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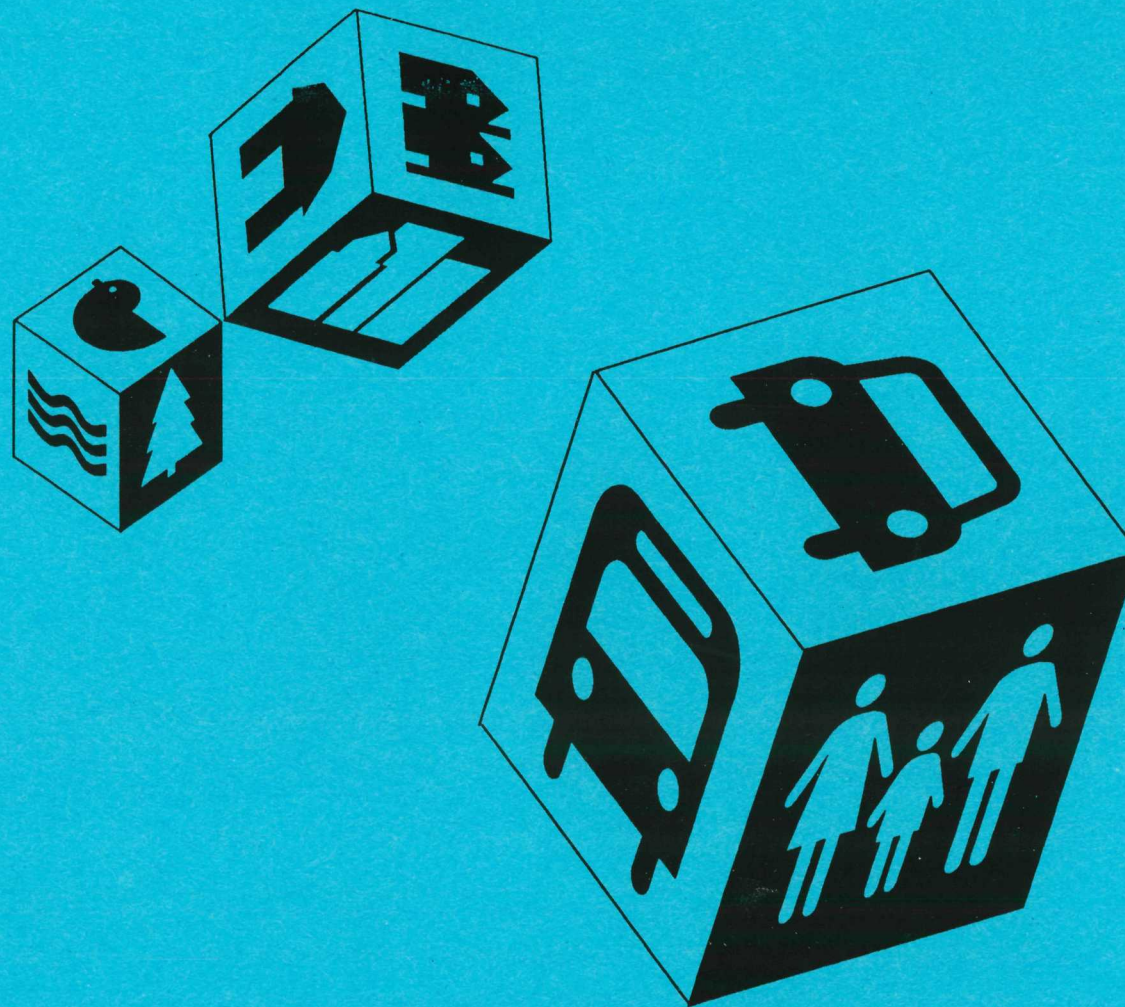
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Ten Essentials for a Quality Regional Landscape

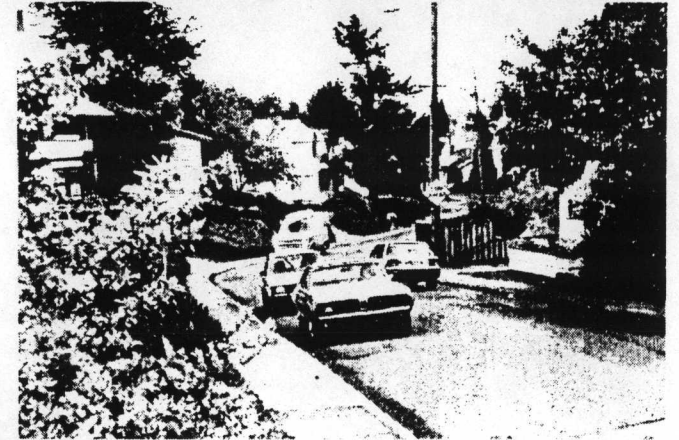
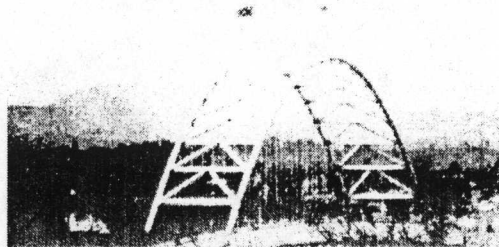
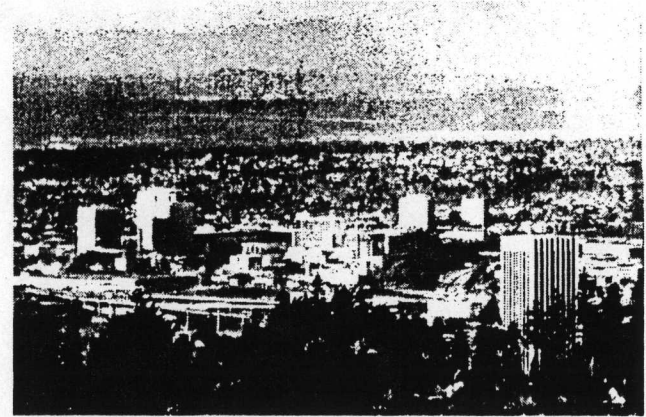
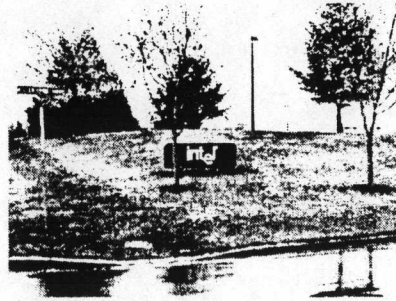
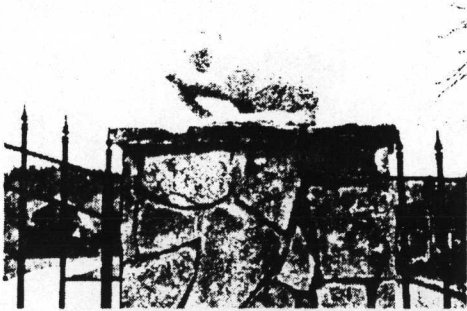
A Guidebook for
Maintaining and Enhancing
Greater Portland's Special
Sense of Place

January 1992

METRO

Ten Essentials for a Quality Regional Landscape

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January 1992



**Ten Essentials for A Quality Regional Landscape:
A Guidebook for Maintaining and Enhancing Greater Portland's Special Sense of Place**

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"I have seen a lot of scenery in my life, but I have seen nothing so tempting as a home for man than this Oregon country... You have the basis here for civilization on its highest scale and I am going to ask you a question which you may not like... Have you enough intelligence, imagination and cooperation among you to make the best use of these opportunities?"

Lewis Mumford

From an address to The Portland City Club in 1938.

Preface

Land use planning is a complex and contentious process with few easy decisions. Every alternative benefits some people and places and hurts others. It is difficult to find criteria to help clarify decisions and this is especially true for a large region like greater Portland that is changing rapidly. The first important step is to identify growth management goals, as METRO has recently done, but these are many and diverse and often in conflict for particular decisions. There remains a need for some general consensus about the most important public values that can guide planning.

In our rapidly changing region there is a strong consensus that one very important purpose in planning is to avoid losing the special qualities of our place-- our landscape-- that make greater Portland a very attractive and enjoyable place to live and do business. METRO has recognized that this widely held purpose might offer an essential source of guidance in making regional planning decisions.

In order to discover and articulate the landscape values that can guide urban growth, the METRO Planning and Development Department contacted the University of Oregon Department of Landscape Architecture and the Oregon Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1989. Faculty and students at the university and practicing landscape architects in the Portland region agreed to donate their time and expertise toward this enterprise.

For four terms at the university, student classes under Dr. Ribe explored the region, attended public meetings, mapped the landscape in many ways, and examined old maps, air photos and plans to discover the history of the region's landscape. All along, the idea was to find the special place-making values in greater Portland and how these are affected by existing and potential alternative urban growth patterns within and outside the developed cities of the region. The volunteer landscape architects and METRO planning staff offered guidance to the students at class workshops and reviews. The contents of this book are a distillation of the most important values found in this process.



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Introduction

The Portland metropolitan region stands to gain as many as a half million new residents by the year 2010 and still many more than that by 2050. One of the great attractions of this region is its relative livability and untrammled landscape. There is a special quality of life in this region that long-time residents cherish. It also attracts many new residents and businesses. Yet, as everybody knows, the very process of growth can destroy the attractions that generated it to begin with.

There will be great changes in the metropolitan region if these growth projections are realized, but these changes needn't be catastrophic to our region's quality as a place to live. It is not necessarily just the number of people living in a region that makes it a livable place. Instead, its urban pattern and the retention of special qualities and places in the landscape can help keep it that way. Yet, as our regional planning seeks to manage important growth impact issues like highway congestion, housing supplies, urban renewal, pollution control, infrastructure development, and economic growth, it can easily neglect the essential elements of greater Portland's sense of place, its unique identity as a great landscape to live in. Preserving our region's special qualities should be a paramount concern guiding urban growth, and these other problems can be solved within the guiding framework set by this endeavor. This book describes a set of landscape planning principles essential to sustaining our region's quality as a special place over the next 60 years.

Three key ideas guide the identification of critical resources for the regional landscape in this book. The first is that this region's landscape is an indivisible public resource, so that the shared qualities that make our own sense of place are most important. The second idea is to try to identify only a few clearly important landscape attributes uniquely important to greater Portland and most worth keeping or pursuing further through creative growth patterns. The third idea is to stick to landscape essentials that can be protected and created through our existing land use planning institutions working to accommodate major urban growth into our landscape.

Essential Concepts

The essential elements of the region's special sense of place derive from the uncommon things that form our own and visitors' memories of the region. These memorable elements make up our place's identity. They result from greater Portland's geographic context and the scenery and evidence of natural processes that provides. But, they also come from our place's cultural history and the busy and friendly people-oriented everyday places and activities that are unique to this area. These kind of elements occur at all scales in many types of places, from vistas over the city, to the experience of river shores in the bottom of local canyons, to the life of the park blocks, and on and on. They also occur in exceptional scenic views, such as those of Mount Hood, and everyday views of the native landscape, such as the agricultural valley bottoms along the Tualatin River, the wildlife habitats found inside the city, or the older neighborhoods in places like East Portland or Oregon City. In all cases, these exceptional place-making landscape resources must be identified and their value appreciated so that they might be retained in the fabric of the growing urban region.

