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The Fountain District: Framework Plan

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The Fountain District
Framework Plan
[Pre]Urban Renewal

The 'South Auditorium' neighborhood established itself in the days when loggers and other workers filled the district’s hotels due to its proximity to the river. In the wake of the Great Depression and as the logging trade declined, the area began to fall into disrepair and development shifted away from the Willamette River. By the 1950s, many of its 2,000+ inhabitants were low-income or elderly and living in small, poorly maintained apartments, shuffling from one to the next as they were forced out of their prior home. The neighborhood was also extremely diverse, housing numerous immigrant families, particularly Italian, Jewish, Chinese, and African American families.

In 1955, the newly formed Portland Development Commission targeted a block of land in what was then considered part of South Portland as a test of the new Urban Renewal philosophy making the rounds in planning circles, at the behest of the Mayor’s Advisory Committee. It was decided that a 110 acre portion of the district would be razed in two phases.

Interestingly, the district had originally been intended as the home for a new expo center or coliseum, with the remaining redevelopment occurring around it. This center would be just the sort of attraction to lure people to the city center, it was believed; these plans were scrapped, however, after conflicts between interested parties on each side of the Willamette resulted in the centerpiece of the project (later to be Veterans’ Memorial Coliseum) being relocated to the eastern side of the river.

Inspired by the design principles of Le Corbusier and the budgets of major firms such as Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM), renewal pressed onward, with the forthcoming towers and plazas to be punctuated by greenspaces, among them a set of fountains crafted by Lawrence Halprin. Little, if anything, remains of the district as it had existed prior to the removal of the area’s residences, businesses, and the communities who resided there.
Halprin Sequence Development

With $12 million in federal funds, the Portland Development Commission (PDC) teamed with SOM to build a “city within a city.” The plan intended to attract middle class residents back to the central city. Their plan was true to the Le Corbusier style of the 60's consisting of residential towers surrounded by parks.

With towers planned, PDC set aside a 9 block sequence and hired well known landscape architect, Lawrence Halprin, to design the parks. In 1966 a four part series was developed, culminating in two large water fountains, a reflecting pool surrounded by a bermed park, and a discreet fountain that begins the series to the south. The capstone fountain was the Forecourt, later renamed the Keller Fountain. When completed, the fountain held 75,000 gallons of water and pumped 13,000 gallons per minute.

Post–1970s

Once open, Keller Fountain, the sequence’s golden child, was cited by Ada Louise Huxtable, as “one of the most important urban spaces since the Renaissance.” This positive reception continues today, having been awarded a medallion from the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1999. The fountain is also noted as a source of inspiration by renowned architects, including Laurie Olin and Thomas Balsley. Since opening, Keller Fountain has been victim to multiple counts of vandalism such as “soaping,” adding dish detergent to the fountain and causing thousands of dollars in damage. Both Lovejoy and Pettygrove Park have continuously received much less attention over the years. However, due to its importance in redeveloping downtown Portland, the entire Sequence was listed on the National Historic Registry in 2013, just shy of the 50-year-old guideline.

Designed to mimic and complement the surrounding landscape, the declining of the Halprin Sequence is often chalked up to the impeded views and visibility from later-constructed developments.
### The Fountain District

#### History

#### Existing Conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entire District</th>
<th>City Grid</th>
<th>West Transition</th>
<th>Core</th>
<th>East Transition</th>
<th>South Anchor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Uses
- **Residence**
  - All residential opportunities marked in red.
  - Condos, townhomes, apartments.
- **Education**
  - Portland State University
  - St. Mary’s Academy
  - OHSU
  - The International School
- **Vacant Lots**

#### Employment
- 14.9% Sales
- 14.3% Management
- 10.6% Administrative
- 9.8% Food Service
- 8.8% Education
- 5.8% Healthcare
- 5.4% Computers
- 4.7% Business
- 3.3% Entertainment
- 3.1% Transportation
- 3.1% Personal Care
- 3.0% Engineering
- 3.0% Production
- 1.7% Science
- 1.5% Facilities

