either way, moving the Plaza or adding another Plaza north of Foster on 92nd may create a quieter plaza with the feel of a main street.

First step: Discuss physical changes or additions of plaza areas with PDC, the agency responsible for creation and maintenance of Crossroads Plaza. The Lents Neighborhood Association has taken the lead in hosting community centered events and activities in the Town Center. The LNA could invite local organizations, such as Rose CDC and Portland YouthBuilders, to host events in the Plaza. The Plaza could also host traveling information kiosks or mini-festivals. If size of the space is an issue, nearby parking lots could be negotiated for use with the property owners.



Foster Road is three travel lanes from I-205 through the couplet.

CONVERSION OF SOUTHERNMOST TRAVEL LANE ON FOSTER TO ON-STREET PARKING

Converting the travel lane into a parking strip along the south side of Foster Road between 89th and 94th Ave could slow through-traffic, add on-street parking capacity, and improve the pedestrian experience. PDOT believes this may be feasible in the near term and could be implemented soon, with little expense. The couplet discussion has delayed action on this, but Crossroads Consulting recommends proceeding even if it is temporary. If decoupling is approved, it will take years to implement.

First step: Contact Rich Newlands at PDOT to pursue.

RENAMING FOSTER ROAD MAX STATION

Renaming the station “Lents Town Center Station” (or similar name) would have two main benefits. First, it raises the general public’s awareness of Lents and the presence of a Town Center. Second, the unique name contributes to a defined sense of place, creating appeal and interest in the area. Achieving this requires few resources, outside of determination and dialogue with TriMet. As work progresses on the MAX Green Line, it will be more difficult to obtain this change, so action should be taken immediately.

First step: Contact Elizabeth Davidson, Public Relations at TriMet and pursue. The LNA may need to address the issue with TriMet at the policy level.



The MAX Green Line will bring new opportunities to Lents. Four stations will be constructed in the neighborhood, one located at the intersection of Foster Road and I-205 in the Town Center. Estimated completion for this project is 2009.

INCLUSION OF LILACS IN MAX STATION LANDSCAPE PLAN

Small changes in landscaping and maintenance can have impact to the viewer. Neighborhood involvement in landscaping choices at the MAX station and roads through the Town Center area would be highly beneficial and could come at little to no cost to LNA. Lilacs have historical significance to Lents and, as such, including them in the landscaping would help enhance the neighborhood’s historic nature. Furthermore, this type of planting is used less frequently by TriMet designers and would create visual and olfactory interest while adding to imageability and unique sense of place. With landscape design currently underway, speaking with TriMet’s I-205 landscape designer early on will be key, as will following up and maintaining dialogue to ensure the neighborhood’s request is considered.

First Step: Contact Elizabeth Davidson, Public Relations at TriMet and pursue. The LNA may need to address the issue with TriMet at the policy level.

DESTINATION: LENTS

Improvement Strategies

Recommendations for Future Action: Requires decision on whether or not to keep the couplet

It is unlikely that a true, pedestrian-scaled town center will develop along Foster and Woodstock, if the couplet remains in its current state. Traffic speed and noise in the current configuration present formidable barriers making a pedestrian orientation implausible. Right-of-way may continue to be an issue for some types of streetscape improvements. The requested reconsideration of the couplet issue by LNA may result in one of two scenarios: either a couplet remains and 92nd north of Foster serves as a main street or Foster and Woodstock return to two-way traffic and Foster serves as the community's main street. Whether or not Foster and Woodstock are decoupled is of central importance to how Lents Town Center will look, feel, and function in the decades to come. A final decision on this issue will help the LNA move forward and help developers feel secure regarding design and orientation of future redevelopment projects.

The following longer range recommendations for improvements can be implemented with either scenario. The key differences will be the locations for improvements. Implementation times may vary also.

- Reduction of travel lanes (study required)
- Addition of traffic signals (study required)
- Public art and gateways
- Container plants
- Sign caps
- Intersection repair and/or beautification project
- Improvement of pedestrian crossings
- Wayfinding signs to MAX station
- Lilacs and trees on ODOT land just west of I-205
- Reduction of posted speed



An intersection repair project in Portland adds art to a neighborhood and serves to slow traffic.