More fundamentally, the growth of the urban region should seek to avoid the sameness of urban form that is occurring everywhere else, or greater Portland will come to look and feel much like most of the cities of California. There is a distinct shift taking place in most American cities away from what is distinctive to what is similar. The result is not just an ever-growing presence of drive-in restaurants and shopping malls just like those found in every other city, but also residential subdivisions, corporate office parks, and streetscapes cut everywhere from the same efficient but monotonous mold. These urban forms reflect what people want, as expressed through our land use markets, and will therefor continue to play a role in the region's growth. But, they needn't take over the landscape completely until it loses its own special qualities as a place to live. We must balance the short-term market and functional efficiencies that make for urban sameness with the creation of long-term, people oriented, and quality of life elements in our everyday landscape.

For example, downtown Portland has many of the economically driven forms of any American city center, with its street-grid of skyscrapers. But, the downtown is a uniquely Portland experience, with its small square blocks that allow buildings to take on clear singular forms, its beautiful park blocks, MAX lines, transit mall, plazas, paving patterns, and long waterfront park. Why not extend other such unique, functionally modern, but attractive combinations of urban form throughout the region?

In seeking to identify key elements for the region's future landscape it is important to realize that every city needs places and recurrent landscape elements that make its identity clear to everyone. These are best derived from the city's historic responses to its natural setting, as well as the patterns of land use and social activity in small spaces that over time have become the authentic essence of life there. The result is inevitably very distinct and often dramatic or comfortable places immediately recognized and loved by residents and visitors alike. The region has these things in abundance. They include our coniferous forests, mountain and lava-dome landmarks, beautiful old neighborhoods, hillside parks, river canyons, neighborhood centers, and many subtle responses to our love-hate relationship with rain and abundant water. Above all, our region still retains, through its climate, size and youthfulness, a rich contact with natural systems and water. We experience these at many scales in distinctive niches of our landscape, such as canyons, floodplains, mountain slopes or along the paths of creeks.

Such elements in our metropolitan region make it possible to fit human activities beautifully into the landscape. If the region grows in a form responsive to this setting, we will find added meaning in this place as we become aware of the presence and beauty of the landscape in the experience of our daily activities. To make this happen, land uses must not be freely located in space. Instead, scenic landmarks and views must be preserved and created, and places must take shape that people can be in and identify strongly with. This does not mean that the emphasis should only be placed on preserving historic districts and natural features with all new development viewed as bad to be fit in the leftover gaps. Instead, careful planning can make a variety of successful new places everywhere. These, then, will eventually come to be seen as authentically belonging to us because their special qualities will come to shape and satisfy our expectations of the region.

Making It Happen

The ten essentials for maintaining and enhancing our regional landscape in this book are all equally important. They only differ in strategies needed to make them happen. All can be applied by planning jurisdictions and developers of any size, through careful identification of landscape resources and imaginative planning methods to fit growth in concert with these. The design of major new urban infrastructure, such as streets, highways, sewers and MAX lines, should not occur only according to functional criteria but must consider the public landscape it will create and the preservation and creation of people oriented neighborhoods. Design codes can promote the successful creation of people-oriented infill housing, livable streets, neighborhood centers, and the creation of urban forests that are more than just street trees. Minimum density and mixed-use zoning can create strong neighborhoods and successful new subregional urban centers. Low density zoning and site planning codes can further promote living urban forests and retain forest cover on hillsides. And, intelligent placement of the urban growth boundary and urban reserves can strengthen the region's urban edge.

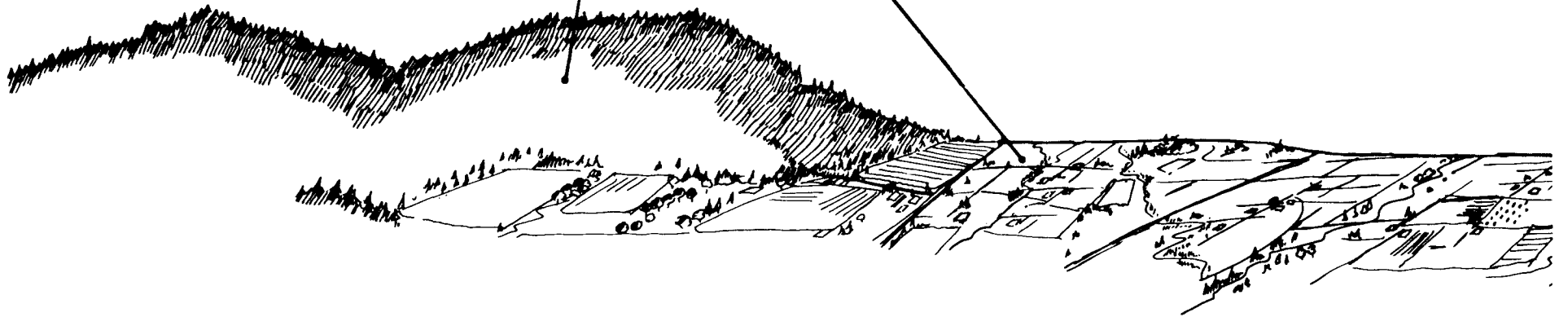
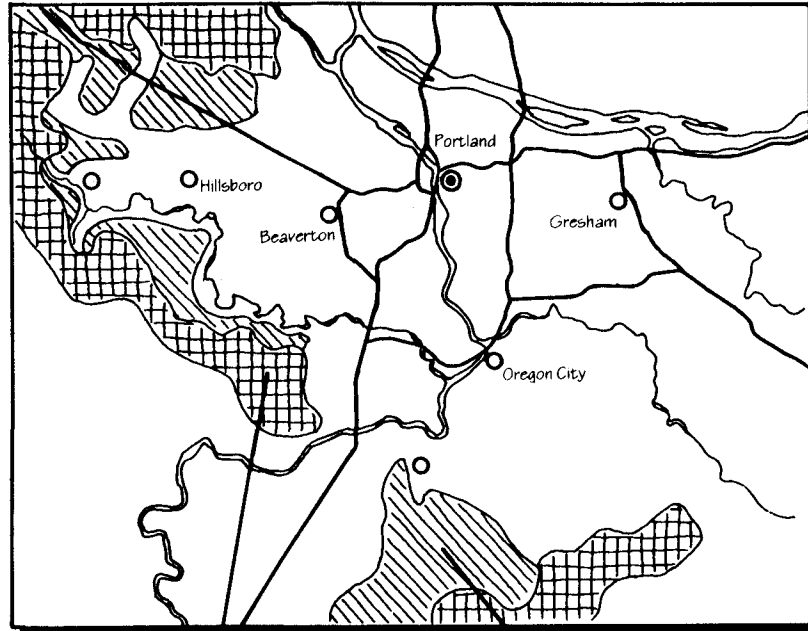
There is a great influx of people and money to our region with outside habits of place-making that are not our own and which they often seek to escape. These sources of change often want to keep this region's quality as a place to live as much as older residents do, and they often expect to be regulated toward this end for everyone's long-term economic health and quality of life. We have a better chance of keeping our region's quality of place than perhaps any rapidly growing region ever has. This opportunity comes from both the big, small-town community spirit of greater Portland and the unusual strength and accountability of our planning institutions. The metropolitan area will inevitably change with growth, and with it the region's identity. This will harm some of the old virtues of our place, but these losses can be minimized while opportunities to enhance the region's best qualities can be embraced. Toward this end, the aim of this book is to begin to form a shared vision of the good things we can all sense in our landscape from the best traditions of greater metropolitan Portland's urban form. That vision can then enter the planning discourse with other urban growth problems to seek a balance between modern urban forms and a beautiful and successful landscape for people.

Harmonize Growth Patterns With Regional Landforms

Our metropolitan landscape can keep a lot of the beauty we cherish with just a little regional design. Obviously, we can't design the whole region in any detail at all. But, we can lay down some broad rules of thumb to maintain and enhance our most valuable visual, regional landscape qualities while giving each part of the region its own special identifying features.

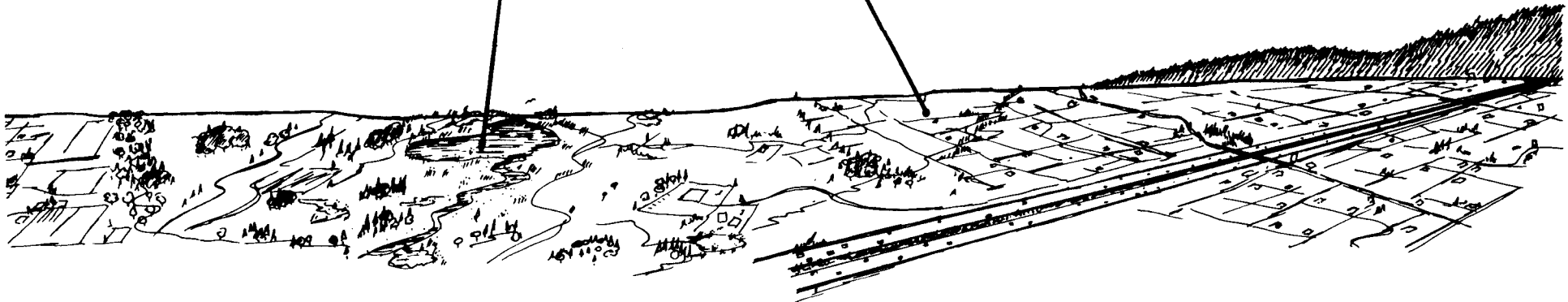
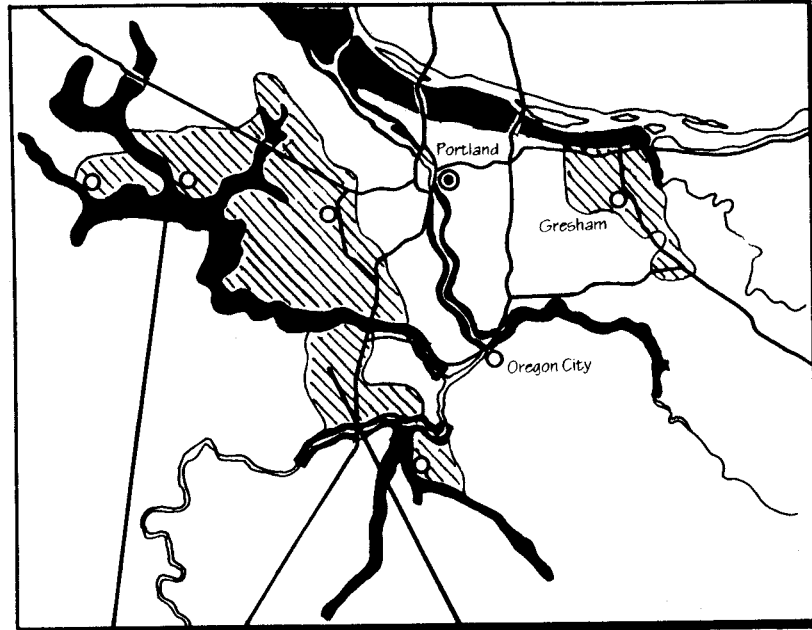
It is easy to take such landscape qualities and features for granted until they are lost in a sea of haphazard, monotonous growth. For example, there is now a rhythm to the regional landscape where the valley bottoms have open fields or spread-out city set into a grid of streets and between these we drive on winding roads through upland hills dominated by forests or tree farms or low density housing set within the forest. This is one of the essential experiences of the region's landscape and will be lost if alternative land use patterns supplant this rhythm. Similarly, each part of the metropolitan landscape is very distinctive--especially compared to most other American cities--so that everyone knows when they are downtown, in the West Hills, in the Tualatin Valley, in East Portland, in the Southeast Hills, or in a lot of other distinct places within the region. In a way, driving among these places is like being in a Fred Meyer store, where you know what "department" you are in and where the others are in relation to you. This quality must also be kept and strengthened to make the region diverse and make everyone's' own home place within the region distinct and their own.

