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Regional Mainstreets: An Implementation Strategy to Promote Main Street and Corridor Development

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REGIONAL MAINSTREETS:
AN IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
TO PROMOTE
MAIN STREET AND CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT



METRO

July 1995

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1. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

This report summarizes the results of the Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) grant-funded portion of Metro's Regional Mainstreets Project. The work is part of a larger Metro planning effort focused on the "main streets" designated on the Region 2040 Growth Concept.

The report contains an introductory discussion of the purpose of the study; a section that examines the factors associated with vital main streets; a section that recommends an overall implementation strategy and specific actions by Metro, local governments and the development community; and a presentation of key "regional standards and guidelines" for consideration in local comprehensive plans and land use regulations.

The following introductory section speaks to the key concepts of Region 2040 and explains the role of main streets as part of a compact urban growth form. It then describes the objectives of the Regional Mainstreets project, and in particular, the TGM grant funded portion.

The regional planning process for growth management in the Portland metropolitan area (Region 2040) includes a "future vision," a "regional growth concept" and the "2040 Framework," which is a set of functional plans to achieve the vision and growth concept.

Region 2040 began with a comprehensive inventory of the region's land use, environmental and infrastructure characteristics, and especially its transportation system. For this study, alternative projections of population and employment growth for the region were examined and a mid range projection was adopted.

Based on community input, three alternative growth concepts were developed to show how the region might develop over the next 50 years. These included an alternative (A) that showed the region "growing out," an alternative (B) that showed the region "growing up" and an alternative (C) that combined elements of (B) with the conscious shifting of some metro area growth to "neighboring cities" outside of, but near, the metro area.

Metro staff then allocated the projected growth to different areas of the region, reflecting the different growth concepts. To do so, all land in the region was classified by type of area. Each area is referred to as a "design type." An example of a design type is a "regional center" or a "inner neighborhood."

These design types range from the Portland Central City, the region's most dense and developed area, to "neighborhoods", the region's least dense areas. Among the design types are "main streets" and (transit) "corridors." A complete list of these design types is shown in Table 1.

After the three growth alternatives were evaluated, with extensive public involvement, a "preferred alternative" was developed. This alternative was preliminarily approved by the Metro Council in December 1994, and is now considered the Region 2040 Growth Concept.

2040 Framework
and the Region
2040 Growth
Concept

The Region 2040 Growth Concept retained most of the "growing up" characteristics of Alternative B, with minor expansions of the UGB. The Growth Concept calls for the intensification of development within the Urban Growth Boundary in general, and in particular within the Portland Central City, regional centers, town centers, and main streets.

Table 1. Design Types

Centers	
The Central City	Downtown Portland, will retain 20% of region's employment; 1990 density of 150 people/acre would increase to 250 people/acre.*
Regional Centers	Major nodes of compact development, there are eight regional centers: Hillsboro, Gateway, downtown Beaverton, Washington Square, downtown Milwaukie, downtown Oregon City, Clackamas Town Center, downtown Gresham: will grow from 24 people/acre to 60 people/acre.
Town Centers	Serving smaller areas than regional centers, these compact, multi-modal areas will grow from an average of 23 people/acre to about 40 people (residents and employees)/acre, equal to the current densities of SE Hawthorne Boulevard or downtown Hillsboro. Examples of town centers include downtown Forest Grove, Hillsdale and Troutdale.
Corridors	Less dense than centers, these are located along good quality transit lines. Densities would grow moderately, from about 19 people/acre to about 22 people/acre.
Station Communities	Nodes of development centered around light rail or high capacity transit. Specific station area planning is now underway.
Main Streets	Providing neighborhood retail and services, and sometimes having some regional specialty, main streets would grow moderately, from 36 people/acre in 1990 to 39 people/acre in 2040.
Inner Neighborhoods	Close in older residential areas, with smaller lot sizes
Outer Neighborhoods	More outlying residential neighborhoods, with larger lot sizes and lower densities.

* People per acre includes both residents and employees.

2040 Framework

Regional Mainstreets Project: Objectives and Process

Project Report

The 2040 Framework will include functional plans and programs. It will also include regulatory actions that local governments will be required to adopt. Finally it will call for regional investment, incentives and other related actions. Metro staff is currently engaged in designing the structure and process that will comprise the 2040 Framework implementation.

As one of the first steps in the development of the 2040 Framework, the Regional Mainstreets Project is focusing on the development of main streets and transit corridors. The objectives of these efforts are to see how these areas function, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, review and evaluate the growth allocations used in Region 2040 and develop strategies to promote their development.

The study process involved Metro planning staff, a special advisor to Metro staff and a consultant team consisting of planners, real estate economists and architects/urban designers. The project team worked with a Technical Advisory Committee composed of local government planners, developers, lenders, business owners and other members of the development community.

The basic work program included:

- Reviewing elements of successful main streets.
- Evaluating the Region 2040 growth targets for main streets.
- Selecting main street and corridor case study areas.
- Interviewing stakeholders to identify factors of success.
- Analyzing the case study areas in terms of the Region 2040 growth targets, land use, transportation, demographics and the market for commercial and residential development.
- Developing an overall implementation strategy and specific implementation actions to promote main street and corridor development.
- Developing development and design objectives, standards and guidelines. These can be used by Metro to assist local governments in shaping their local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances to promote main street and corridor development.

This report focuses on key findings of the study process and more detailed recommendations regarding the overall implementation strategy, specific implementation actions and recommended development standards. More detailed descriptions of the case study analysis and the market opportunities along main streets are provided in two technical memoranda that accompany this project report.

2. WHAT ARE MAIN STREETS AND CORRIDORS? WHAT MAKES THEM SUCCESSFUL?

Main Streets and Corridors

Main Streets

Main streets are described in a recent Metro newsletter:

During the early decades of this century, main streets served by transit and characterized by a strong business and civic community were a major land-use pattern throughout the region. Examples remain in Hillsboro, Milwaukie, Oregon City and Gresham, as well as the Westmoreland neighborhood and Hawthorne Boulevard. Today, these areas are undergoing a revival and provide an efficient and effective land-use and transportation alternative. The recommended alternative calls for main streets to grow from 1990 levels of 36 people per acre to 39 per acre. Main streets would accommodate nearly two percent of housing growth.

Main streets typically will serve neighborhoods and may develop a regional specialization - such as antiques, fine dining, entertainment or specialty clothing - that draws people from other parts of the region. When several main streets occur within a few blocks of one another, they serve as a dispersed town center, such as the main street areas of Belmont, Hawthorne and Division that form a town center for inner Southeast Portland.

Thus, main streets historically served the basic retail and service needs of a neighborhood. Main Street originally "housed" the grocery, drug store and post office. In the normal course of life, neighborhood residents depended on main streets for a large proportion of their needs. Trips along main streets, and in many cases to main streets, were on foot, bus, or trolley.

Today, main streets are still important to neighborhoods, but neighborhood residents obtain a larger proportion of shopping and services at regional malls, community shopping centers, hypermarkets (e.g. Fred Meyer) and warehouse retailers (e.g. Costco, Cub Foods). Today, main streets such as SE Hawthorne Boulevard provide a narrower but still critical range of goods and services, often focusing on specialty retail needs, restaurants and personal, medical and professional services.

Metro anticipates several trends that will help main streets regain some of the commercial and residential importance they had in the past. One is that as the population diversifies and the mix of household types continues to favor smaller households, more households will prefer the urban amenities and convenience of main streets. Another is that as congestion increases in the region and frequent auto trips to malls and outlying big box retailers become more difficult, main streets, with their characteristic good pedestrian and bicycle access and connections to adjacent neighborhoods, will offer an increasing premium in convenience. Finally, main streets are seen as good places to develop multi-family housing. In fact, higher density housing on main streets is seen as an alternative to densifying and perhaps disturbing existing and single family neighborhoods.

The Region 2040 Growth Concept designates a relatively small number of main streets. However, they still represent a wide range of development conditions. Some are urban; some are suburban. Some are commercially thriving; some are struggling. Some are located near major sources of retail competition; others are more isolated.

(Transit) Corridors

Corridors are described in a recent Metro newsletter:

Corridors are not as dense as centers, but also are located along good quality transit lines. An example of a present-day corridor are Beaverton-Hillsdale Highway or Macadam Avenue. They provide a place for densities that are somewhat higher than today and that are convenient to transit. Typical new developments would include rowhouses, duplexes and one- to three-story office and retail buildings, and average 25 persons per acre.

In contrast to main streets, there are a large number of corridors designated in the Region 2040 Growth Concept. This reflects the assumption that there will be an extensive transit system providing 10 minute peak hour service on major routes throughout the region.

Because of the large number and variety of corridors, they are extremely hard to characterize. However, corridors are logical places for higher density housing to locate because of the proximity to good transit service and access to employment and shopping.