REDUCTION OF TRAVEL LANES

For either couplet or decouplet scenario, the number of travel lanes on Foster could be reduced to improve the streetscape. The result will be slower traffic, potential for more parking, and safer pedestrian access to the new MAX light rail platform. This will require a study by PDOT. Maps 7 and 8 show the possible scenarios for reducing travel lanes with and without a couplet.

Continued Couplet: The southern lane on westbound Foster between 94th and SE 90th should be eliminated to reduce the travel lanes to two lanes. This extra footage could be converted to parking or used to widen sidewalks to make room for streetscape improvements such as trees or street furniture. A similar lane reduction should be considered on eastbound Woodstock through the Town Center; however, this may be unlikely given the technical information presented in the 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Transportation Plan. The LNA believes traffic congestion is acceptable if they could reduce the road width; a careful study to examine diversion onto neighborhood streets would need to be conducted. This could be examined for both Foster Road and Woodstock Blvd.

Decouplet: LNA would like Foster and Woodstock to be returned to two-way streets. These would likely require center turn lanes to facilitate left turn movements, and may restrict parking to only one side of the road on Foster given today's available right-of-way.

First step: Contact Rich Newlands of PDOT to pursue an update of the 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Transportation Plan.

ADDITION OF TRAFFIC SIGNALS

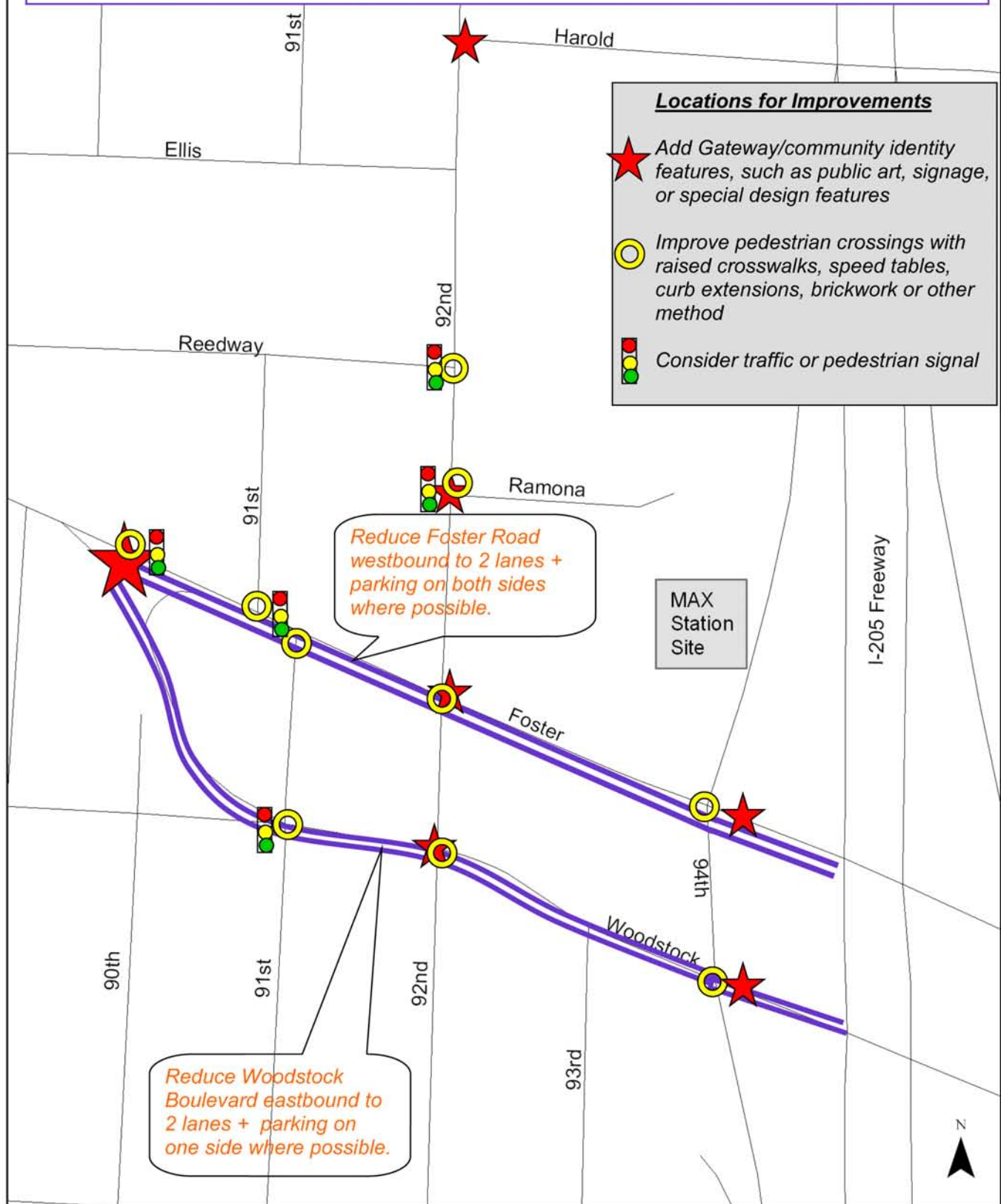
For either couplet or decouplet scenario, traffic signals should be considered on Foster, Woodstock, and 92nd to help manage the high volumes of traffic through the Town Center. Traffic signals will facilitate pedestrian access to key destinations, such as the new MAX Green Line Station and the Assurety Northwest development on Foster. This will require a study by PDOT. A study will help determine which area(s) may be eligible for a traffic signal. Pedestrian signals may also be an option. Maps 7 and 8 show possible locations for traffic signals or pedestrian signals to be studied.