#### Churches + Art
- Saint Michael the Archangel Church
- Keller Auditorium

#### Open Space
- Lownsdale Square
- Chapman Square
- Terry Schrunk Park
- Keller Fountain Park
- Lovejoy Park
- Pettygrove Park
The use regulations are intended to create and maintain higher density residential neighborhoods. At the same time, they allow for large scale institutional campuses and other nonresidential uses but not to such an extent as to sacrifice the overall residential neighborhood image and character. The RX zone is a high density multi-dwelling zone which allows the highest density of dwelling units of the residential zones. Density is not regulated by a maximum number of units per acre. Rather, the maximum size of buildings and intensity of use are regulated by floor area ratio (FAR) limits and other site development standards. Generally the density will be 100 or more units per acre. Allowed housing developments are characterized by a very high percentage of building coverage. The major types of new housing development will be medium and high rise apartments and condominiums, often with allowed retail, institutional, or other service oriented uses. Generally, RX zones will be located near the center of the city where transit is readily available and where commercial and employment opportunities are nearby. RX zones will usually be applied in combination with the Central City plan district.

The Central Commercial (CX) zone is intended to provide for commercial development within Portland’s most urban and intense areas. A broad range of uses is allowed to reflect Portland’s role as a commercial, cultural and governmental center. Development is intended to be very intense with high building coverage, large buildings, and buildings placed close together. Development is intended to be pedestrian oriented with a strong emphasis on a safe and attractive streetscape.

The Open Space zone is intended to preserve and enhance public and private open, natural, and improved park and recreational areas identified in the Comprehensive Plan. These areas serve many functions including:

- Providing opportunities for outdoor recreation;
- Providing contrasts to the built environment;
- Preserving scenic qualities;
- Protecting sensitive or fragile environmental areas;
- Enhancing and protecting the values and functions of trees and the urban forest;
- Preserving the capacity and water quality of the stormwater drainage system; and
- Providing pedestrian and bicycle transportation connections.
Movement & Transportation

**Public Transportation**
TriMet's regional light rail system peppers the area along 5th and 6th Avenue. The Orange line runs on Lincoln and makes one stop at the south end of the sequence.

The Portland Street Car A and B loop provides a 4.4 miles of interurban circuitous service through the Portland's downtown. The streetcar makes two stops along Harrison.

TriMet runs 27 bus routes run through the study area, 8 of which are frequent service routes.

**Bicycle**
The downtown district see an average of 3,000 bike commuters a day.

The area consists of:
- 4 protected bike lanes (lower traffic street)
- 1 Multi-use paths (closed to motor vehicles)
- 3 Bike boulevard (pavement markings and directional signs to guide cyclists)
- 1 Shared roadway (or wider outside lane)

**Pedestrian & Vehicle**
The SW Pedestrian Trails provide pedestrian-only walking trails through and around the Core area and are popular with pedestrian commuters, dog walkers, and local residents alike.

- Walk-ability Score = 96
- 99.6% travel into the area for work.
- 45.6% of the workers travel more than 10 miles to get into area for work.
- Of the 1,489 working residents, 66% of them travel less than 10 miles out of the area for work.
OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Though the Fountain District encompasses and is adjacent to areas of dense population and has ample transit connectivity, the majority of pedestrian and vehicular traffic in this area is comprised of workers traveling to or from their offices during the business day. Included in the Fountain District’s green and open spaces is the Halprin Block Sequence, a landmark park sequence which received international critical acclaim and whose fountains serve as the namesake for the District. The intention of the Sequence’s designer, Lawrence Halprin, was for the space to be interactive and engaging; a place of self expression and community enjoyment while connecting with nature. However, years of wear and lack of funding for maintenance has resulted in the Halprin Block Sequence being neglected.