The range of housing densities that would be appropriate to corridors is perhaps wider than that for main streets. Small lot subdivisions and generously sized, attached single-family housing would represent the low end of the density range appropriate for corridors.

The Regional Mainstreets process began with a look at "what makes a main street or corridor successful?" Metro staff and consultants examined other cities (including Toronto, Ontario, which has an ongoing main streets program, and successful main streets in the Portland region) and reviewed available research to reach an understanding of the critical elements of main street success.

Many key ingredients were identified, some of them pertaining to land use patterns, some to the main street built environment, some to social and organizational issues. In discussion with the Regional Mainstreets Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), all agreed that successful main streets grew over time ("organically") and could not be developed all at once.

It should be noted that all of the following factors apply to the success of town centers and other "nodes" of activity. Some of the key ingredients of main street success include:

1. Population Density

Population density, on and adjacent to main streets is a key element of main street and corridor success. The Long Branch Mainstreet Project report, "41 Ways to Revitalize Mainstreet" (Toronto Metro Planning Department) concluded in a comparison of successful and less successful main streets, that the most critical difference was the population density within a .6 mile distance. This study concludes that large numbers of residents that can walk or bike to main street businesses are necessary.

What Makes Main Streets and Corridors Successful?

The most often cited examples of successful main streets in the Portland metro area are Hawthorne Boulevard and the NW 21st/NW 23rd Avenue district. In the case of Hawthorne, adjacent neighborhoods are primarily single family, though generally on 5,000 s.f. lots. On Hawthorne itself, however, are many older apartment buildings. NW Portland is the most dense neighborhood in the state.

The degree to which local support of retail and services can support a main street is discussed in more detail in the market analysis. However, it is clear that a combination of local-serving retail and some wider market draw contribute to main street success in Portland.

2. Pedestrian Circulation System

Main streets do not feel or operate like main streets in the absence of pedestrian traffic. The traditional image of a main street has as its essence the storefronts fronting the sidewalks and people on foot. Pedestrian crossings are frequent and safe. Though there are models of suburban main streets that differ from the traditional main street, there is no substitute for the presence of pedestrians.

Pedestrians will not patronize an area that does not accommodate them safely and conveniently. The case study analysis revealed that in suburban locations like Lake Grove, people will drive from one destination to another within the same area because walking from place to place is not too far but too difficult and too dangerous.

3. Streetscape

Pedestrians are attracted by an interesting and continuous streetscape. If there is a consistent building line with few gaps, such as surface parking lots or vacant or underdeveloped properties, this will draw residents out of their cars and onto their feet. Once on their feet, pedestrians become patrons of main street retail shops and services.

Streetscape is composed of a variety of elements. The building line - where the buildings meet the street - is a major element. If the building line is consistent and at the sidewalk, the street edge is better defined. Buildings that have different setbacks can still maintain a consistent street presence if substantial landscaping or other elements are at the street edge.

The height and mass of the buildings is also important in defining an attractive street environment. The balance of building height and street size is especially important, and the combination of two-four story buildings on a street with a 55 - 60 foot curb-to-curb distance seems to work very well on traditional main streets.

Wider streets can also provide a good streetscape, even if the building height is modest. In these cases, the presence of street trees to create a strong edge is critical. If the street is too wide for informal pedestrian crossings, then it is important to provide pedestrian refuges mid-street. Such refuges might consist of a median or even discontinuous pedestrian islands.

Building facades that have lots of windows at street level create interest for pedestrians. Building facades that express a common architectural theme can also create interest.

The streetscape is also defined by the sidewalk width and the quality of the walking experience. The presence of a parking lane - with cars parked - commonly has an important buffering effect, insulating pedestrians from the noise and threat of the moving motor vehicles. Street trees that provide buffering and shade are good. For Oregon, incorporating awnings or other weather protection into a building facade provides a meaningful amenity for pedestrians.

Finally, the streetscape can be enhanced with public open spaces such as plazas or smaller outdoor seating areas where people can congregate and which provide other destinations for pedestrians.

4. Demographics

The presence of a neighborhood population with the ability and inclination to patronize main street businesses is obviously essential. The market analysis conducted for this study hypothesizes that there is a relationship between the number of younger, smaller, one and two person households and the success of a main street. Though households with higher income may seem more essential, younger couples and singles are more apt to patronize the restaurants, coffee shops, book stores and local retail and service establishments that form the backbone of main street commerce, because on main streets there are opportunities for greater social interaction. Larger, higher income households may be more likely to patronize shopping centers than main street businesses because they are purchasing in greater volume.

Portland's successes - Hawthorne and NW 21st/23rd - have a high proportion of one and two person households in adjacent neighborhoods. But then, so does Belmont. Demographics are a good contributor, but are not alone sufficient to generate a successful main street.

5. Main Street Business Mix

The converse of having a neighborhood population attuned to main street is to have main street businesses attuned to the neighborhood population. Over time, the tenant mix will respond to market opportunities, but this may be a long time. There is a high degree of inertia in many main streets resulting from unmotivated property owners and business owners. These people may perceive opportunities to attract more neighborhood patronage but are not prepared to act.

Unlike a shopping center, where management exerts careful control over tenant mix, main streets are agglomerations of individual businesses and buildings. Attaining the appropriate mix in the absence of a management mechanism often takes years, and many times does not occur at all. The recommended response to this challenge is discussed in the following paragraph.

6. Main Street Organization

As discussed above, the management of a shopping center carefully controls tenant mix. Main streets can achieve some of the benefits of this type of management if they are motivated and organized. The recommended approach would include an assessment that defines the market niche for a particular main street and evaluates how the current mix matches the perceived market opportunities. Following this evaluation, strategies can be developed to actively recruit new businesses, or at least advise landlords as to where their best leasing opportunities may be.

In addition to addressing tenant mix issues, main street businesses can work together on common district-wide promotional efforts, public events and storefront and facade revitalization.

7. Traffic

Vehicular traffic can be a blessing and a curse. The key appears to be traffic levels and speeds that do not pose threats to pedestrian comfort or safety. Once cars are moving at over 30 mph or so, their tendency to relate to and be attracted by businesses lining main street is reduced.

The number of cars passing a retail storefront is critical; often retail spaces are rated by their "exposure" to car traffic. More is perceived to be better. But if cars are moving too rapidly they do not benefit the retailer. Traffic calming as opposed to traffic diversion is a strategy that retains the traffic volumes, but reduces traffic speed. This is a win-win situation. Retailers benefit more from the traffic volumes and pedestrians feel safer and more comfortable on foot.

8. Parking

Adequate parking - in terms of both the number and location of parking spaces - is a major requirement for successful main streets. (On-street parking is beneficial, both from the perspective of increasing parking supply and providing a buffer between moving cars and pedestrians.) A substantial proportion of the patrons of even Portland's most successful main streets arrive by car. In the suburbs, most patrons drive to main street.

Providing adequate parking conflicts directly with having dense uses on main street, unless the parking is structured. Structured parking is too expensive for most main street circumstances, and will remain so until land prices increase significantly over their current levels.

A good solution is shared parking, which can work on a block by block or district level if the pedestrian circulation is good. Some cities have established downtown parking districts, and some areas, i.e. Sellwood, have privately provided communal parking lots. If a patron can park once and accomplish many trip purposes, the total amount of parking can be substantially reduced over what otherwise would have to be provided on a business by business basis.

9. People

Main streets will ultimately depend on the entrepreneurial skills of the main street business people. Key to main street success is the presence of retailers and other business people with a good sense of local economic potentials and opportunities and the willingness and ability to capitalize on these opportunities. The ability of businesspeople to capitalize in turn depends on capital; small business loan programs can be a critical resource for a main street.

Metro's concerns are primarily regional in scope. Yet Metro has a stake in the success of main streets, if the region is to grow in a way that protects resources and livability. There are key regional issues that provide a positive context within which main streets can best succeed. Metro can act - on the regional level - to promote main street and corridor development by addressing these issues.

1. Main street and corridor development will best succeed if the region remains livable and continues to grow. Without continued growth pressure, there will be insufficient market demand for main street development. Metro needs to continue to focus on the basic regional economic infrastructure (transportation and regional planning) and on maintaining livability.
2. Main street and corridor development will best succeed if the regional growth management program rewards the efficient development types that occur in these areas. If growth is allowed to occur in a land extensive, inefficient way that effectively subsidizes lower densities, main street development will operate at a competitive disadvantage.

These issues are so basic as to sometimes be overlooked. Though it is important to focus on the specifics of town center, main street and corridor development, the overall economic climate and growth management policies of the region are critical in creating the proper context for success.