Continued Couplet: The addition of signals to improve pedestrian safety is important, considering the large volume of traffic and speed at which it travels under the existing couplet. Given the incoming development at the Assurety Northwest site on Foster Road and the distance to the next westbound traffic signal, placement of a signal at SE 91st or the Assurety entrance may be warranted. This would provide a safe crossing to the new mixed use development and slow traffic that would otherwise gather speed through this long block. Eastbound presents fewer needs/opportunities for lights, but formal consultation and study should be pursued to determine placement.

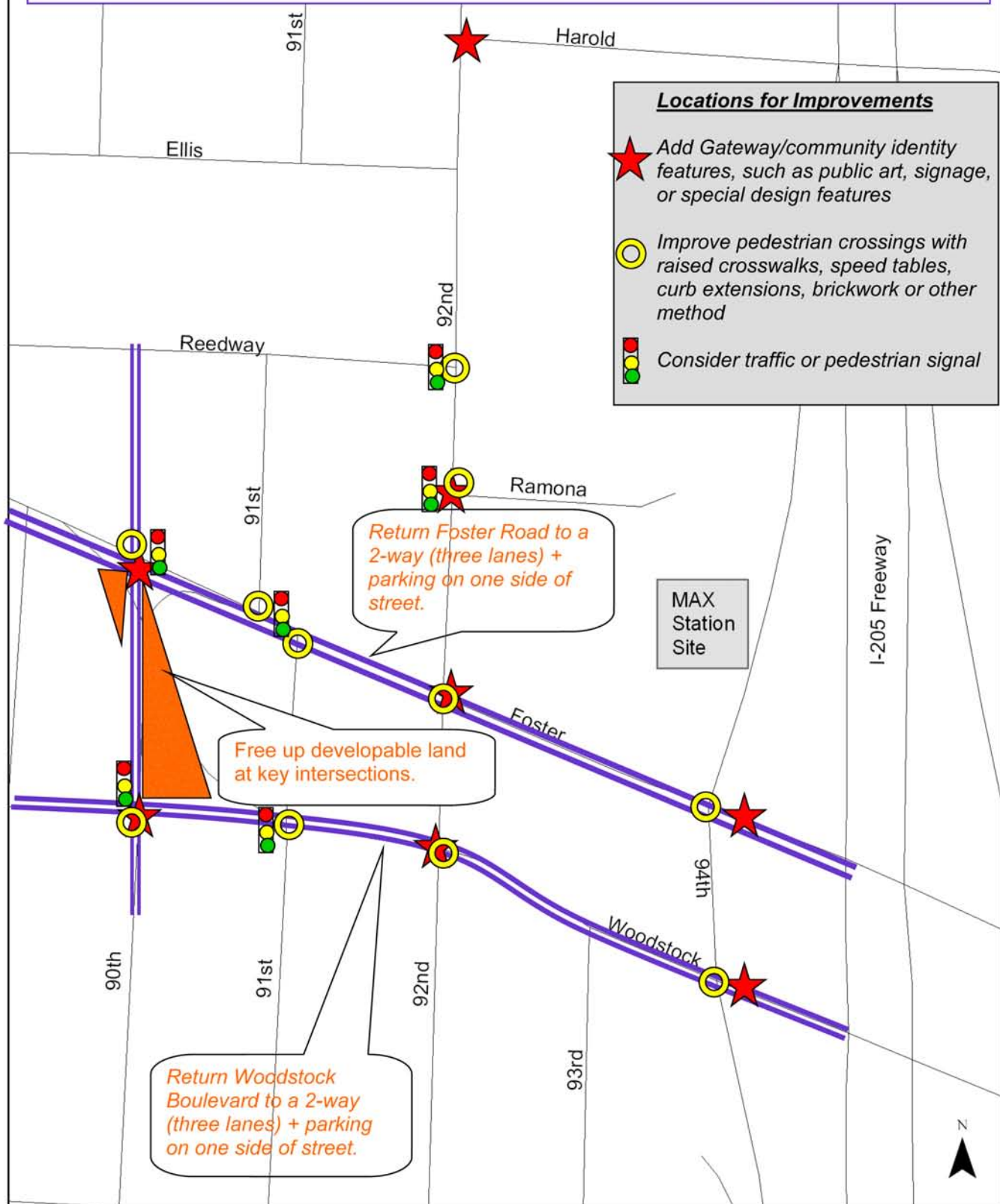
Decouplet: If Foster and Woodstock are decoupled, crossing the street at unsignalized intersections will become much more difficult. Vehicles will be traveling in both directions, making it more difficult for pedestrians to find gaps in the traffic and also for drivers to see the pedestrians. It is recommended that a traffic signal be considered at SE 90th and Foster and SE 90th and Woodstock, at a minimum.

First step: Contact Rich Newlands of PDOT to pursue an update of the 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Transportation Plan.

Lents Town Center — Retain Couplet (Make it more pedestrian and business friendly)



Lents Town Center — Decouple Foster/Woodstock (To create a more pedestrian and business friendly environment)



PUBLIC ART AND GATEWAYS

For either couplet or decouplet scenario, many forms of permanent public art such as pieces embedded in new sidewalks or murals or sculptures could be incorporated into the streetscape. The Regional Arts & Culture Council coordinates public art projects in the Portland