In order to discover some simple but powerful regional design prescriptions for the very large geographic area now experiencing potential growth pressures, we must first understand the structure of our region and how it can be meaningfully divided for design. This structure is illustrated on the following eight pages by means of a pictorial cross-section of our landscape from west to east. It is divided into key parts that are referenced to maps of the region. The design prescriptions for the landscape parts are then described on the pages that follow each half of the landscape cross section.



Outlying Basalt Uplands

Outlying River Terraces



Floodplains

Near-Urban River Terraces

Outlying Basalt Uplands

These hills should remain as a scenic backdrop of agriculture and forest cover for the metropolitan area. As we look out to the west and the south they visibly mark boundaries to our region and provide a context expressive of the Pacific Northwest. The soils are of volcanic origin, are seasonally droughty and high in clay. They are not well-suited for major development, and any development should be low density and sited so as to maintain a strong forest cover and wildlife habitat.

These are the scenic rolling hills of the countryside near the city and should remain that way for our enjoyment. A drive through them is an experience of views of farmland and views back to our urban areas in their larger natural and agricultural setting. It is an experience of narrow roads winding up a forested hillside, a few gravel driveways and wood smoke from chimneys. These uplands are easily accessible from much of the metropolitan area and are welcome reminders that we are a city who enjoys a clear and strong sense of a city-country ideal.

Outlying River Terraces

Far from urban centers, and beyond major rivers and floodplains, these river terraces include some of the best farmland in Oregon and should be preserved as such. They are home to our true working farms, on relatively level soils of silty-clay loams of high fertility. These same soils are easy to build on, making them tempting sites for urban development. However, these terraces should be kept as viable farms to give urban residents a nearby country and 'small town' landscape setting.

It is here that we find our most beautiful agricultural landscapes that are close to the city. There we find much of the feeling of the well-kept barn and the single oak tree in the plowed field. It is the large and contrasting setting for the urban patterns of our cities, giving them a vivid visual context. It is also a reminder of our agricultural history and of the accessibility of country life that we enjoy far more than most urban areas. Few major metropolitan areas have such a strong presence of farming so close. Saving these places helps keep greater Portland's identity special.

Floodplains

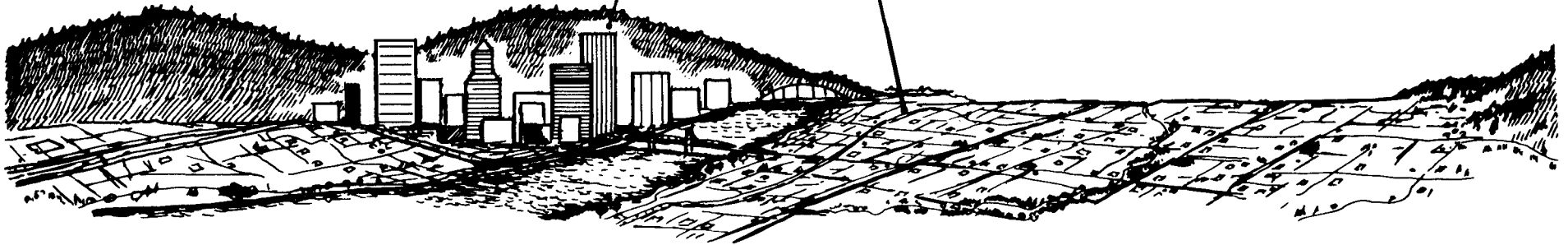
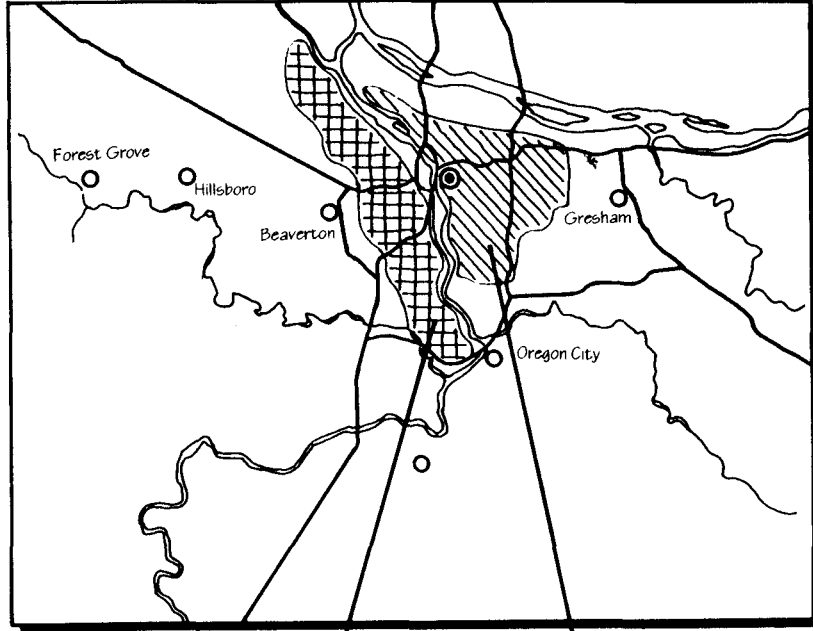
Here, flood hazard, high water tables and poor soils have created important wetlands, riparian habitat, and natural open areas in places not suited for intensive development. The best opportunities that arise here are for development of greenway, wildlife, and recreation corridors in the urban landscape. These open space zones are essential in keeping nature in the city for a livable landscape quality. Limited kinds of industrial development may occur here in already disturbed areas if it can accept or resist the risk of flood damage.

The floodplains should remain a special and recognizable part in the natural landscape. They are the bottom of the landscape and can offer special experiences of enclosed natural zones that are a rich habitat for wildlife and vegetation. In cases such as Jackson Bottom, near Hillsboro, areas of floodplain are given public recreational and interpretive educational uses as well. In some floodplain areas annual flooding has been controlled by levees and upstream dams but in many other areas we expect them to be seasonally filled with water according to an inevitable rhythm all their own. It is part of the natural drama of our landscape.

Near-Urban River Terraces

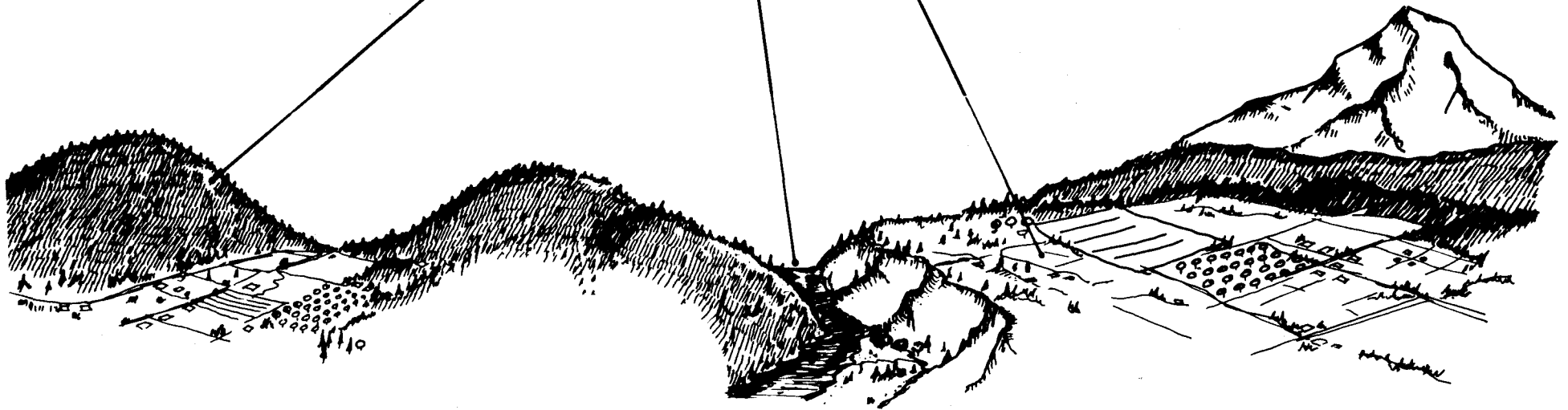
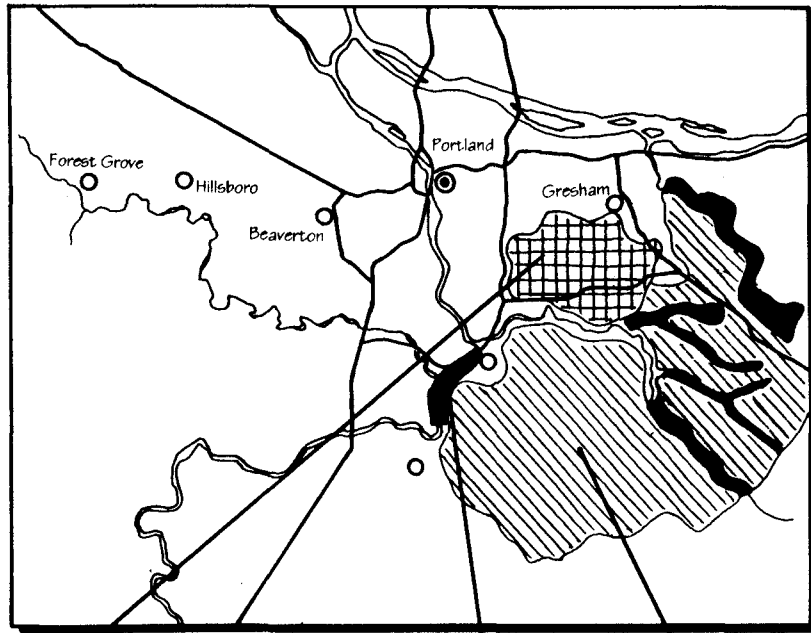
These terraces are near our urban centers and are already being developed. Like the outlying river terraces, the soils here are a relatively level silty clay loam of high fertility and are easy to build on. An intensive, compact, well designed pattern of development with a clear outer edge next to farmland can occur here.