It is not necessary or desirable to penalize lower density, suburban development. It is critical that development be made to pay the true costs of public infrastructure. In the past, low density suburban development was subsidized by large federal funding contributions for development of highways and other infrastructure. More recently, trends are to charge developers for the impacts of development on infrastructure systems. If this trend continues, the cost of lower density development will increase, to reflect its true costs. Conversely, main street and corridor development will benefit because of its intrinsically more efficient use of infrastructure that is largely already in place.

Regional Factors Influencing Main Street and Corridor Success

3. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLANS

Overall Implementation Strategy

This section of the report describes the overall implementation strategy recommended by the consultant team. It further lists the specific implementation actions that should be taken by the public sector and the development community to promote main street and corridor development.

The overall implementation strategy for main streets should be comprehensive and multi-faceted.

- A comprehensive strategy includes all levels of public and private action. Functional planning at the state and regional level should inform and be informed by local jurisdictional planning. Policy planning, land use planning and capital improvement planning need to be integrated and undertaken simultaneously.
- A multi-faceted strategy includes a wide variety of actions: promotion, education, public investment and regulation.

Metro has recently started referring to its upcoming implementation of Region 2040 as the “2040 Framework” instead of the “Framework Plan.” Though this is just a title, it indicates a positive change in orientation. What is needed is a *regional framework process, not just a regional framework plan.*

Components of a comprehensive and multi-faceted main street and corridor implementation strategy will include:

- Promotion of desirable development patterns through education and marketing
- Investment in public facilities to support main streets and transit corridors
- Planning partnerships with local governments and communities
- Partnerships with the development community
- Regional regulatory guidance

Regulation should be only one part of the process. It is only one component of an overall strategy.

The public sector in general is responsible for planning, regulation and infrastructure development. Within the scope of these activities, the public sector should act to address the following objectives:

1. Resolve Conflicts between Intensification of Main Streets and the Livability of Adjacent Residential Neighborhoods.

The greatest obstacle to intensified development along main streets may be the real or perceived threats to the livability of adjacent neighborhoods. In Lake Grove, Cedar Mill and other areas around the region, the Region 2040 policies to promote higher density and mixed use development in main streets are causing concern resistance among residents of adjacent neighborhoods. Neighborhood residents feel that intensified development will only decrease the livability of their neighborhoods. Residents do not perceive that they will benefit from such development.

In part this feeling results from experience with forms of commercial, multi-family and attached single family development that are poorly planned, designed and executed. Where higher density residential and mixed use projects are planned with citizen involvement and designed with respect for the existing development pattern, and where the impacts of the development (e.g. traffic, parking, environmental impacts) are accommodated, adjoining neighbors find such development can increase the livability of their neighborhood.

In addition, public policy makers need to document and demonstrate -- and residents need to better understand -- the likely consequences of not allowing intensification: deteriorating mobility, deteriorating environmental quality and higher costs of utilities and services. If these consequences are demonstrated and understood, residents may be more receptive to more intensive main street and corridor development.

a) Recommended Actions by Metro:

- Continue to educate the public about the consequences of inefficient, land extensive development and the benefits of main street and corridor intensification. Continue to be educated by the public in terms of the needs for livable neighborhoods, privacy and security.
- Provide information resources and technical assistance to local governments to support main street and corridor planning processes that involve adjacent residents and main street businesses.

b) Recommended Actions by Local Government:

- Conduct specific area planning for main streets with the participation of residents and businesses. (Local governments must then be willing and able to abide by the results of this planning, which may result in more limited increases to density or intensity.

- Make sure that development standards are appropriate for main street development, which will be largely infill development and may include a substantial amount of rehab or adaptive reuse. Commonly, development codes do not work well for infill and rehab projects.
- Adopt design standards and guidelines and/or design review process to ensure compatibility and resolve or at least mitigate development impacts.

The result of many of the above actions should be to shorten the review period for any one particular project. Once the front-end planning is complete, projects that meet the planning objectives and standards should be afforded an expedited permit review process.

2. Invest in Public Facilities to Promote Main Street and Corridor Development

The need for improvements to the public realm has been cited repeatedly in this study. Sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, bicycle facilities, street furniture and shared public parking facilities are all key elements of a successful main street or corridor.

Focused public investment in such facilities is needed. It should be directed at those areas that are identified as the critical nodes within main streets. It should be directed at those areas that can benefit in the short term. It should be leveraged with private investment (see Recommended Development Community Actions, below).

a) Recommended Actions by Metro:

- Continue to target regional infrastructure funding to critical nodes within main streets, in addition to the regional and town centers. Infrastructure funding should leverage local investment and should reward local policy support for denser and mixed-use development.
- Support Tri-Met's strategic plan to develop high capacity transit corridors.

b) Recommended Actions by Local Government:

- Target capital improvement plans at critical main street and corridor nodes, along with regional and town centers.
- Require equitable investment in public facilities in return for approval of land use and building permits.

3. Implement Fair, Appropriate and Effective Land Use Regulations that Reflect the Particular Needs and Objectives of Each Main Street and Corridor

The design and development objectives that are discussed and illustrated in Section IV of this report can form one basis for land use regulations on main streets. Such regulation should be fair, effective and flexible. Flexibility is needed in terms of allowing different solutions appropriate to different types of main streets and in terms of phasing and timing of regulations. Some development types are achievable in some places and not in others. Some development types are achievable in today's market; some will be more feasible in the future.

a) Recommended Actions by Metro:

- Use the 2040 Framework as the basis for a recommended main street and corridor program that can fit a variety of circumstances. Though Metro should avoid a single "model ordinance" approach that treats all main streets alike, it can provide a set of regulatory systems that fit a range of situations. There could be, for instance, a model for an older traditional main street in a stable neighborhood and a model for an arterial oriented main street in a rapidly growing suburban setting.

Where there is not a need for substantial local variation, regulations should be relatively consistent from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The value in this is that a developer who has successfully developed a mixed use or higher density infill project in one jurisdiction will be more able to transfer that knowledge and experience to another jurisdiction.

- Establish a planning clearinghouse of information on regulations and approaches that have been used effectively in the Portland metro area and other places.

b) Recommended Actions by Local Government

- Systematically review and revise current comprehensive plan designations, zoning regulations and development standards to allow and facilitate intensification of main streets. Make sure that development standards are appropriate for main street development, which will be largely infill development and may include a substantial amount of rehab or adaptive re-use. Commonly, development codes do not work well for infill and rehab projects.
- Involve the development community and residents in review and revision of regulations.

Recommended Public Sector Actions in Regional Marketing and Promotion of Main Street and Corridor Development

The public sector has not traditionally recognized its potential role in marketing and promoting types of development that meet stated public objectives, such as those relating to main streets. Though development agencies (like the Portland Development Commission) are actively involved in such activities, general governments - on the regional or local level - do not generally see themselves as promoters.

Yet this is the attitude that will be required to make main street and corridor development happen. Some of the most substantial obstacles to main street and corridor intensification are:

- The development community is not sufficiently aware of development opportunities on main streets; and
- Developers and lenders lack models of successful mixed use development projects that are feasible in today's market.

Metro and local governments can act to overcome these obstacles if they begin to think of themselves as pro-active in the development of their own region and jurisdictions.

1. Recommended Actions by Metro:

- Compile and distribute data on regional development, demographics and the economy in a format accessible to the development community, such as a newsletter or on-line database.
- Participate in professional real estate development organizations such as the Urban Land Institute and the International Council on Shopping Centers.
- Establish an ongoing task force of policy makers and members of the development community to advise on future Metro actions.
- Compile and distribute information on successful main street and transit corridor development projects.

2. Recommended Actions by Local Government

- Compile and distribute data on local development, demographics and the economy in a format accessible to the development community.
- Participate in professional real estate development organizations such as the Urban Land Institute and the International Council on Shopping Centers.
- Maintain ongoing communications with members of the development community to advise on future local government actions.

- Work with the local real estate brokerage community to ensure that opportunity sites are well marketed.

The “development community” consists of developers, builders, architects and planners, lenders, economic and redevelopment agencies, transit agencies and property owners. The development community will be the co-implementors, along with the public sector - of Region 2040.

The development community must be prepared to take a variety of actions to address the concerns and objectives of the region’s residents. These include actions in the following areas:

1. Planning and Design

- Work in concert with local governments and neighborhoods to resolve livability issues by participating in neighborhood planning processes.
- Invest in quality project planning and design, recognizing the return in terms of profit and smoother project permitting.

2. Real Estate Financing

- Adapt lending policies to new development patterns. For example, separation of commercial and residential lending functions results in difficulties for mixed use projects.
- Recognize potential for innovative residential and mixed use projects in meeting the needs of smaller households.
- Expand sources of financing to include private foundations, public pension funds.
- Provide funding for development by Community Development Corporations.
- Develop innovative responses to Community Reinvestment Act objectives.

3. Investment in Public Infrastructure

- Work with local governments to develop equitable and feasible systems for infrastructure finance.
- Develop innovative approaches to including public facilities in private development projects.