area, overseeing virtually all details including funding, project management, and cooperation with public agencies such as PDOT and PDC. Strategic placement of art may be used to lead people to the MAX Green Line Station entrances on Ramona or Foster. Installation of large-scale art on the MAX light rail bridge east of 94th is another exciting opportunity to give the area a memorable visual identity. Tri-Met is not considering art on the bridge at this time. Gateway art projects near 92nd and Harold, Foster and Woodstock, and the I-205 overpass would further reinforce town center identity and create a sense of arrival into a distinct area.

Continued Couplet: If the couplet remains, 92nd should become the focus for pedestrian improvements and attractions. A coordinated public art program along 92nd would be instrumental in creating a special identity for the street, while

Gateway Elements



The Laurelhurst Neighborhood in SE Portland has memorable monuments signifying entrance to the historic area.

creating signs of investment and care. This can occur without adding right-of-way footage. A gateway art project near 92nd and Harold would also reinforce a town center feel. Although Foster would not serve as a pedestrian main street, the beginning of the couplet at 90th has PDOT right of way that could house a gateway piece on the west end of the Town Center.

Decouplet: If Foster Road and Woodstock are decoupled, Foster could become a significant business district with main street qualities. New opportunities for development would be created on the west end and thoughtful and deliberate urban design could create substantial gateways through signage and architecture. Many forms of permanent public art could be installed throughout the Town Center.