The Fountain District is in need of better coherency between its subdistricts. Connectivity between these subdistrict’s lacks visual and physical accessibility in places. A pattern of auto-oriented development, particularly in the southern portion of the District, creates an unwelcoming pedestrian environment which hinders exploration by those on foot or on bikes. Activity is at its highest during office hours and wanes in the evenings and on the weekends. Therefore, improving the connectivity and accessibility within and between the five subdistrict areas is an essential key to renewing interest and activity in this area.

Our goal is to set forth a plan which can help revitalize the Fountain District by creating a cohesive public realm framework. With the Halprin Sequence as the District’s core, we strive to extend the thresholds of this historic park sequence to better align with the urban development that has occurred around it since its original installation. Our vision draws its inspiration from Halprin’s original intent of fostering community and public engagement through public open spaces. We seek a future in which residents and workers engage in a collaborative development process to bring vibrancy to the Fountain District, as a place for a diverse population to enjoy at all hours of the day and every day of the week.
THE FOUNTAIN DISTRICT

DISTRICT WIDE GOALS

**YEAR ROUND**
The Fountain District should attract and welcome visitors, residents and tourists day and night, year round with a variety of programming.

**ACCESSIBILITY**
The spaces within the Fountain District should be able to accommodate a wide range of visitors including; the visual & hearing impaired, those with neurodevelopmental disorders and the physically impaired.

**DIVERSITY**
The district should promote a greater diversity of users and a wider range of activities and uses. Opportunities for cultural activities are fostered within the district.

**SEQUENCE**
The district should overall enhance the Halprin Sequence as it serves as a source of local pride within the community

**GREEN SPACE**
By unifying the public park, private green space and open space sequence we would provide enhanced public amenities with programmatic flexibility.

**TRANSPORTATION**
The district should enhance connection to existing transportation infrastructure and hub. Visitors can easily determine pathways and navigate to destinations using different wayfinding methods.

**PEDESTRIAN**
Promote pedestrian environment and shift from automobile focus decreases perceived security concerns. This would offer good pedestrian and cyclist connectivity within and between its subdistrict.

**CORRIDORS**
Visual and physical accessibility barriers are removed, creating a sense of shared public ownership. A better sense of permeability between public and private spaces promotes easier greater connection to waterfront to the east and mountains to the west.
The grid section of the district framework would soften and activate the high, hard concrete walls that make the sidewalks uninviting until the building's ground floors can be made more permeable and interactive. This would also include a more accessible pedestrian pathway and additional visual gateways to attract visitors deeper into the district.

Upcoming Development
- New: Multnomah County Courthouse (Civic)
- New: The Porter Hotel
- New: 140 SW Columbia (Mixed-Use High Rise)

Key Interventions
- Additional/Enhanced Pedestrian Path
- Additional Visual Gateway
- Activation Center

Design Guidelines
- Enhanced wall facade
**THE FOUNTAIN DISTRICT**

Interventions to the City Grid include adding color and life to drab, uninviting walls. This could be achieved through murals, temporary art installations, green walls, etc. Bringing aesthetic stimulation into the monotonous City Grid encourages pedestrians to stop, admire and enjoy the built surroundings. Sparking curiosity throughout the space will entice visitors to explore and make their way through the Halprin Sequence. Further drawing people through the space comes in the form of visual gateways, a way of signaling to visitors that they're entering someplace special. All of these interventions are enhanced by improved pedestrian pathways throughout the Grid.
Additional Interventions to the City Grid would include adding green space irrigation and strategically placed bioswales in order to provide a visually appealing way to incorporate key storm-water management ideas throughout the area. This also creates an interesting wayfinding idea in order to direct visitors closer to the Halprin Sequence.
Interventions for the Keller Fountain include closing off 3rd Avenue in front of the auditorium space in order to allow more usable space in an otherwise low density street. Here we would add tables and chairs in the street, as well as, up at the top of the fountain area in order to provide additional outdoor usage. We would invite live bands to play at the entrance in order to invite guests to be re-introduced to the space. Re-opening a cafe, bar and/or coffee shop would reinvigorate a once lively streetscape. Creating a second story balcony on Keller would allow people to enjoy the fountain space even in unfavorable weather.