Recommended Development Community Actions

Recommended
Business
Community and
Neighborhood
Actions

4. Public/Private Partnerships

Redevelopment (Urban Renewal) Agencies such as PDC can have a critical role in main street and corridor development. In the past redevelopment agencies have acquired land, prepared sites and provided improvements for real estate projects that meet specific public redevelopment objectives. These agencies have used tax increment financing (TIF) as a major revenue source. Though TIF is currently not a viable option within the City of Portland (because local government tax rates in Portland are over the \$10.00 per \$1,000 cap), in other jurisdictions in the Metro area it can be used to promote main street and corridor development.

Public/private partnerships are also possible without urban renewal or tax increment financing. In particular, Federal funding has been made available through the ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) and CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation Air Quality) programs. However, regional and town centers may be given higher priorities for use of such funds than main streets or corridors. These funds can be used for various project purposes.

On main streets, public/private partnerships could focus on land assembly and site preparation, since these costs, borne solely by the developer, commonly render main street redevelopment projects infeasible.

There are a range of other actions that are critical to main street and corridor development that are commonly the responsibility of business community and neighborhood organizations.

1. Main Street Management

Among the more intangible but more important factors in main street and corridor development is the degree to which the business community and the neighborhood is organized and motivated to promote development. Main street businesses depend upon each other and the overall image of the street to generate customer traffic. Ideally, a main street attracts neighbors and other patrons who combine trips to shop, eat, obtain personal or professional services. Business district associations traditionally deal with matters such as area wide promotions, small scale physical improvement projects (plantings, street furniture, etc.) and participation in neighborhood planning and zoning efforts. They rarely engage in more active management of the mix of tenants and uses along a main street. With individual buildings and businesses under separate ownerships, it is hard to coordinate in any effective way the mix of tenants on main streets or corridors or more substantial improvement programs for buildings and facades. However, a key to successful main streets is a mix of uses that is synergistic; where the entire mix is greater than the sum of its parts and commonly share a building design theme.

Communities in Oregon which have participated in the Main Streets program offered by Livable Oregon, Inc. have begun to achieve this level of main street management. This program focuses on the hiring of a Main Street Manager, and using grant funds for building improvements and other activities. The manager is typically someone with an unusual degree of energy, enthusiasm and people skills. The key ingredient is local participation in planning and implementing the main street program. It takes an intense commitment on the part of the business district and the local jurisdiction, but it is an approach that has produced results.

Other alternatives exist for management of main streets, but all require that the business community works together and in concert with local government.

2. Shared Parking Districts

The case study analysis showed that accommodating parking is a critical and difficult issue in main street development. In some of Oregon's larger cities (Salem, Eugene), downtown parking districts have been established to develop and manage public parking facilities which are used by downtown patrons and employees. Though these are set up by the local government, the impetus for such programs usually comes from the business community.

In areas such as Lake Grove, a shared parking program or district could produce enormous results. In such an area, the lack of parking limits future development at the same time that vehicle trips from one parking lot to another increase congestion. Shared parking can increase the effective parking supply and reduce congestion.

For a parking district approach to work in this type of main street, it would have to be combined with a program of pedestrian improvements. With safe pedestrian crossings and continuous sidewalks or pedestrian ways, a shopper could park once and walk to accomplish multiple tasks.

3. Economic Improvement Districts

Though Economic Improvement Districts (EIDs) are established by local governments, like parking districts the impetus comes from the business community. EIDs are funded by assessments on property. (They normally do not qualify as Local Improvement Districts and are thus subject to the Constitutional limits on property taxes. This makes their formation more difficult.)

EIDs are used in downtown situations in Portland, Springfield, and most recently Gresham. The funding is available for a range of management and improvement activities. The approach is one that could be adapted to main streets where there is sufficient support.

4. REGIONAL OBJECTIVES AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

As described in Section 3 of this report, regulations and ordinances represent only one element of an overall implementation strategy for main streets. Zoning ordinances emphasize standards for development of private property, and they also address public improvements to support and serve private development.

Some changes to local ordinances will be required to implement the regional objectives for main streets. Equally important, public investment should be targeted to the main streets to provide the infrastructure and framework to facilitate more concentrated development and higher densities.

Metro is beginning work on the 2040 Framework to focus on specific strategies to implement the general policy direction outlined in the Region 2040 Growth Concept. The 2040 Framework will define areas of regional significance and will provide performance standards for local governments to meet. Metro is required by charter to prepare “model ordinances” as a guide for local governments to follow and use to meet regional performance standards.

Representatives of local governments have consistently emphasized that Metro should clearly articulate regional objectives for main streets, provide direction and guidance on how to meet the objective, and allow for flexible and creative local approaches to implement the regional objectives.

The comprehensive plan and ordinance framework applied by the local governments within the Metro region vary dramatically, even with the statewide planning program. Several jurisdictions have adopted planned district overlay techniques to implement varied land use planning concepts. The ordinance framework of these jurisdictions may require little change to meet the regional objectives and recommended performance standards for main streets. Other jurisdictions have very simple ordinances and limited planning staff to develop and administer new planning techniques. A model ordinance format may be very attractive to these jurisdictions, if it is relevant to local circumstances and easy to administer.

The majority of local governments in the Metro region have recently completed amendments to local plans and ordinances to meet the requirements of the Transportation Planning Rule. Several of these amendments address elements which are critical to main streets, such as street connectivity, building orientation to major transit stops, bicycle parking facilities and pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to major activity centers. The recent Transportation Planning Rule ordinance work will minimize changes needed to meet main street objectives.

The following pages highlight proposed regional objectives for main streets in five key areas: *Land Use, Density, Design, Circulation and Parking*. Following a general discussion, recommended standards are proposed which could form the basis for a regional model ordinance. Recommended guidelines capture additional “good ideas” for development of main streets which are important at a local level but may not be critical to meet regional objectives.

As an overriding goal, the recommended standards focus on removing regulatory barriers and obstacles to the types of development the region is trying to achieve along main streets.

The Mainstreet Technical Advisory Committee and Metro staff initially proposed a structure of minimum standards, preferred standards, and a toolbox of implementation strategies to guide main street regulations. While the consultant team has attempted to address the majority of the concepts raised by the Technical Advisory Committee, we believe that the approach of standards and guidelines is simpler. Local jurisdictions that are ready to move beyond the minimum regional standards are encouraged to consider concepts included in the guidelines. The "toolbox" of implementation strategies -- including regulatory, education and financial strategies -- are addressed in Section 3 of this report.

Regional Objective

Promote land use intensification and mixed use development along main streets to create attractive neighborhood activity centers. A range of housing types and densities, retail and service commercial uses, office uses, and neighborhood oriented civic/public uses are appropriate and encouraged. New development, redevelopment and infill will be encouraged to maximize the accessibility offered by main streets.

Discussion

Traditional main streets supported a variety of land uses. Before World War II, commercial land uses such as grocery and clothing stores, hardware and other supply stores were located close to where people lived or worked. Small neighborhood markets supplied the day to day needs of the community and people often worked or lived above ground floor stores. Many local trips were accomplished using the extensive streetcar network or by walking.

After World War II, there was a tremendous public investment in building an infrastructure to support the automobile. Public policies were written to encourage automobile access for all new development. Zoning ordinances restricted more than one type of land use on a single site and reinforced the separation of residential areas from employment and commercial areas.

The Region 2040 Growth Concept seeks to learn from and build on the successes of traditional main streets. The concept emphasizes a diversity of land uses — which means having a balanced mix of housing, retail, office, and other services readily accessible. Land use diversity can be planned into a single building, among several buildings within a project site, or among several projects in a small area. A key consideration is the pedestrian connection between the different uses and to adjacent neighborhoods.

Land Use

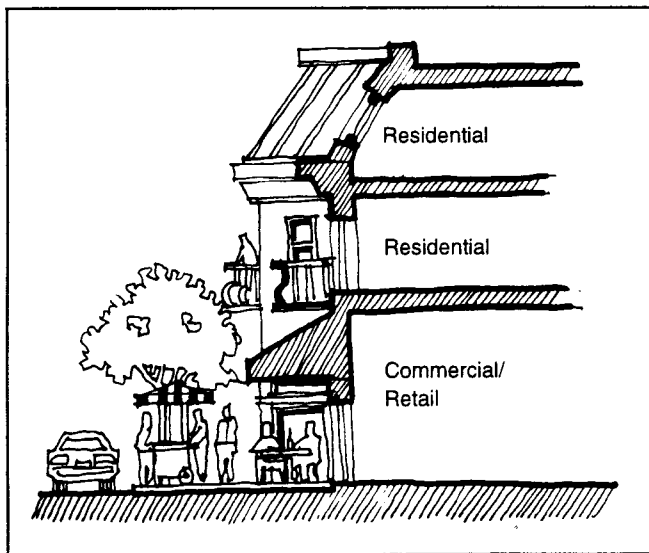
The Mainstreet Technical Advisory Committee has emphasized the importance of permitting a range of land uses along main streets. Restaurants and food service uses are recognized as a key to the vitality of main street districts. Neighborhood oriented civic and public uses such as post offices and community centers also provide important services and serve a critical role.