First step: Contact Rich Newlands of PDOT to pursue an update of the 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Transportation Plan.

CONTAINER PLANTS

Container plants, rather than street trees, are being recommended given the past right-of-way issues. Street trees can be incorporated where there is sufficient right-of-way, but both permanent and moveable container plants could be installed where space allows, including private property, near doorways, and in parking lots. Adding living color with flowers and foliage would increase the appearance of neighborhood investment. Funds could be requested from the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee (URAC), and PDC may be able to purchase the containers once PDOT approves use of the right-of-way or private locations are identified. The City will want assurance that the planters will be well maintained. The most common way is to fund a maintenance service with funds assessed from nearby businesses.

Given the current business climate, this may not be feasible in Lents. As such, the City may choose to approve a plan that relies upon a neighborhood agreement and volunteer efforts, such as an “adopt-a-block” program, to promise engagement of businesses and nearby residents in a working partnership. It may be advantageous to propose this as a demonstration effort; if the plants are not tended, the planters can be removed. It would even be beneficial to place container plants outside of vacant or non-pedestrian oriented businesses to give the area a sense of life. If right-of-way permits, curb extensions or parking spaces could be used for new street trees or other permanent concrete planters.

Continued Couplet: Installation of window flower boxes on building walls facing 92nd north of Foster would result in immediate imageability and streetscape improvements. Regular placement and thematic planting of flower boxes would create a unifying visual effect and give 92nd and Lents Town Center a unique image within the Portland area.

Decouplet: Converting lanes of traffic along Foster and Woodstock to on-street parking yields expanded opportunities for permanent container plants because curb extensions could be created at intersections. Placing trees, flowers, and other plantings in permanent concrete planters on curb extensions is relatively easy to implement and can greatly beautify the streetscape.

First step: Contact Rich Newlands of PDOT to pursue an update of the 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Transportation Plan.

SIGN CAPS

The installation of toppers or caps for street signs will create a sense of community or neighborhood, pride and ownership. The LNA could work with artists in the community to design the caps, and work with PDOT and PDC to determine the best locations and coordinate production. This activity can likely be funded within the Lents URA budget. Crossroads Consulting recommends waiting until an update of the 1999 transportation plan since street connections and signage needs could change under the decouplet scenario.

Sign Caps



Example of sign caps used for neighborhood identity in other parts of Portland.

INTERSECTION REPAIR

City Repair is a non-profit, Portland-based organization dedicated to enhancing public spaces. Its Intersection Repair Program aims to create beautiful public squares out of ordinary intersections with paint and/or paving materials. Intersection Repair projects are built by neighborhood volunteers with organizational assistance from City Repair. The end result is a more beautiful intersection that serves to slow vehicle traffic and reinforce neighborhood identity.

For both the continued couplet and a decouplet, such improvement at 92nd and Reedway or 92nd and Ramona would bring neighbors together, build community pride, strengthen imageability, and improve the pedestrian access to the MAX station entrance on Ramona Street. The cul-de-sac at the future MAX station entrance on Ramona should be considered for this treatment as well. Intersection repair at this location would enhance neighborhood imageability and convey a welcoming feel to MAX riders disembarking at that station. Intersection repair work on SE 92nd will need to be highly creative and focus on safety given the high traffic volumes on this street.

First step: Assemble a representative group of residents within two blocks of the chosen Intersection Repair site and contact City Repair.

IMPROVEMENT OF PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS AT KEY INTERSECTIONS

Pedestrian crossings often include curb extensions, speed tables, raised crosswalks, and/or unique paving treatments, such as different colored pavers or bricks. Portland most often uses curb extensions. “Virtual” curb extensions, though not commonly used in Portland, may require little funding and are easily implemented. Moveable planters are placed in parking areas near crossing points and the street surface is marked to visually extend the curb. Just as with permanent curb extensions, the street width is effectively narrowed so pedestrians can cross more safely. Disadvantages occur in

maintenance requirements and the possibility of reducing pedestrian visibility to drivers. Permanent curb extensions are preferable, but their implications on infrastructure (e.g., stormwater and drainage systems) may incur costs and design that postpone their installation. In addition, permanent curb extensions may need to be reconfigured when redevelopment occurs on adjacent parcels and other street changes are made. Traffic signals and synchronization of traffic signals are also measures to consider for improving pedestrian movement. See maps 7 and 8 to identify recommended locations for improved pedestrian crossings

Continued Couplet: Traffic volumes along 92nd are high, especially at peak times and the lack of an active pedestrian environment causes drivers to not anticipate foot traffic. Improved pedestrian crossings along 92nd would heighten driver awareness of pedestrians and enhance safety and comfort on this main street.