This landscape presents an opportunity for a well structured urban landscape. A strong urban form, including clusters of tall buildings at new urban centers, civic landmarks, wide, green parkway boulevards, and shopping centers can give everyone a sense of urban relief and orientation as they live and move about in this flat landscape. This is also an appropriate landscape setting for our regional economic health represented by the growing number of corporate and office developments, so long as they are well-integrated into the desired urban form. The many small creeks and ravines running through these terraces should be kept as a network of greenspaces separating and enhancing neighborhoods of integrated land uses.



West Hills Basalt Uplands

East Portland Terraces



Boring Lava Domes and Valleys

River Canyons

Southeast Mud and Lava

West Hills Basalt Uplands

In these uplands dissected old lava flows create steep, now forested hills. The high clay, seasonally droughty soils help make the steep slopes difficult to build on. The steepest of these slopes, and the slopes facing north, should be kept as public open spaces. More moderate slopes can accommodate low or medium density residential development if a forest cover is retained among the houses. The bottom edges of these hills should form a sharp boundary between dense and moderately dense urban development in the hills. The primary traffic flow through the hills should be along two or three new major arterials, avoiding disruption of the low density, quiet residential west hills neighborhoods.

There are opportunities here for some wonderful regional views of the downtown skyline, Mt. Hood, the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, and the Tualatin Valley. View opportunities should be preserved and enhanced through more road pull-offs, parks and forest openings. These hills should continue to support a wonderful urban forest among our homes, especially including large forest areas like Forest and Washington Park. Many narrow and winding roads should move with the topography rather than contesting it with straight lines and broad streets, allowing residential areas to fit pleasantly into the hills, with only small neighborhood commerce allowed.

East Portland Terraces

These are river and glacial outwash terraces. The older homes and streets of Portland are located here, not far from the city center. These areas are committed to intensive urban use characterized by compactness, traditional neighborhoods and a focus toward downtown as a dense urban center. This neighborhood character should be retained and infill should rehabilitate but not overwhelm declining communities and neighborhoods.

New subregional and neighborhood centers of intense social and residential life can be created here with many urban amenities to accommodate growth. This landscape benefits from all the forest remnants left here should be and neighborhood scale parks are very important. Plans to effectively extend downtown Portland to the east side of the river are appropriate within the old industrial-warehouse districts to retain the existing neighborhoods. High density, mixed-use nodes can be developed along the MAX line while retaining the traditional charm of a quieter time next to the bustle of contemporary Portland.

Boring Lava Domes and Valleys

This is a landscape of wooded hills and pastoral valleys of superb scenic quality formed by recent volcanism. Silty clay, seasonally droughty soils in the valleys here provide excellent opportunities for nurseries and tree farms. Urban growth can occur here but it should retain as much leftover low density valley landscape as possible beyond the urban growth areas. Hillsides should retain forest cover with low density development and minimal development on the very tops of domes and ridges will keep their scenic outline. Some of the remaining large tracts of forest or field on the domes should be reserved as urban parks. These park reserves can be primarily on the steepest and the north facing slopes.

This a special place in our regional landscape, offering unique landforms with which we can harmonize our urban growth forms. It is a complex and intricate landscape in which we experience a frequently changing pattern in the natural landforms and land uses. Harmonious urban growth here would take its cue from the landscape by making only smaller in scale neighborhoods and communities that fit into niches among the hillsides, valleys and farmlands.

Street patterns should be compactly gridded on the valley floors and rise, fall and curve with the topography on the hillsides. As with our Outlying River Terraces, there should be an experience of a clear edge between city and country that fits here with the bases of and passes between the domes.

Southeast Mud and Lava Flows

These undulating landforms are typically well beyond urban centers and should not be further developed. They make up a landscape characterized by nurseries, tree farms, canyons and forested hills. This is a part of the surrounding countryside, which provides a special rural context to our cities. We enjoy this landscape much as we do our outlying basalt uplands. We experience the unique landscape of tree farms and nurseries, frequently displaying their cultivated reddish soils and orderly green. It is a visible expression of one of our leading economic resources and the low density, rural life associated with small but viable farms. It should remain essentially as it is. Where there are urban centers here, such as Oregon City, they should be places with their own well defined urban form, kept through compact growth, avoiding suburban sprawl in this part of our regional landscape.

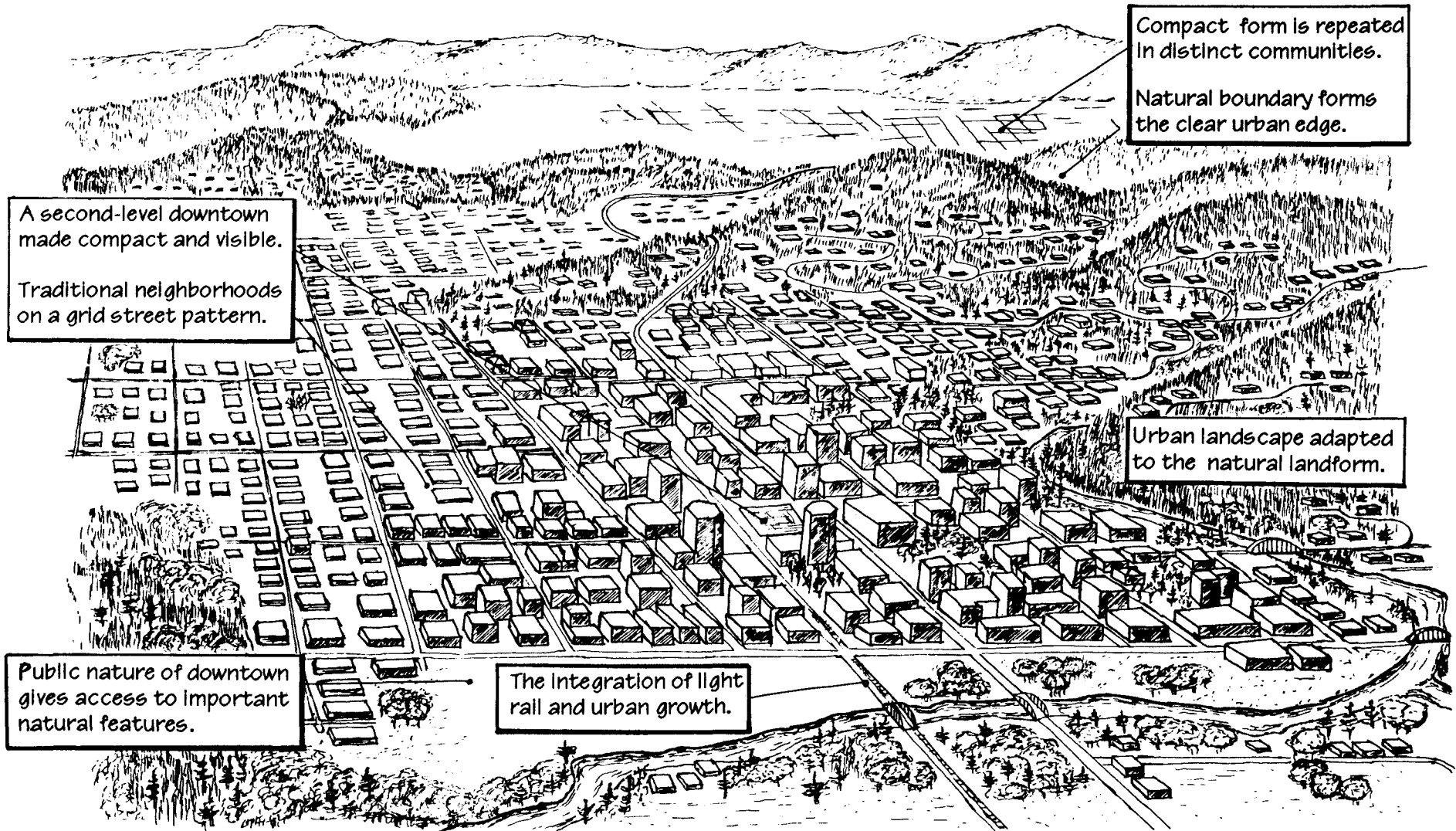
The Region Needs More Truly Urban Growth

As the region has grown so has its identity crisis. Elements of new development have appeared, but in an entirely new form. Rather than truly urban growth, it has been a largely suburban pattern of separation and segregation of the traditional elements of the city. It has been a pattern sustained in large measure by the car. We seem to be abandoning the compactness of urban centers surrounded by distinct neighborhoods --which have offered the best of city and town life-- for a sprawling region of far-flung destinations. In its place is appearing a region of shopping malls here, business parks there and our housing somewhere else again.

This will not be a sustainable pattern if we are to preserve our unique landscape and our livability with a great deal of population growth. It is imperative that new growth be directed around truly urban centers. New urban centers can focus and integrate outlying urban growth so that identifiable places and realms of daily shopping and work can converge. Rather than the 'placeless' sprawl of California-style suburbia, we need a region of distinctive cities both inside and outside the currently urbanized area. Think of it as a second urban level, characterized by subregional cities, like Oregon City, with their own smaller downtowns. We have a unique opportunity to develop such a regional form.

We live in a striking landscape of hills and valleys, ravines and rivers, and lushly vegetated ridge lines. Urban form and landform can achieve a memorable marriage here. New urban centers that are compact, visually compelling and clearly bounded, like that shown on the facing page, surrounded by identifiable neighborhoods, are possible by using rather than ignoring the natural landscape. For example, in downtown Portland, and in its surrounding neighborhoods, we already enjoy just such an urban 'sense of place'; one that is appreciated by the resident and visitor alike. We need only follow our own best traditions in planning our metropolitan future.

All cities need an identifiable public realm. If we are to return to a successful city form there must be more attractive, mixed-use cores, places quite unlike the set apart shopping mall fastened to a freeway, or the uncomfortable commercial strip development. These should not be distant places we go to, compelled by necessity, hoping only to hurry up and leave. We need places to stop, walk and linger. The experience should be mass transit and pedestrian based, full of business, cafes and retail at a variety of scales. There should be a mix of outdoor spaces congenial to simply 'hanging out' and to public festivals. Finally, there should be no reluctance to break the low-slung, two-story suburban code by mixing housing, shopping, office space and tall buildings in a single bound. In short, we need to make downtowns again, and build our region's cities around them.



A second-level downtown made compact and visible.
Traditional neighborhoods on a grid street pattern.

Compact form is repeated in distinct communities.
Natural boundary forms the clear urban edge.

Urban landscape adapted to the natural landform.

Public nature of downtown gives access to important natural features.

The integration of light rail and urban growth.