Recognizing the wide diversity across the region in terms of the location, character and market potential of various main streets, the consultant team recommends that Metro and local governments focus on a *permissive* approach to land uses rather than mandate a specific mix or percentage for different land uses along main streets. Requiring specific land uses could discourage the development of individual sites and may not respond to the market needs of individual main streets. However, the consultant team recommends a guideline that local governments consider application of the specific development plan approach to individual main streets to refine and target the appropriate mix of land uses at an area-wide level.

Metro has a regional interest in intensifying land uses and densities along main streets. It may be appropriate to restrict or prohibit new land extensive or auto-oriented uses in main street districts. This issue is most appropriately addressed at the local level. However, suggested minimum residential densities and floor area ratios will also work to limit land extensive uses along main streets.

Recommended Standards:

1. Zoning applied to main streets shall permit outright a broad range of land uses. At a minimum, the following categories of uses shall be permitted by local ordinances:
 - Residential
 - Retail Sales and Service
 - Office
 - Civic/Institutional



2. Zoning applied to main streets shall permit mixed use development such as housing or office above or behind storefront retail uses.
3. Zoning applied to main streets shall restrict or prohibit exterior display and storage. Outdoor seating for restaurants and pedestrian-oriented accessory uses, such as flower, food or drink stands, shall be allowed by right, subject to standards for protecting adequate clearance for pedestrians.

Recommended Guidelines:

1. At a local level, refine the list of what civic/institutional uses are most appropriate along main streets relative to Town Centers and Regional Centers.
2. The specific development plan approach is recommended to provide a mechanism to refine and target the appropriate land use mix at an area-wide level. The specific development plan also provides greater flexibility to identify important locations for public/civic uses.
3. At the discretion of the local government, zoning for main streets may prohibit new auto-oriented and drive-through uses.

Regional Objective

Establish minimum densities for new residential and commercial uses along main streets to support incremental increases in land use efficiency throughout the region. Provide opportunities for taller buildings and focus higher densities adjacent to the main streets to establish a stronger street edge, take advantage of excellent accessibility and minimize disruption of established neighborhoods.

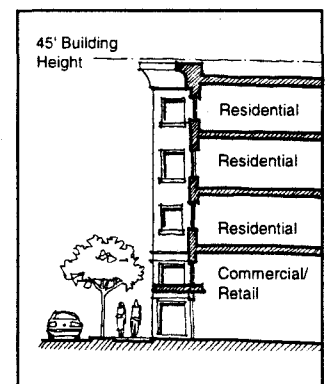
Discussion

Key components of the Region 2040 Growth Concept include: (a) increased concentration of population and employment in centers and corridors with good transit service; (b) emphasis on a mix of appropriate land uses and (c) design of private development and public right-of-way improvements to be pedestrian-oriented.

An incremental increase in the density of development relative to existing patterns will be critical to achieving the Region 2040 Growth Concept. Traditionally, local ordinances have focused on setting maximum densities for development. Imposition of land use regulations to set minimum densities is less common. Minimum residential densities and commercial floor area ratios (FAR) are proposed as a "floor" for all new development along main streets. It is assumed that local ordinances will allow maximum densities and FARs up to two to three times the minimum standard. Over time, it is assumed that the minimum densities and FARs will be increased.

Will a combination of incentives, increasing land prices and changing demographic and market factors result in the increased densities and concentrated development articulated in the Growth Concept? If minimum densities are set in ordinances, will they have the effect of directing development to other areas which are not subject to the minimum densities? The Growth Concept is based upon assumptions regarding infill, redevelopment, and average densities of development for residential and non-residential uses. If the assumptions are not built into the local ordinances as minimum standards, will it be possible to achieve the Growth Concept?

Density

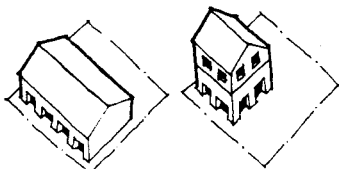


Setting minimum densities for development along main streets at a regional level is difficult. The consultant team is aware of the tremendous variation in the land use character and development potential of different main streets. How can a minimum density be set at a regional level that will have meaning and applicability to the wide variety of local circumstances?

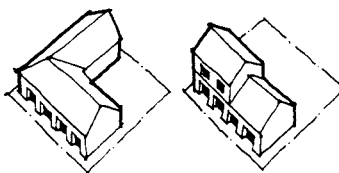
It appears appropriate to specify minimum densities to ensure that the region's limited urban land is not underdeveloped and that opportunities to leverage concentrated development and higher densities with good transit service are not missed. However, the consultant team contends that minimum densities for main streets should not be set in a vacuum. The Growth Concept outlines a hierarchy of centers and corridors, including the Central City, Regional Centers, Town Centers, Station Areas, Main Streets and Transit Corridors. It is assumed that the highest minimum densities will be established for the Central City, with minimum densities graduating down to the main streets. The minimum densities proposed for the main streets, therefore, should be considered a starting point for discussion with local governments and others.

Recommended Standards:

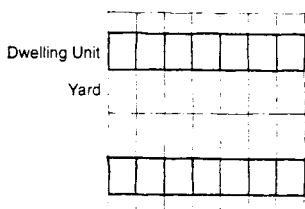
1. Allow building heights of at least 45 feet along main streets. This will accommodate four-story buildings.
2. Require *minimum* densities of 15 units/acre for new residential development along main streets. Allow *maximum* densities at least two to three times the minimum densities. Minimum densities shall be implemented on a project-by-project basis unless a specific development plan has been approved which strategically targets densities to individual parcels consistent with regional density objectives.
3. Require a *minimum* Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of .7 for new office and civic/institutional development along main streets. Require a *minimum* Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of .4 for new retail along main streets. Allow *maximum* FAR ratios at least two to three times the minimum standard. Minimum FAR ratios shall be implemented on a project-by-project basis unless a specific development plan has been approved which targets higher FARs to individual parcels consistent with regional density objectives. Minimum FARs shall be coordinated with shared parking and reduced parking standards.
4. To encourage the reuse of old buildings, conversion of existing buildings to new uses shall not be subject to minimum residential density and FAR requirements.
5. To provide opportunities for a range of building sizes and uses and varied street character, do not specify minimum lot sizes or lot dimensions for main streets.



FAR: .4 Diagram



FAR: .7 Diagram



12-15 Dwelling Units/Acre

6. Allow zero setbacks and high building coverage ratios (80 - 100%) to encourage intensive utilization of land adjacent to main streets.
7. Reduce or eliminate on-site open space requirements and focus landscaping on the public streetscape/sidewalk space with street trees and plazas.

Recommended Guidelines:

1. In mixed use projects which include housing above retail uses, ordinances may allow the developer the choice of including housing floor area to meet the minimum FAR. As an option for more intensive development, the developer may choose to exclude the housing floor area from the maximum FAR, consistent with height limits.
2. In lieu of applying the minimum residential density and FAR standards on a project-by-project basis, a specific plan for a main street district may be prepared to meet the regional objectives. Opportunity sites may be identified and designated for higher intensity development, with other sites planned for less intensive development. On an area wide basis, the specific plan must demonstrate that minimum density assumptions in the Growth Concept can be attained over time. Local government monitoring of densities shall be required for specific plan areas.
3. Local governments may want to consider maximum setbacks or a "build-to" line as an option to encourage more intensive development and a consistent street edge. Requiring at least two-story construction may be appropriate in certain locations.

Regional Objective

Key regional design standards that are critical to the character, function and experience of main streets have been identified which should be implemented through local ordinances and standards. Metro shall provide flexibility for local jurisdictions, in partnership with main street districts, to tailor and supplement the regional design standards to unique locations and needs.