Adding additional lights to fountain area would re-activate a rather lackluster space at night. Performance murals could be added to the blanks walls in order to showcase upcoming performance in a more creative, public manner.
The West Transition is the edge of the Fountain District interfacing with Portland State University, toward the west hills. This plan enlivens the area and improves the 4th Avenue frontage in order to entice the students, faculty, staff, and workers in the area's offices down the footpaths and into the parks.

**Upcoming Development**
- New: Jasmin Block (9 Story Academic Bldg)
- Upgrades: St. Michael The Archangel Church
- New: 2211 SW 4th Avenue (114 Unit Apartment)

**Key Interventions**
- Additional/Enhanced Pedestrian Path
- Additional Visual Gateway
- Activation Center
- Implement Road Diet
- Additional Cross walks
- Additional Wayfinding

**Design Guidelines**
- Stormwater Infrastructure
- Revised building frontage
Development in the Fountain District is subject to the City of Portland's Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines. These guidelines seek to address the character of development within the Central City area as a whole. We recommend an emphasis on Section B of these guidelines for the Western Transition Area in order to ensure that future development in this area prioritizes the pedestrian experience.

Above: Street trees buffer traffic and provide a pleasant pedestrian environment while mitigating Urban Heat Island effects.

Above: Paving treatments and patterns offer visual interest at the pedestrian scale and can assist in wayfinding and establishing a cohesive district identity.

Right: Sidewalk furniture offers business patrons and passerby an opportunity for rest and socialization while facilitating an active street life.
THE FOUNTAIN DISTRICT

STREET IMPROVEMENTS

CURRENT CHALLENGES

- High traffic volume makes pedestrian crossing difficult
- Existing crosswalks are missing or ineffective
- Cyclist infrastructure is missing or inadequate
- Tree canopy coverage is inconsistent along SW 4th and SW 5th Avenues
- Building street frontages offer limited interaction with street life
- Little to no buffering between sidewalks and street traffic
- Entrances to the Halprin Block Sequence are unmarked or unclear
- Pedestrian realm is unengaging
**GATEWAY IMPROVEMENTS**

Above: Current Street Section of SW 4th Avenue.

Above: Where sidewalk width is limited, cafe seating can extend into the street to provide additional space for pedestrian activities.

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**WAYFINDING IMPROVEMENTS**

The primary goal for the Western Transition Area is to shift away from auto-oriented development and create a welcoming atmosphere for pedestrians and cyclists. In this area of the Fountain District, SW 4th Avenue becomes the focus for these changes, with special attention paid to sidewalk life and the pedestrian experience.

In addition to fostering a vibrant street life, connections to the Halprin Block Sequence are emphasized along SW 4th Avenue where pathways to Lovejoy Fountain and Pettygrove Park connect to the sidewalk. Interpretive signage at these gateways to the Sequence provide wayfinding guidance while facilitating exploration of these spaces. A unified branding strategy for the Fountain District helps enforce the area's identity while creating a sense of place within the city. Branding strategies can include the use of customized Fountain District street sign toppers to help demarcate the area.

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**STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS**

In addition to fostering a vibrant street life, connections to the Halprin Block Sequence are emphasized along SW 4th Avenue where pathways to Lovejoy Fountain and Pettygrove Park connect to the sidewalk. Interpretive signage at these gateways to the Sequence provide wayfinding guidance while facilitating exploration of these spaces. A unified branding strategy for the Fountain District helps enforce the area's identity while creating a sense of place within the city. Branding strategies can include the use of customized Fountain District street sign toppers to help demarcate the area.

Example: Arch Entry

Example: Street Poems

Example: Branding & Identity

Example: Sidewalk swales add greenery while buffering traffic and provide sustainable stormwater management
The **Core** section is the heart of the Fountain District where the Haiprín fountains and walkways are found. This plan adds lighting and amenities to make the parks more inviting places to spend time for members of the community and tourists alike.