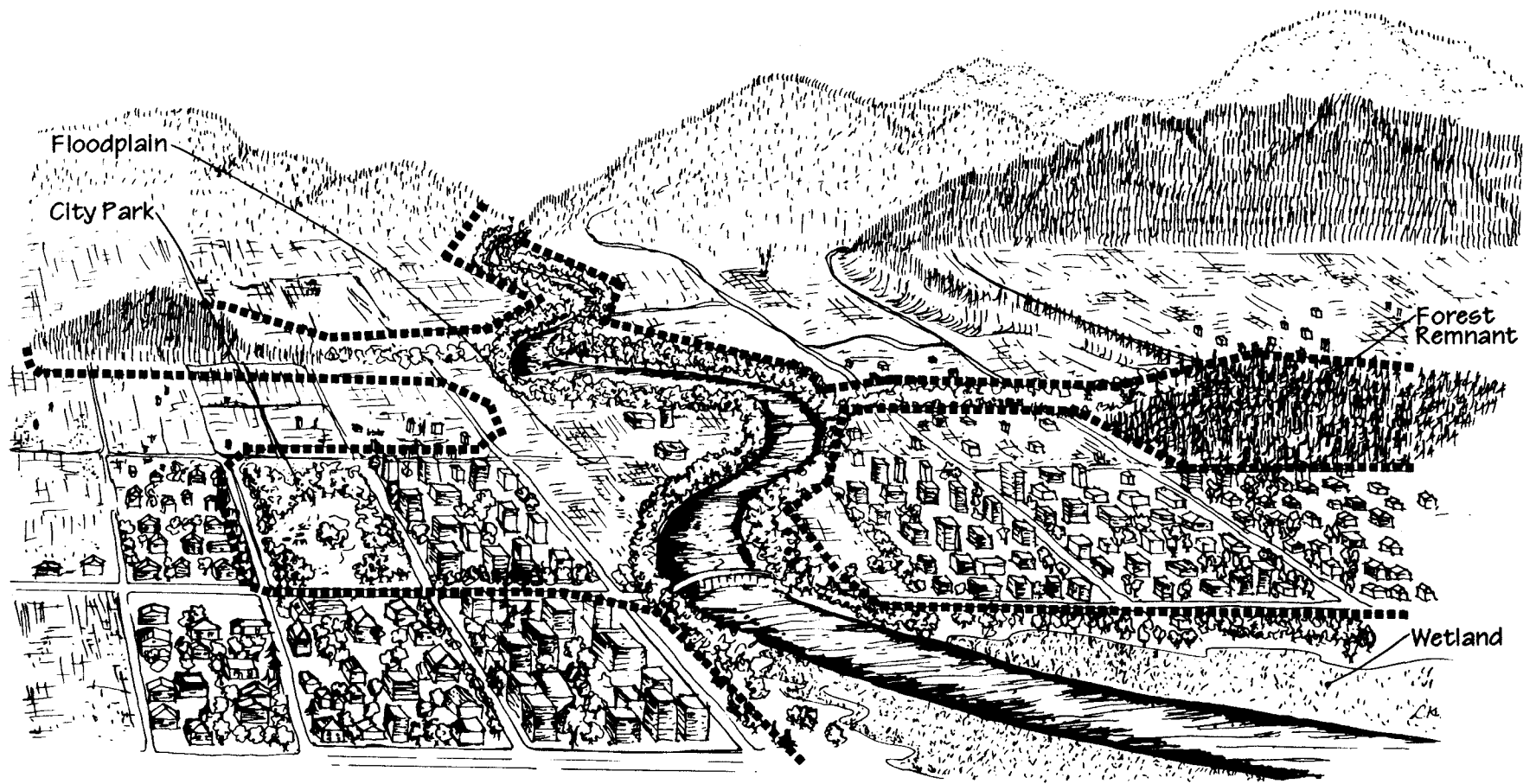
A sub-regional city: A new urban center, surrounded by neighborhoods and fitted with the features of its setting.

Continue To Build A Metropolitan Greenspaces System

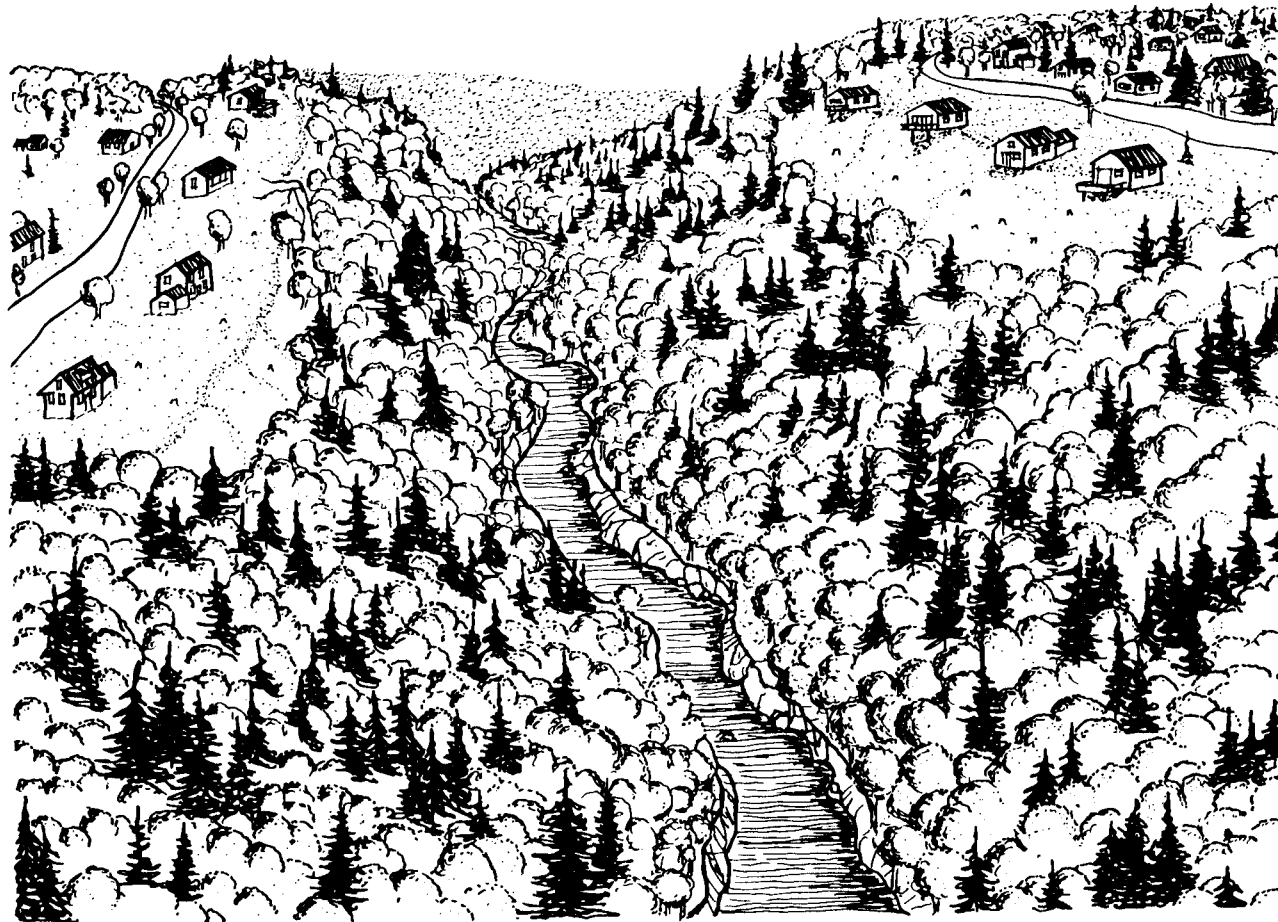
In the metropolitan Portland region we enjoy one of the highest percentages of open space in any urban area in America. It has shaped and softly partitioned the forms of our urban environment. It enriches our daily lives with sights of quiet green and hints of natural beauty everywhere. As such, it is an achievement that reflects our shared values, public policy and the natural building constraints in our landscape of steep slopes, canyons, floodplains and wetlands. It has cast a positive national image for our region. A principle component in this prize of open space is the Metropolitan Greenspaces Network that METRO is successfully pursuing to keep natural areas throughout the urban area.

Regrettably, urban growth threatens to out-race our ability to identify, set aside and link, with a network of 'green corridors', this immensely valuable part of our urban landscape. Continued careless development will diminish accessibility to these opportunities to experience the natural landscape and foreclose the essential links in this network, such as wildlife corridors and recreational park systems connecting our major metropolitan areas. Finally, our opportunity to create an 'urban ecology' in which our towns and cities are contributions to the natural environment, rather than its degradation, would be lost. Urban expansion should avoid the richest and most diverse habitat for plants and animals, as well as the visually important areas that contribute to our sense of being a 'green city'. Special attention should be given to the natural corridors of riparian zones along our rivers. In addition to their scenic qualities, these zones, left undisturbed, play a vital role in preserving water quality and in the movement of wildlife.

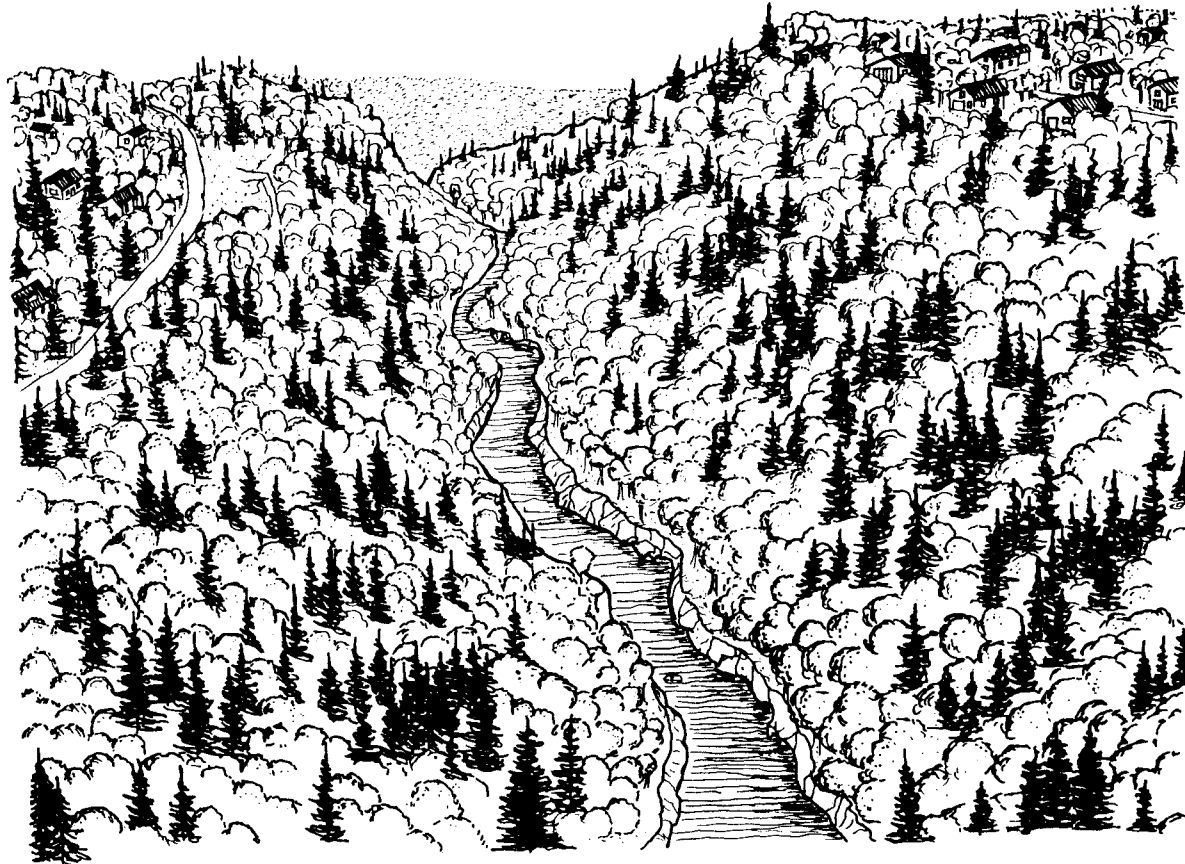
Our abundance of canyons and ravines are also of special importance in this network. Their steep slopes and thick vegetation lend scenic strength, identity and variety to our landscape. They form natural boundaries between communities, even neighborhoods, allowing us to experience our region as a natural mosaic rather than as unbroken urban sprawl. Additionally, they have potential use as linear parks and greenways just beyond the urban fringe. These canyons and ravines still exist near and in the city as beautiful, whole places. They should be set aside as large components of the regional greenspaces system.