Discussion

Design principles must be applied together with land use diversity and density to be effective. The Mainstreet Technical Advisory Committee has identified and discussed a variety of design elements that contribute to the vitality of main streets. The following elements were repeatedly mentioned:

- smaller, varied storefronts concentrated in a walkable area
- minimal building setbacks along main streets
- windows or other features creating interest for pedestrians
- building entrances that are close to and face the main street

Design

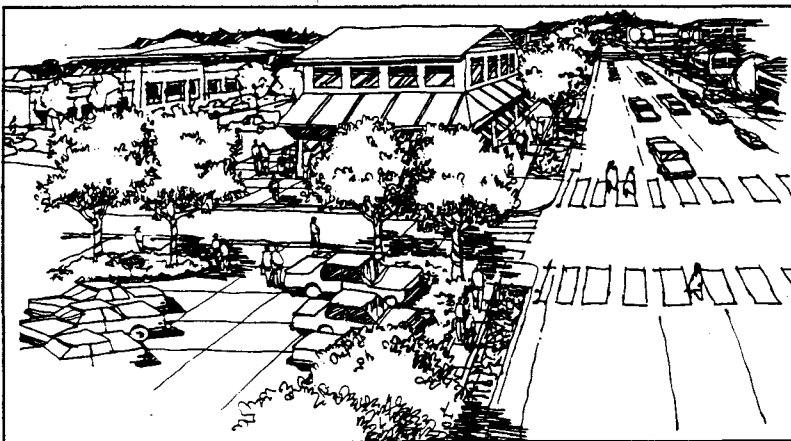
- awnings and overhangs for weather protection and building character
- pedestrian facilities and amenities, including continuous sidewalks, street furniture, street trees and plazas

The Mainstreet Technical Advisory Committee emphasized that local governments can set standards for attractive main street design. However, the organic, intangible “people” factor should not be overlooked in an effort to set a standardized main street design formula.

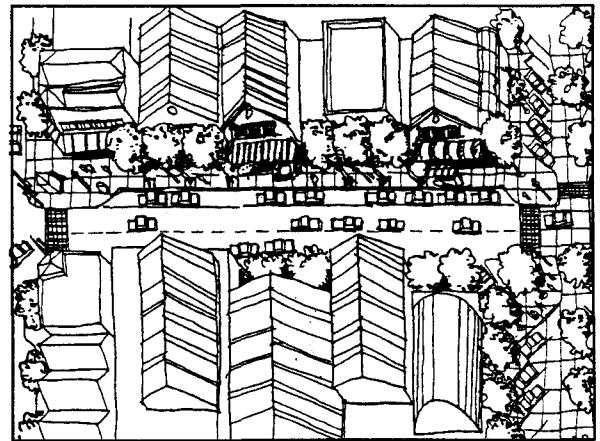
The consultant team recommends that Metro focus on key design elements that are important to the function and character of main streets throughout the region. Local jurisdictions should have the flexibility to tailor and apply the key design elements as appropriate for each specific district.

Recommended Standards:

1. For main streets with an established storefront character, local ordinances shall require maintenance of the building line for new construction.
2. In urban main street locations, ordinance standards shall require orientation of buildings and entrances to the sidewalk adjacent to the main street. For examples, see the City of Portland’s Mixed Commercial/Residential and Storefront Commercial zones. The City of Gresham has adopted good building orientation/entrance standards for designated transit streets.
3. Along suburban main streets, building orientation and entrance standards can emphasize a “nodal” approach focused on major transit stops rather than requiring a linear storefront character. For good examples, see the Clackamas County provisions adopted to address the Transportation Planning Rule and Washington County requirements for pedestrian connections between uses along transit streets.



Suburban Storefront



Urban Storefront

4. To minimize gaps in the building edge along main streets, off-street parking shall be located to the side of or behind buildings. For good examples, see the Gresham and Milwaukie ordinances.
5. Include standards in the zoning applied to main streets to restrict blank walls and require transparent windows along the primary pedestrian network. For good examples, see provisions from the ordinances of Portland, Gresham and Milwaukie.
6. To maintain and enhance livability with increased densities, street trees shall be required and spaced 30 - 50 feet on center along main streets. In urban areas with on-street parking, tree wells are appropriate. Along suburban main streets where there is no on-street parking, a planting strip with street trees will provide an improved buffer for pedestrians and also help to establish a stronger street edge. Tree species should be selected by the local government to create a unified image for each main street.

Recommended Guidelines:

1. A broad range of design elements contribute to the pedestrian character of main street districts. Local governments are encouraged to adopt standards and/or guidelines for specific districts to address elements such as awnings and overhangs for weather protection, pedestrian-scale lighting and signage, utility undergrounding, street furniture, etc.
2. To enhance the historic and aesthetic quality of specific main street districts in the region, local governments are encouraged to adopt specific design standards to encourage a sense of historic identity and reinforce the commitment to existing historic commercial buildings and/or compliment adjacent residential historic districts.
3. Local zoning ordinances typically require a buffer between different land uses such as commercial and residential. Ordinance requirements often result in barriers and closing off potential connections between land uses. Metro recognizes that neighborhoods adjacent to main streets have legitimate concerns regarding buffering of uses. Local governments are encouraged to focus on specific districts to identify opportunities for providing transitions and connections between land uses and avoiding barriers.

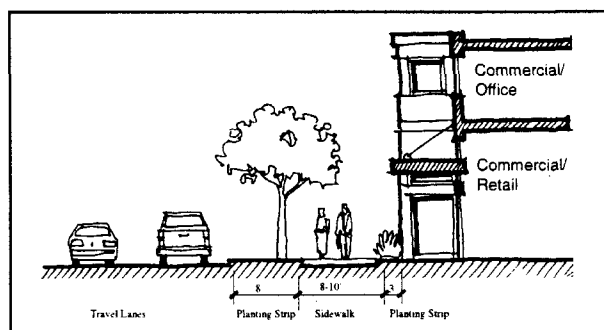
Circulation Regional Objective

Encourage and facilitate growth in main street areas through improved accessibility, with an emphasis on a high quality bicycle and pedestrian environment and convenient access to transit. Substantially increase the percentage of trips made by walking, bicycle and transit to support the region's urban form and growth management goals. Connections between the main streets and adjacent neighborhoods are critical to accessibility. Frequent opportunities to cross the main streets will also be emphasized for pedestrian circulation. Most main streets are arterials and maintenance of needed vehicle capacity will be addressed with specific goals and objectives in the Regional Transportation Plan and local transportation system plans. Calming measures to mitigate the adverse impacts of traffic volumes and speeds will also be explored.

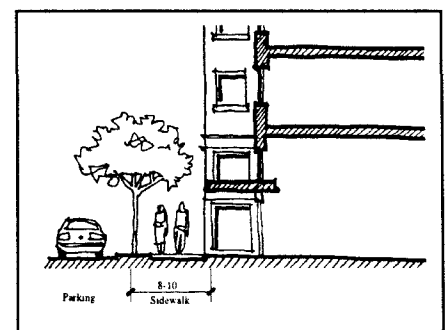
Discussion

The accessibility provided by the main street has shaped the potential of these areas for higher intensity development. Traditional main streets evolved in response to the streetcar transportation system. Subsequent development patterns were shaped by the automobile. The challenge faced today is to shape, refine and retrofit main streets in response to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, transit users and auto users. It will be a challenge to balance the often conflicting needs of the individual modes of transportation. However, the importance of a well-connected circulation system to the viability of main streets cannot be overstated.

Sidewalk connections to the neighborhood are the factor most often mentioned as key to the success of a main street. In urban locations, the sidewalks are typically located along the street. In suburban locations, buildings are often set back from the street and a sidewalk linking individual buildings provides an alternative route for pedestrians. Successful main streets have continuous sidewalks with few obstructions or gaps. Where the sidewalk system is incomplete or does not provide connections between land uses, the overall circulation opportunities within the district suffer.