**Upcoming Development**
- The Collective on 4th (14 stories, Luxury Residential)

**Key Interventions**
- Additional/Enhanced Pedestrian Path
- Additional Visual Gateway
- Activation Center
- ADA Accessible benches/seating

**Enhanced Entryways**

**Design Guidelines**
- Augmented Lighting & Visibility
- Analog & Virtual Wayfinding/Historic Markers
- Programmed, User-Focused Open Space
- Encouraging N/S & E/W Pedestrian Traffic Flows
By introducing new **illuminated** signature gateways at the entrances to each fountain, travelers of all types will have a safe, visually distinctive aid to help them navigate the sequence. Additionally, we would implement interactive methods like geocaching, QR navigation and web based applications in order to create an interactive atmosphere throughout the district.
The re-envisioned Lovejoy Fountain would include 14 new chess tables and chairs. Enhanced ADA accessibility would promote an additional level public diversity throughout the district. Each table would be made of concrete in order to withstand the elements, a hexagon shape in order to complement the current shape of the fountain. Secondly, alterations to the Linc apartments would include adding ground floor access, forming a “front porch” on the side facing the fountain.

**SEATING**
- 14 Tables
- Shape: Hexagon: Spiraling down to keep with the style
- ADA accessible: Easy access to levels on right side
- Engraved chess board
- Material Concrete
- 3 Chairs to 1 tables
The re-envisioned Pettygrove Park would utilize new way finding markers along the primary site entrances (Pedestrian Trail and 4th Ave.), along with illuminated gateways and historical markers to increase interactivity within the park. Additionally, colorful net sculptures such as those created by Janet Echelman could be used to add color and verticality to Pettygrove. The vibrant patterning and undulating waves seen in these sculptural pieces could be inserted without compromising the park’s original vision – every landscape needs a sky, and these patterns could easily create a dynamic, ever-shifting recreation of views such as a sunset or the Northern Lights.

INCLUDING:

- Sequence-Specific Indicators & Pathway (Paint/Stones/Lights/Water) Along Pedestrian Trail
- 4th Avenue (Laughing Planet and Maseeh Engineering Building) Wayfinding Markers
- Market St. - Road Diet/Lane Restriction East of Keller (downtown from the Auditorium to Naito)
- Removing or Amending the Low Wall at Linc apartment entrance to aid visual recognition of source fountain from street-side.
- In conjunction with the South Anchor subdistrict, relocate hotel to site currently occupied by retail strip, add food carts and/or signature seating to encourage outdoor activity and pedestrian travel

Images include wayfinding, public space activation and lighting precedent for the district.
The **East Transition** is the edge of the Fountain District facing the Willamette River waterfront area. This plan uses the area to activate the Halprin fountains and walkways by proposing Portland State University buildings, which will induce pedestrian traffic throughout the day.

- **Upcoming Development**
  - New: The International School (3 Story Classroom Bldg)

- **Key Interventions**
  - Additional/Enhanced Pedestrian Path
  - Additional Visual Gateway
  - Activation Center

- **Design Guidelines**
  - Road Diet
  - Additional Crosswalks
The intersection of Lincoln Street and First Avenue seen from the location of the hotel proposed by this plan, shows an apartment building with ground-floor entrances that enliven the street and create a feeling of ownership and responsibility for the public realm. The buildings, at the crest of a slope, will provide its residents with incredible views to the east. Pedestrian safety is enhanced by a zebra crosswalk painted with a mid-century modern color palette inspired by the Kennedy-era, when the district was built.

A view to the east from Pettygrove Park walkway between 1st Avenue and Naito Parkway will be realigned with the original walkway leading east from Pettygrove Park in the far future. With proper maintenance and pruning of the tree canopy along the walkways, there will be a a spectacular view from the park, reconnecting the west hills, natural features of the landscape and the waterfront.
The key to activating the Halprin Sequence is to pull people through the space in an east/west direction. To do this, we are proposing a solution to encourage people through the sequence: Further develop Portland State University, Oregon Health & Science University, and Oregon State University buildings on the east end of the district. Posing the Halprin Sequence in the middle of an extended university campus will naturally encourage more use of the current public space. Students will follow the pathways to reach classes and facilities. Those who are less mobile can use the Portland Streetcar, which is free for PSU students.