Decouplet: Decoupling Foster and Woodstock should help reduce speed, thereby easing pedestrian crossings. Still, improved crossings at key intersections along Foster and Woodstock will be needed to create a pleasant and pedestrian-friendly town center environment.

First step: Contact Rich Newlands of PDOT to pursue an update of the 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Transportation Plan.

WAYFINDING SIGNS TO/FROM MAX STATION

Wayfinding signs to and from the station platform could be installed at multiple locations along Foster, Woodstock, and 92nd. Signs could also be posted on the platform to direct transit users into the Town Center. These signs would encourage locals and visitors to use MAX and reinforce a feeling of town center convenience and connectivity throughout the area. Facilitating local pedestrian traffic to and from the MAX station would reinforce the Town Center as its own place and could also increase demand for goods and services, such as coffee shops and other food/retail uses. In addition, it will help those passing through or visiting Lents to find and use the public transportation system, as well as draw them into the Town Center and encourage interest and development in the area. The MAX Green Line will be open in 2009, so signs to and from the station could not be implemented until then.

First step: Contact PDOT and Tri-Met, to inquire whether way-finding signage is being planned for the opening of the MAX Green Line.

LILACS AND TALL TREES ON ODOT LAND BETWEEN FOSTER, WOODSTOCK, 94TH, AND I-205

The addition of distinct landscaping in this location would have multiple benefits. With their historic significance to the town, lilacs planted in the ODOT right-of-way could create a gateway effect. In the spring, the flowers would give visitors and residents visual cues that they were entering or leaving a special place. As well as providing enhanced imaginability, implementation of gateway treatments tends to help slow traffic by giving drivers a reason to slow down and enjoy the scenery. Furthermore, increasing plantings in the greenspace would help absorb sound created by automobile traffic on I-205. The combination of visual, sound, and safety improvements gained by this treatment could also encourage walking. This

strategy is appropriate regardless of any decision made on the Foster/Woodstock couplet, but can be part of a streetscape plan.

First step: Inquire with ODOT and/or PDOT about how to influence or become involved in landscaping choices. LNA should be prepared to consider partnership in funding the enhanced landscaping and its maintenance. In addition, the agencies and LNA should negotiate a long term plan for the upkeep of the area. Financial resources for the initial landscaping, may be available through PDC's urban renewal funds for Lents.

REDUCTION OF POSTED SPEED

As recommended in the 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Plan, LNA should pursue a reduction of the speed limit through the Town Center. The earlier plan states, "Request the State Speed Control Board reduce the posted speed limit to 30 mph on Foster and Woodstock within the couplet, and on 92nd from Reedway to Tolman to 25 mph.

The posted speed on 92nd Ave is already 25 mph but is 35 mph just south and north of the Town Center. Foster Road through the Town Center currently has no speed signs posted, but appears to be 35 mph based on signs to the east and west.

First step: Contact Rich Newlands of PDOT to determine how to pursue a lower speed limit and signage on Foster through the Town Center.

DESTINATION: LENTS

Next Steps

The Lents Town Center is conveniently located to roads, freeways, and soon transit. It also has capacity for new businesses and housing. With the MAX Green Line station opening in 2009, the Town Center has new potential; pedestrians will have reason to walk through the area and riders of the new MAX line will see the area from a bridge nearly 30 feet above Foster Road. This is not an opportunity to be wasted or waited on—implementation of improvements to the area must be in place as the new transit riders venture into and out of this area.

The Lents Neighborhood Association would like to see their Town Center develop into a pedestrian friendly destination for neighbors and the region. This will require the collaboration of the various public agencies, current property owners, potential developers, existing businesses and neighbors. The LNA does not have the resources to fully implement this revitalization. Partnerships will be crucial. Over the last few months, the LNA has been pursuing these partnerships and gearing up for community action.