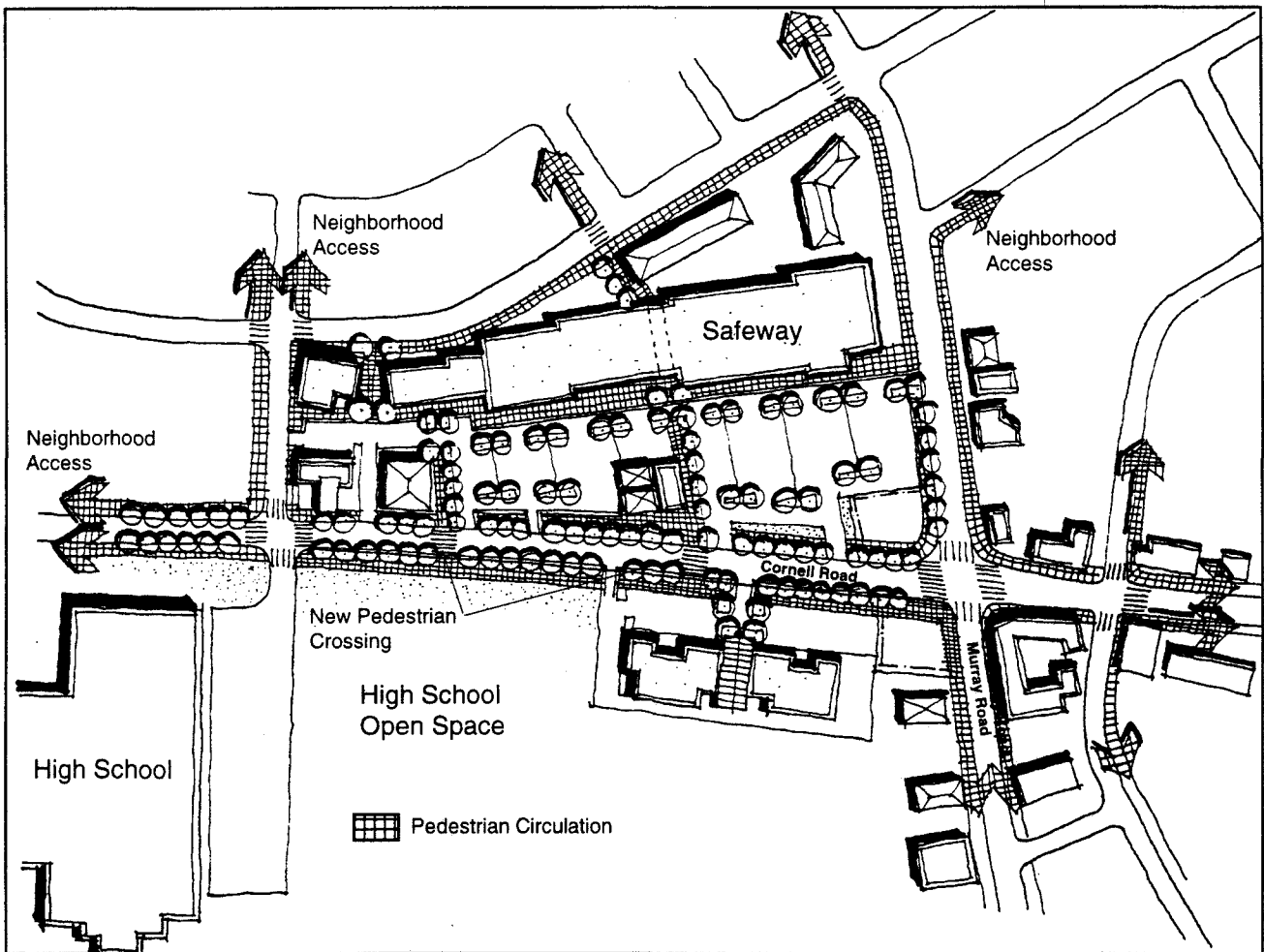
Suburban Sidewalks



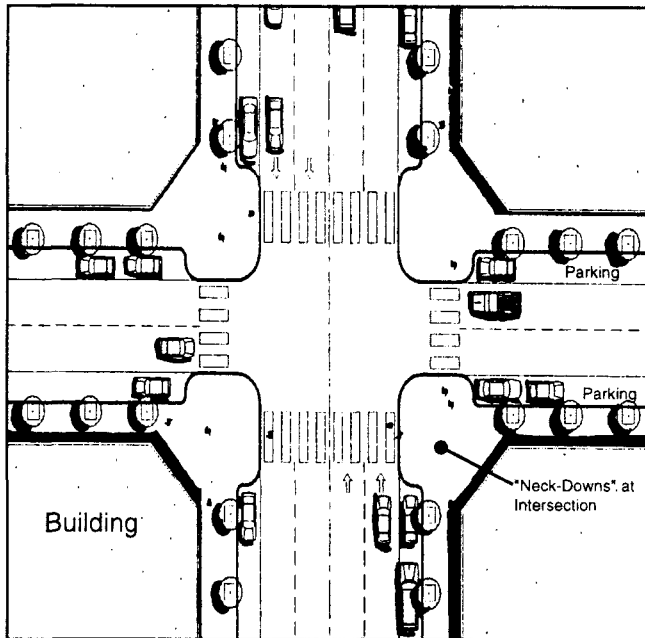
Urban Sidewalks

Vehicle traffic is important to main street shopping areas. However, the traffic needs to be controlled to maintain a suitable pedestrian environment while not jeopardizing the necessary road capacity and visibility of businesses to passing traffic, especially in peak hours.

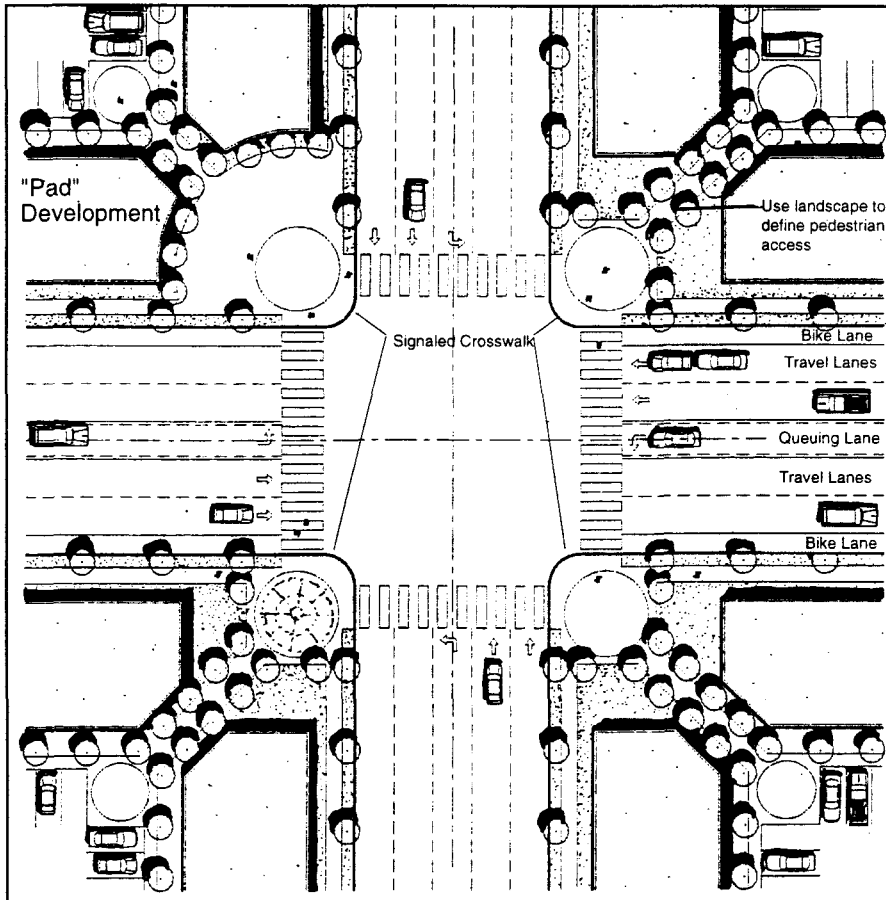
Consideration of the needs of cyclists and transit users is also critical to the viability of main streets. Transit users are pedestrians at the beginning and end of each trip, and improvements to the pedestrian circulation system will also benefit transit users. The basic infrastructure of a well-connected street system provides circulation options important to all modes and is appropriately emphasized in state, regional and local plans and ordinances.



Cedar Mill: Pedestrian Circulation Diagram



Pedestrian Crossings: Urban



Pedestrian Crossings: Suburban

Recommended Standards:

1. Sidewalks shall be required along all main streets, and must provide an unobstructed path at least 5 feet wide. Larger sidewalks, up to 10 feet, may be desirable in selected main streets and at nodes along corridors where pedestrian activity will be the greatest and where outdoor seating is encouraged.
2. A grid system of local streets which intersect the main streets shall be maintained and encouraged to provide multiple routes and opportunities for pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle circulation. Where a grid system is in place, pedestrian crossings shall be focused at the intersections.
3. In locations where there are long distances between local street intersections with the main street, local ordinances shall require opportunities for pedestrian crossings at approximately 300 foot intervals. Based on the case study analysis, this standard appears appropriate.
4. Local ordinances shall provide opportunities for alley access or private lanes to the back of lots fronting on main streets.
5. Bikeways shall be required to serve all main streets, consistent with bikeway designations and standards in state, regional and local bikeway plans. Local ordinances shall require bicycle parking facilities for all new construction. Most local governments in the region have adopted bicycle parking standards to meet the Transportation Planning Rule.
6. Local streets connecting the main streets with adjacent neighborhoods shall include provisions for bikeways and sidewalks. Facilities along public streets are preferred; however, off-street accessways may be appropriate in limited circumstances.
7. Provisions for access management, vehicle speeds, signal timing, and spacing of public and private intersections along main streets shall be specified at a framework level in the Regional Transportation Plan and at a detailed level in local Transportation System Plans. Design standards shall emphasize the retention of needed vehicle capacity, primarily through access management. However, public investment priority shall be focused on pedestrian, bicycle and transit improvements to support increased development densities along main streets.