Within the East Transition are targeted properties for university redevelopment, namely around the OHSU Collaborative Life Sciences Building. These properties are either undeveloped, underdeveloped, or poorly situated as a means of increasing pedestrian flow. Examples of the development interventions are seen in the concept drawings on the page previous. Drawing people to these spaces are distinct multimodal paths, with proposed pedestrian crossing interventions to ensure easy, safe travel. These interventions include colorful, decorative crosswalks to entice people across Natio Parkway, and hawk beacon lights to ensure safety when crossing high-speed traffic.
This proposal aims to hit many of the identified goals of the greater Framework Plan. As college campuses are often used early in the morning to late at night, day in and day out, anchoring Oregon’s public Universities on the east end of the District will attract and welcome visitors on a regular basis.

Further, this proposal will increase physical and visual accessibility between the West Activation area, the Halprin Sequence and the East Activation area, encouraging enhanced activation. Identified access routes are proposed to be multi-modal with a strong emphasis on safe active transportation options.

Establishing stronger east west connections through the district increases legibility and permeability for pedestrians. Additionally, this proposal encourages the visibility of the Halprin Sequence to visitors and passers-by’s, and will ultimately help to educate on the importance of the historical significance of the Sequence.
The South Anchor is the bottom of our framework district. This proposal includes densifying the area to include more residence, hotel units and increased public space.

**Upcoming Development**
- No current development project in the works

**Key Interventions**
- Additional/Enhanced Pedestrian Path
- New Dog Park
- New Development
  - Mixed Use
  - Residential
  - Tower
- Current Public Park

**Design Guidelines**
- Year Round Activation
- Pedestrian Access
The South Anchor of the study area is nearly a 10.5 acre swath of land south of SW Lincoln Ave. Of that, 2.3 acres is currently built upon. There is an unofficial extension to the Halprin sequence in the form of a sculpture in Lee Kelly Park that divides the area between the 3 American Plaza Towers and Portland State University's University Place Hotel and Conference Center.

Phase one of the design plan for the South Anchor is to move the University Hotel to the Lovejoy Plaza, replacing a portion of the underdeveloped eastern portion of that block. A tourist and conference building use will fill the gaps of pedestrian traffic between office hour workers and local residents. With the now available land in the South Anchor, the familiar 200-by-200 ft Portland grid will be reintroduced with pedestrian or bike oriented access. The development will be mainly residential with first floor retail services oriented to neighborhood uses or micro-industrial “maker” space.
Additions to the South Anchor will include re-introducing the familiar 200-by-200 ft Portland grid with increased pedestrian and bike oriented access. An underground parking garage will be installed beneath the entire site to create even more foot traffic in the Halprin Sequence as people will park and complete their last mile of travel on foot through the area.

The buildings will be mainly residential with first floor retail services oriented to neighborhood uses or micro-industrial maker space. In our renderings there are 8 buildings, which provide ample first floor retail space or residential activity that is oriented outwards.
**Dog Park:** The back portion of the project, facing highway 405 barricade will be a dog park that will draw residents from apartments within the district to walk through the sequence. The Halprin Conservancy currently hosts a year Happy Hour for residents and their dog owners. A dog park will build on this existing community while also drawing more residents from the surrounding neighborhoods. The nearest alternative dog park is 2.5 miles north at The Fields Park or 3.4 miles south at Council Crest Park.

This proposal would including additional seating for those visiting the park with their pets. Some of these amenities include:

- Water fountains for pets
- Water fountains for pet owners
- Gated access for additional security
- Trees Lining the freeway to create a visual and noise buffer.
- Obedience and agility interventions for pet owners

Right: Precedent Study LA County Department of Parks & Rec
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