Metropolitan Greenspaces System: As the metropolitan area grows outward and infills with greater density, a network of greenspaces should be woven into the urban pattern. This network should be a linked system of floodplains, forest remnants, wetlands, parks, steep slopes, and riverways that lend 'natural' structure to all urban places.



Unacceptable Development Practices: Far too often development occurs along canyon rims to maximize private ownership of views. This degrades the canyons scenic quality, ironically diminishing its original market attraction, and increases the likelihood of further degradation through increased erosion. This canyon's value has been greatly reduced as a public component of the metropolitan greenspaces system and the potential for scenic views from our automobiles has been greatly curtailed.



Acceptable Development Practices: Development can be permitted only along the top of canyons and ravines if what we build there will have a better fit with the natural landscape. It should be set back enough from slope tops so that a high degree of the original visual quality of forested rims will be maintained. Vegetation removal should be kept at a minimum to visually screen development from within and from across the canyon while opening windows for views from homes. Finally, placing through-street and trail rights-of-way between private development and the canyon rim in many places can ensure greater public access to canyons and allow frequent vistas there from our automobiles.

Bring Rivers Fully Into Public Life

Our metropolitan region is defined by the Columbia, Willamette and many other rivers. We have bridged them, built communities and industries on their banks, dredged them tirelessly for ship channels and watched them flood and recede with an annual inevitability. Large portions of our landscape have been terraced and dissected, deposited and nurtured by rivers. They have influenced the location and the form of our communities.

Our rivers are also a civic and a recreational resource. Their abundance of flowing water is one of our best scenic features. The Willamette downtown waterfront defines a strong focus for the region and is a setting for many of our public festivals. For all of that, our rivers deserve respect for their environmental quality and more celebration of their special place in our urban landscape. The key to the first of those objectives is an appreciation of their dynamic role in a natural system, and of the multiple threats of urban degradation. The key to the second objective is enhancing and providing much more public access as the region grows. Many other river cities in America have effectively cut themselves off from their rivers, only to later undertake expensive and measures to restore public access and a vital connection to the riverbank. In downtown Portland we have integrated the river into our public life by replacing a highway with an intensively used waterfront park. Throughout the region, however, there is relatively little visual and physical access to the rivers. Growth need not mean even greater restrictions of that access. It should, in fact, present us with opportunities to expand and enhance the place of water in our public life.

Public access has a dual nature. First, we must be able to reach the water's edge and its surface. Boating and fishing opportunities as well as walking and biking along the banks, should be preserved where they exist now and set aside as public open space in all new growth areas. Waterfront parks and a community's downtown are two of our most public uses of the riverbank. The riverbank should never become the exclusive province of private ownership, valued only as a property value rather than as a public resource. Second, we should open and keep clear frequent views of our rivers. Public buildings and hilltop parks, like Washington Park, provide excellent opportunities. Roads and streets that parallel the river should allow us to frequently see the river. Bridges designed with guard rails that do not obstruct the motorist's view of the water will enhance our experience of crossing.

Above all, we should remember that the health of our rivers has great significance, both ecologically and symbolically, to the health of our region. Accessibility does not imply high impact damage to the environmentally sensitive slopes and vegetation of the riverbank.



The River's Public Edge: River shores should be accessible as bike and pedestrian trails. This ensures us of opportunities for a slower paced recreational experience in quiet contact with the water. This has been made possible along the Willamette at the downtown waterfront and Powers Park in Burlingame, while other waterfront parks like Memorial Park in Wilsonville, Mary S. Young Park in West Linn, Oaks Bottom, and Cathedral Park in Saint John just catch brief pieces of the river. More and longer river-trail parks are needed with urban growth, and these should be integrated with regional trail systems the way the south Columbia River shore now is.



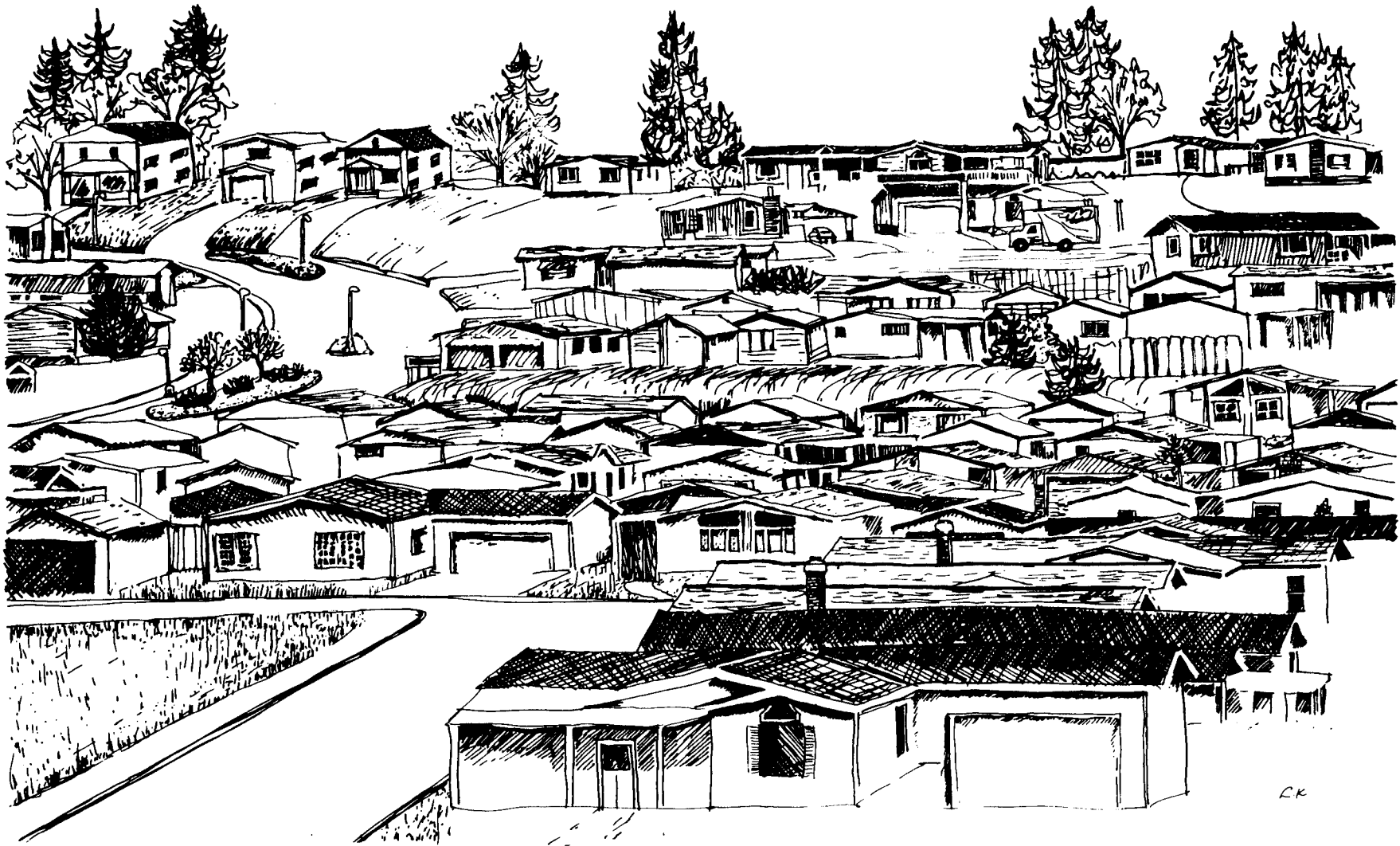
Public River Views: We can never have too many public vista views of rivers and the surrounding landscape. These define our sense of place for us as we see how the rivers define the city and the urban forests and floodplains that fit around them.

Preserve and Maintain An Urban Forest

Trees, lots of trees, are part of the greater Portland region's image. Large contiguous stands of hillside trees, our system of parks and natural areas, an abundance of street and plaza trees and our residential lots with their big trees preserved make up our urban forest. Few other cities in America have such a resource visible and accessible to so many. Few can claim to be such a 'green city'. Much of our livability, our regional identity, the health of our environment and our charm for visitors depends on our magnificent urban forest. Many of our older homes enjoy the extra benefits of shade, quiet and privacy offered by surroundings of relatively natural forest. Throughout the most attractive of our suburban areas mature trees, particularly our prized conifers, have maintained the beauty of our cities. They have given even the newest houses a feeling of being established residences. It is all the more dangerous for us to take it for granted that new development will continue to preserve our cover of trees. Without guidance our urban forest may be irreparably whittled away by the same urban growth that it has attracted.

The dominant and most visible trees in our urban forest are the large conifers, especially our Douglas Fir, with their associated growth of maples and alders. They represent our native plant community and should be protected from the careless 'clear cutting' of development. Much of the remaining native forest grows on slopes which are prone to be built on in order to market their potential for views. It is imperative that guidelines for the density and the patterns of hillside building be set in place. Substantial original forest cover should remain, with the tops of ridges, hills and domes left in full forest cover. Density must be no more than 2 or 3 houses per acre on slopes, and those homes should be designed to favor relatively narrow vertical structures instead of spreading ones, so most trees can be retained with less clearing for construction space and view openings.

Like any forest, our urban forest is neither static nor undying. It requires our maintenance and continued reestablishment as we expand our urban areas. We must secure trees for the future by planting them now, avoiding barren streets and landscapes. Large trees, including the oaks that are rapidly disappearing from our urban areas, should be favored. Native species, especially conifers, should be retained during site development and replanted wherever possible. Finally, no street should be without trees. Next to the forest remnants, the street tree is the most important contributor to our urban forest. They bring shade, color, cleaner air and animal life into the most intensively used city spaces. With so many nurseries nearby, a greater diversity of street trees should be planted than is evident along our newer streets.