Recommended Guidelines:

1. Local governments are encouraged to prepare urban design guidelines for specific main street districts to address pedestrian circulation at a finer level. Such guidelines may deal with visually differentiated paving for pedestrian crossings, curb extensions, median refuges in wider streets, and enhanced pedestrian amenities at major transit stops. The concept of pedestrian district plans is encouraged by Tri-Met and the Department of Land Conservation and Development.

2. Access management plans are recommended for main streets to address circulation needs for various modes (vehicle, transit, pedestrian, bicycle) in a coordinated and integrated manner. Locally appropriate standards for spacing of street and driveway connections and pedestrian crossings could be defined in the access management plan, consistent with the overriding regional objective of an interconnected, recognizable circulation system which supports various travel modes.

Parking Regional Objective

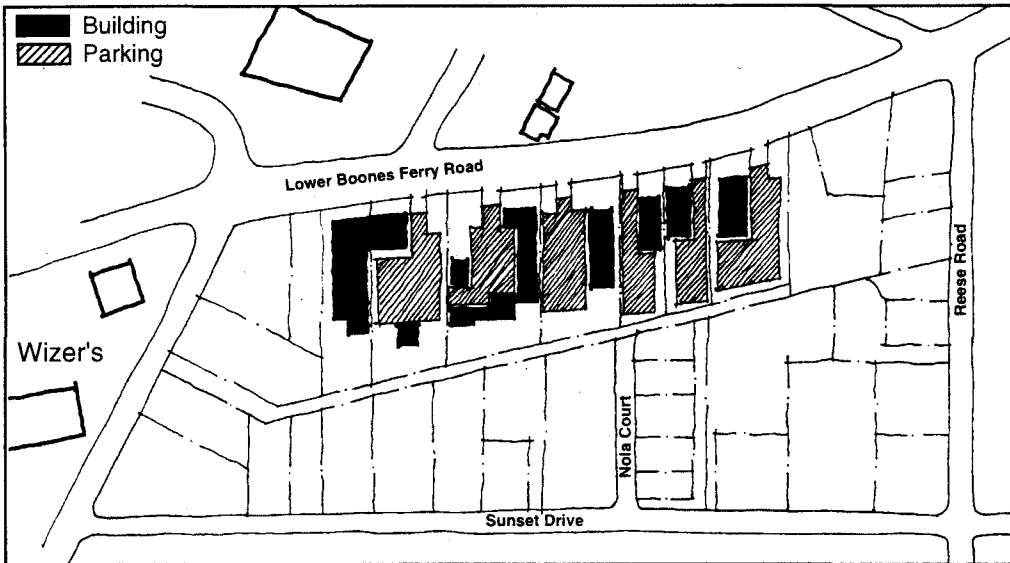
Accommodate intensification of land uses along main streets with a reduced reliance on off-street parking. Utilize and manage parking more efficiently with an emphasis on shared parking opportunities and retention of short-term on street parking. On a regional basis, evaluate local ordinance parking standards and explore reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements and setting maximums.

Discussion

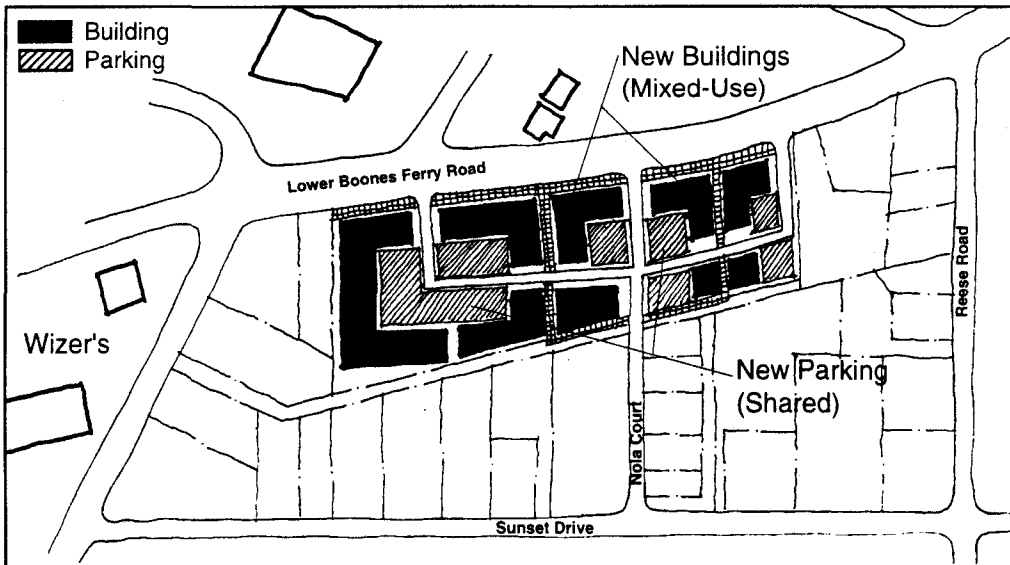
Limited, rather than ample, parking supplies encourage transit, bike and walk trips. However, reduced parking standards have implications for the market feasibility of development along main streets and should be carefully applied to the most important segments of the transit system with existing or planned high frequency service.

Shared parking standards should be more strongly emphasized in local ordinances. Nearby uses with staggered peak periods of demand can share parking and provide opportunities to intensify development. Specific plans for main street areas could identify sites for shared parking lots or structures that are mutually financed through assessment districts or other mechanisms. Financial incentives, such as reductions in traffic impact fees or system development charges, could provide an important motivation for developers to reduce off-street parking.

Minimum parking ratios are appropriately evaluated at a regional level to assure that ordinances are not requiring an over-supply of off-street parking. Additionally, Metro could conduct research and provide local governments and developers with case studies of successful developments which function with reduced off-street parking or shared parking.



Lake Grove: Existing Parking Diagram



Lake Grove: Shared Parking Diagram

Recommended Standards:

1. Local ordinances shall allow and encourage shared parking and central parking facilities to serve land uses along main streets, without unduly restricting the location of the parking. Shared parking/central parking shall be allowed within 800 feet of a site proposed for development, if direct pedestrian connections are available or provided. This distance is representative of walking four downtown Portland blocks and is also consistent with shared parking ordinances from other jurisdictions.
2. Retention of short-term on street parking shall be a priority along main streets. On street parking spaces provide a buffer for pedestrians, allow more intensive development of adjacent properties, slow down traffic, and enhance the vitality of business districts. Local governments should explore the option of allowing on street parking during off-peak periods along main streets where such parking is restricted.
3. The Transportation Planning Rule sets a target for the Portland metropolitan region to reduce the existing number of off-street parking spaces by 10% over the next twenty years. The Regional Transportation Plan will identify strategies to meet this objective which should be coordinated with land use objectives for main streets. In the interim, local governments should explore options to reduce minimum parking standards, set maximum ratios, and/or eliminate off-street parking requirements in appropriate main streets. For example, Portland does not require off-street parking in the Mixed Commercial/Residential Zone (CM) or the Storefront Commercial Zone (CS).
4. Local ordinances shall provide the opportunity for developers to reduce off-street parking requirements by at least 10% to reflect the availability of transit. Financial incentives such as a traffic impact fee reduction shall be provided to encourage more intensive development with reduced off-street surface parking.

Recommended Guidelines:

1. Local governments are encouraged to pursue a policy, ordinance and financing framework for central parking facilities to serve specific main street districts.
2. Intensification of land uses along main streets will raise concerns regarding spillover parking in adjacent neighborhoods. Local governments are encouraged to address this issue up-front with neighborhoods. Techniques such as residential parking permit programs, business employee shuttle programs, and parking time limitations and enforcement may be appropriate in specific locations.

5. CONCLUSION

The Regional Mainstreets Study examined a range of factors that shape the development of main streets throughout the Portland metropolitan area. Starting with an assessment of “what makes a main street successful?” and working through case studies of main streets, the study concludes that a comprehensive approach is required on the part of the public; state, regional and local governments; and the development community.

The findings include the observations that main streets are shaped by (among other things) demographics (e.g. the number of one and two person households), streetscape, existing building stock and community organization. The participants in the study process acknowledge that main street development has historically taken place over an extended period of time and is in effect an “organic” growth process.

The study recommends a strategy for main street development that includes marketing and promotion, education, public investment, development, community commitment and land use regulations. While there is no “one size fits all” solution to local government zoning and other land use regulations, the study concludes that local governments would benefit from a set of model regulations that can be modified to fit specific local conditions and policies. In particular, the study found that the objectives for suburban main streets should differ from the objectives for urban main streets.

The study dealt in a more general manner with corridors. The number and variety of corridors made it difficult to focus on analysis or recommendations that address common issues. The appendix to this report includes some observations and conclusions regarding corridors.

Though as many questions were raised as were resolved, the participants found the study process to be enlightening, useful and even encouraging. Members of the TAC, staff and the consultant team hope that the work proves to be a substantial contribution to Metro’s growth management program.