The first crucial step to moving forward with implementation of improvements is to get a commitment from PDOT and PDC to update the 1999 Lents Town Center Business District Transportation Plan. The updated plan will provide valuable information for the current discussion surrounding the Foster-Woodstock couplet. The discussion and ultimate decision on the couplet must be supported by all stakeholders in the implementation of revitalizations efforts. A final decision on this issue will put agencies, community, and potential developers in a place to move forward.

The LNA should also move forward with the “quick win” improvements outlined in the improvement strategies. Implementation of these improvements will be small steps in the right direction to making Lents Town Center a more memorable and inviting place. These small steps can be big steps in encouraging others to invest time and money in the Lents Town Center, soon to be a very special place.



DESTINATION: LENTS

Resources & References

KEY CONVERSATIONS & CONSULTATIONS

Kristen Calhoun, Regional Arts & Culture Council, personal conversation/consultation, May 1, 2006.

Brian Borello, Artist (Foster Max Station artist), personal conversation/consultation, April 2006.

Bill Cunningham, Portland Bureau of Planning City Planner, personal conversation/consultation, March 2006.

Elizabeth Davidson, TriMet Public Relations Coordinator, neighborhood tour of future Lents Max Green Line stations, February 16, 2006.

David Davies, PDC Project Coordinator, personal conversation/consultation, April 7, 2006. (Subsequent e-mail/phone consultations)

Alma Flores, Portland Bureau of Planning City Planner, personal conversation/consultation, March 2006.

Tom Kloster, METRO Transportation Planning Manager, personal conversation/consultation, May 9, 2006.

Kris Lake-Nord, Meadows Group Realtor, personal conversation/consultation, various dates.

Rich Newlands, PDOT Project Manager, personal conversation/consultation, February 15, 2006. (Subsequent e-mail/phone consultations)

Meghan Oldfield, TriMet Green Line Engineer, personal conversation/consultation, March 10, 2006. (Subsequent consultation with Meghan Oldfield, Sean Batty, and Jeff Goodling of I-205 Light Rail engineering team)

John Southgate, City of Hillsboro Community Development Director (former PDC Lents Town Center URA Project Manager, personal conversation, February 8, 2006.

Michelle Travers, TriMet Public Art Coordinator, personal conversation/consultation, April 26, 2006.

KEY MEETINGS

SWOT Analysis conducted at the Lents Neighborhood Association General Meeting, March 28, 2006.

Lents Transportation Issues Meeting held at Metro, attendees included David Davies (PDC), Robert Liberty (Metro Councilor), Rich Newlands (PDOT), Dewey Akers (LNA), Jeff Rose (LNA), Kris Lake-Nord (LNA), Jess Laventall (LNA and Portland Pedestrian Advisory Committee), Andrew Gulizia (Crossroads Consulting), and Vanessa Meyer (Crossroads Consulting), March 29, 2006.

PRESENTATIONS & PROGRAMS ATTENDED

Lents Community Resource Fair, Lent Elementary School, April 29, 2006

Carol Coletta, president and CEO of CEOs for Cities. GET CENTERED! Catalyzing investment in centers, Metro Portland, Oregon. April 13, 2006.

Michele Reeves, Windermere/CCRGI broker. GET CENTERED! Rejuvenating main street retail, Metro Portland, Oregon. May 11, 2006.

Michael Ronkin, Oregon Department of Transportation, and landscape architect Terry Reckord of MacLeod Reckord. GET CENTERED! Innovative Streetscape Design, Metro Portland, Oregon. April 27, 2006.

Jeff Tashman, Tashman Johnson, LLC. GET CENTERED! Public financing tools for centers, Metro Portland, Oregon. June 8, 2006.

Resources & References (continued)

PUBLISHED RESOURCES

122nd Avenue Corridor Study, a market analysis for Portland Development Commission's 122nd Avenue Station Area Study, Johnson Gardener, 2004.

122nd Avenue Station Area Study, Phase One Report & Recommendations, June 2005, Portland Development Commission

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