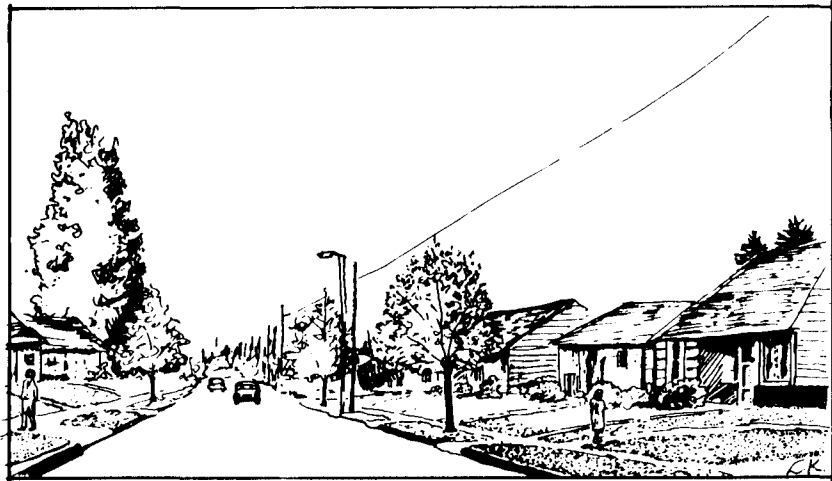
The Loss of Forest Cover: A hillside cleared and developed at too high a density will be a permanent loss of urban forest. Even front yard planting will not replace the forested hill and pleasant neighborhood that could have been retained through careful development.



Maintaining a Forest Cover: Rather than converting a forested hillside into a hillside of housing, low density building should be sited into the existing forest cover creating an urban forest scene of buildings and landscape so characteristic of our region.

STREETS WITH TREES

In addition to being beautiful, tree lined streets bring a human scale to a neighborhood that everyone shares and contributes strongly to sense of place. Trees make this street 'slow down' and fill up our senses. They give this place its character.



A STREET WITHOUT TREES

This street is a few blocks away from the one above, with the same style of houses and same kind of residents. The lack of trees diminishes the front yards as protected, quiet extensions of the homes. It also diminishes the comfort and character of the neighborhood street.

Provide Access to Many Landscape Views

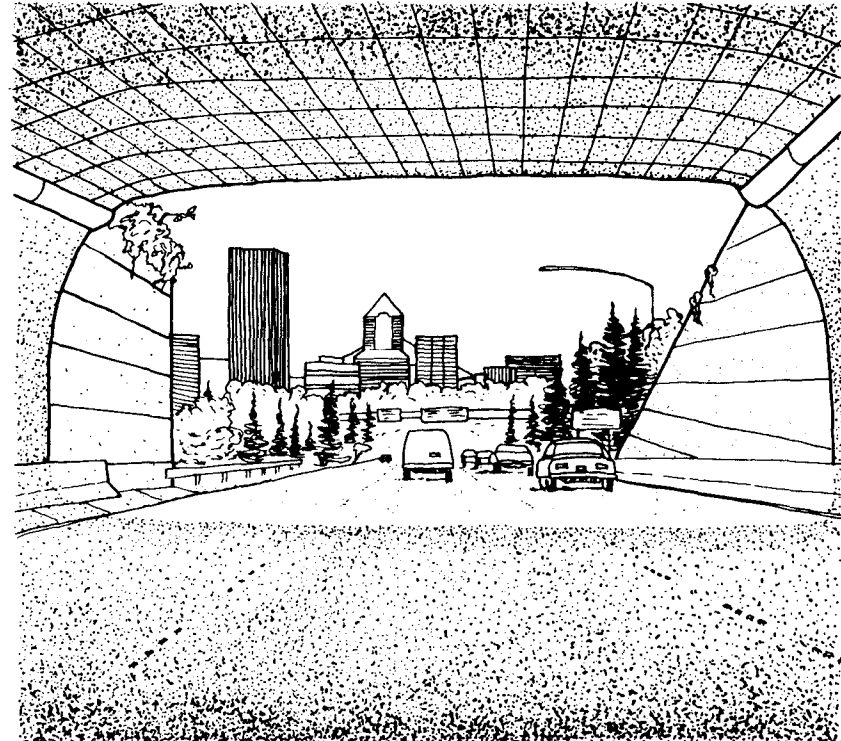
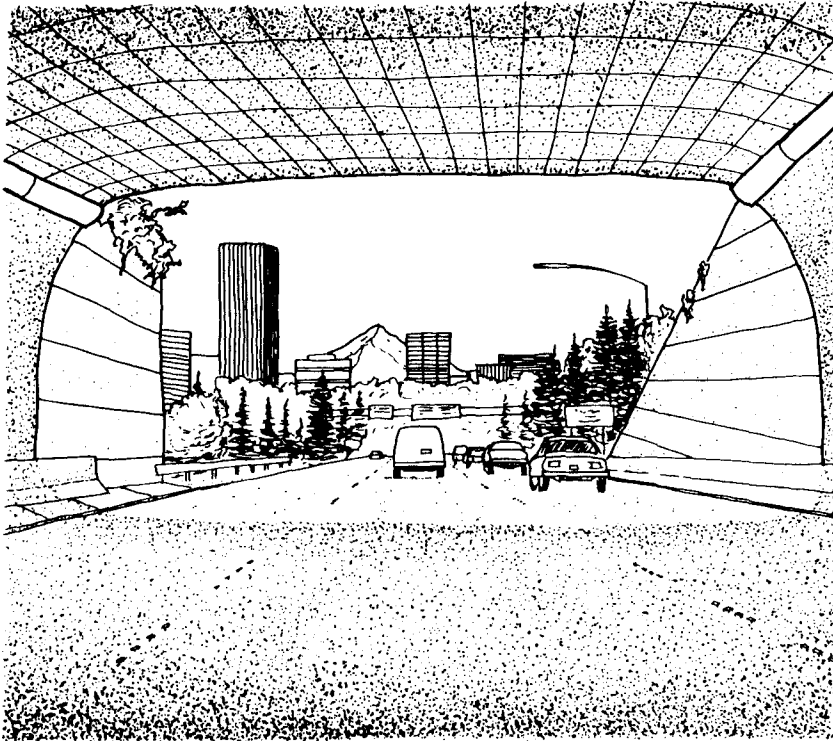
How often have we hoped for a 'room with a view', climbed a hillside for the prospect of the natural scenery, or happily taken the 'scenic route'? Having a view has long been regarded as a rewarding experience. Getting 'a view of things' is a one way of expressing our understanding of our place's significance.

In very fundamental ways views are an imperative part of our regional sense of place. They help us to understand how our region fits together and where we fit in. We know what our setting is and how it is changing, sometimes for the worse. Landmarks, seen repeatedly from different vantage points, serve to orient us. Travel throughout the metropolitan area can allow us frequent glimpses of our own cornucopia of open fields, wooded hills, neighborhoods, valley panoramas and rivers; keeping a strong 'picture' of the region fresh in our minds.

Our diverse topography, with its elevated vistas and panoramas of valleys, lava domes, hills, rivers and distant mountains provides us with an understanding of our city and its landscape setting not possible in most other urban areas. Rocky Butte, Milo McIver Park, Mt. Tabor, Bald Peak, Washington Park, Council Crest, Terwilliger Parkway and dozens of incidental places from any hill top to our own neighborhood have become those familiar commanding locations from which we experience our public views. They are those views apparent to all and exclusive to no one. Any loss of these public opportunities to look out from where we are will inevitably diminish our sense of place. 'Out of sight, out of mind' will take on a new and regrettable meaning.

In the new development of our communities, providing public access to significant views is a particularly important imperative. Views of our surroundings are a public resource that requires equitable distribution rather than excessive private ownership. Land for parks, plazas, and other open spaces with good views of the larger landscape or of civic landmarks should be reserved at both a city and a neighborhood scale. What we can see will then be an invaluable shared public resource.

Regional travel corridors should be inventoried for their significant views, and those kept clear of buildings and trees. The city of Portland is doing just this and that effort must be repeated throughout the growing urban region. Vista-view parks are also needed for other regional cities. Frequent pull-outs should be provided for us to stop and enjoy vistas. New trafficways should be purposefully sited to give us scenic views of vistas as well as of rivers and forests, and a visually coherent experience of both the natural and community patterns of the region.

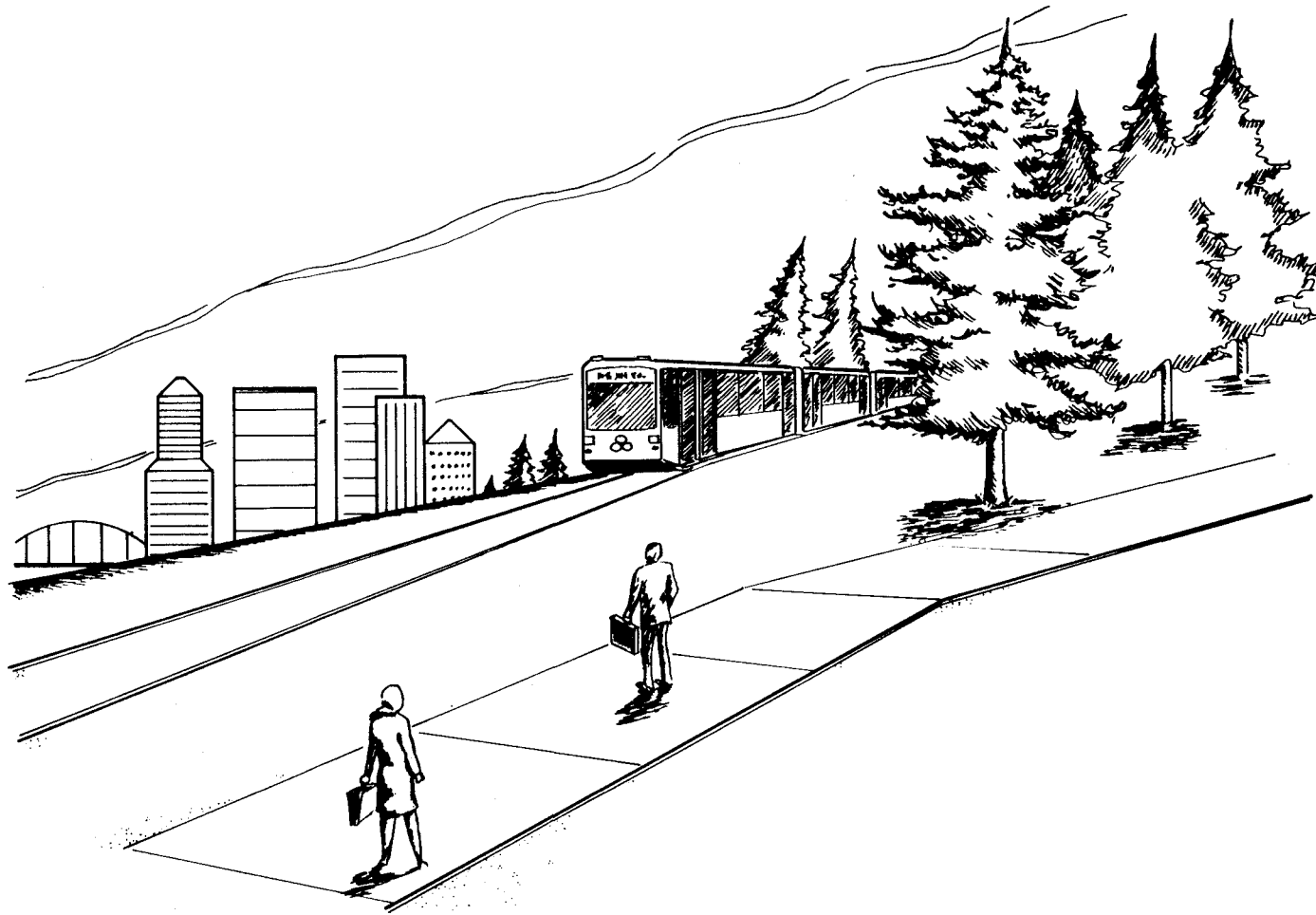


Identify Important Views

Special and frequently shared views, such as the view from vista tunnel to Mt. Hood, are critical in enriching our daily lives and reminding us of regional landmarks. They act as symbols of our sense of place, of our natural landscape and as focal points for our experience of traveling throughout the region.

Protect Our Significant Views

The lack of a visual easement policy allowed new development to obstruct this once spectacular view, at a great loss to everyone. This should be avoided throughout the region as new buildings spring up.



Showcase MAX: Where opportunities arise, we should showcase our progressive mass transit system (MAX) by providing generous views to and from the trains. Ways to achieve this include running the trains along the center of streets, taking advantage of viewsheds at key points along the routes and running the tracks on elevated sites. Giving MAX a high profile and providing views for its riders can make it one of the symbols of our region and attract riders. This can only strengthen greater Portland's unique identity as an innovative, well planned region.

Keep And Make More Neighborhoods For People

The 'neighborhood' occupies a rich and honorable place in the creation of places. It has been a place of sometimes passionately shared cultural values, commerce and small offices, parks and playgrounds, and personal and shared identity. It is often the setting of cherished memories. When we speak about our region's laudable tradition of livability we are usually speaking of how we feel about those urban places we are most often in. Our neighborhoods are among the very best of those places. It is here that we feel our greatest sense of ownership. We are able to identify "our neighborhood", appreciate its desirable qualities, and develop allegiance to it. Why, then, do we seem to be forgetting the neighborhood in new development? The attractions that have drawn many of us to the suburbs should not exclude the sense of community to be found in the best of our inner-city neighborhoods.

Among west coast cities Portland is an old city. Much of its neighborhood tradition developed in an era of small street-car streets, pedestrian alleys and a close-in compactness. Places like Laurelhurst, Multnomah, Ladd's Addition, Piedmont, the King District and Hawthorne, along with many of our fine suburban neighborhoods, such as Cedar Hills, old Oregon City, Forest Grove, Sherwood and Lake Grove have achieved distinct identities. Each is based on shared historic, architectural and landscape qualities, as well as intensely used parks and shopping districts. Both residents and visitors appreciate the clear sense of place derived from leaving and returning to identifiable neighborhoods. Together, our neighborhoods have knitted a wonderful urban fabric throughout the older metropolitan area. While their desirability and popularity seems never to wane we seem reluctant to rebuild or build new ones.

As we plan for the growth of our region we should not think of neighborhood planning as nostalgia for a by-gone era. It should continue to be as vital and as important as it has ever been. Neighborhoods are not just old places to be preserved in the older parts of the city. They should be the building blocks for our new communities, and the continuing model for urban growth. Unfortunately, the fundamental concepts that make a neighborhood

and its characteristic elements, have been pushed aside by sub-division codes and suburban development practices. Put in its place are even greater separations in where we live, where we shop and where we work. We find it necessary to make more frequent, long and congested auto trips away from suburbs that lack the shared, convenient social and shopping spaces, and the perceived boundaries of the traditional neighborhood. We have increasingly sacrificed essential urban amenities to the needs of the car and short-term land market efficiencies.

If we are to preserve our identity and regional livability, we should carefully regard our own best neighborhood traditions. In managing our new growth it would not be unreasonable of us to regard our established neighborhoods as 'elder statesmen'. There are many lessons we can learn from them. Where they may be in decline they should be renewed. Opportunities for appropriate infill may well occur as part of that renewal. As housing becomes less and less affordable, infill opportunities, even if it means modest increases in density, should not be overlooked as part of our new growth planning. While many fine neighborhoods in the older parts of the region have been built around single family homes, that is not exclusively the case; nor is it necessarily a disruption of an existing neighborhood if well-designed infill of higher density, multi-family housing occurs. It is the shared and symbolic sense of 'ownership' --of the streets, walks, parks, corner markets, small gathering spots and any unique cultural or landscape features-- that is the real source of neighborhood identity. Any infill should also remain sensitive to the existing historic, spatial and architectural qualities of surrounding neighborhoods.

In suburban areas, the neighborhood, in the form of both single-family and multi-family housing, should remain our best model. It is our most livable urban form, lending itself to unique social characteristics, neighborhood pride and shared interests, and the feeling of extended, symbolic 'ownership' beyond our own home lots. An additional benefit will be a reduced dependence on long car trips to shopping, child care, entertainment and public open space. Land-use will regain an efficient compactness. Traffic will be more dispersed. We will find ourselves able to stay close to home and do much more. On the following four pages are illustrations of the elements of good neighborhoods that can be planned and examples of how they occur in our own familiar and well-liked neighborhoods.



Northwest Portland Neighborhood

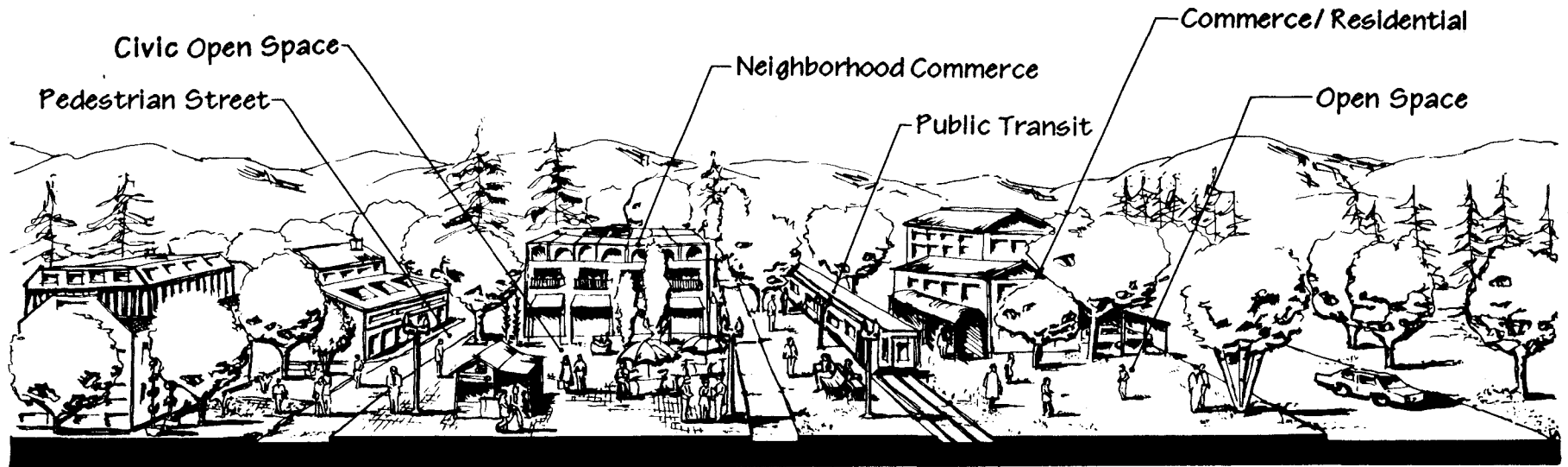


Ladd's Addition

Neighborhood Space is Social Space: It is the collective patterns and intensity of peoples' activity that determines the real boundaries within and between neighborhoods. It is we who invest 'our neighborhood' with its sense of place. The goal of neighborhood planning should always be to provide the traditional elements of houses, shared front yards, sidewalks, and streets with trees in spatial arrangements that will create the best opportunity for a strong neighborhood feeling to evolve. These qualities and goals should not be thought of as possible only in older Portland neighborhoods of single family homes. They are also possible and desirable with higher density, multi-family housing and throughout the whole region.

If we look at our best neighborhoods we see these elements at work. The entrance to the house and the front yard relate closely to the sidewalk, and then to the street with its trees and parked cars. There is a comfortable transition from the privacy of the house to the semi-privacy of the front yard and the public sidewalk. The trees become 'our' trees, defining 'our parking spot' beneath them. The street itself becomes a part of the neighborhood's public space; a shared place where we can walk, talk and play.

MULTI-USE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER



A Multi-Use Neighborhood Center: The fabric of our best neighborhoods is stitched around multi-use neighborhood centers. Creating and strengthening these centers as our communities grow is essential to neighborhood planning. Their role and their scale in suburban growth areas should be quite different from and complimentary to that of our regional shopping malls. These centers should provide one or more closely knit neighborhoods with a strong and identifiable focus. Easy accessibility is critical. There should be pedestrian linkage to the surrounding residential areas within a five minute walk. For those living beyond that radius, there should be a clear transportation hierarchy of public transit, private car and bike. A mixture of smaller scale commerce, office space, open space and housing, including the traditional apartment over shop or office arrangement, should characterize the new neighborhood centers.

Unlike the shopping mall, often insulated by a sea of asphalt and adjacent to a freeway, this will be the true public realm of our neighborhoods. It should have a 'main street' feeling, where we can simply walk around and see people if we choose. For some of us it will provide close-in work places. For others it will express neighborhood uniqueness, while offering an attractive place for short shopping trips where it is possible to gather and socialize.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCE

As a fundamental building block of our new neighborhoods, commerce should favor a small 'store front' scale. It should include neighborhood groceries, specialty stores, especially those expressing some unique neighborhood characteristic, and cafes. Bus stops and a street lined with sidewalk space, buildings and windows, rather than parking lots, are other essential elements.



Multnomah Neighborhood



Hawthorne District

SHOPPING AND OFFICE DISTRICT

New neighborhood growth can support an expanded public realm for many places. Office space, housing and a greater variety of retail, entertainment and cafe opportunities will intensify use. These special qualities can attract many more metropolitan-wide visitors. Regional identity and economic vitality of the neighborhood will then be reinforced to accommodate more unique and outstanding places for a growing population.

MULTI-USE CENTERS

These centers will offer our most dense neighborhoods a level of friendly urbanity not offered by the regional shopping mall. Diversity of uses and the complete integration of housing with the everyday things it needs will keep them lively and viable. Small streets with trees, pedestrian comfort, and frequent public transit characterize these areas. Night and day attractiveness will bring shoppers and visitors and vitality to new neighborhoods.



Northwest Portland



St. Francis Park

OPEN SPACE

A neighborhood center should include an open space where people can gather for shared activity, play or simple people watching. It should have visual or walking access to water, nearby natural features or cultural landmarks. Connection to public transit and proximity to neighborhood commerce are also essential.

Streets Are Places Too

Our streets and roads are not just ways to places. They are places. Far from being simple traffic corridors, whose function is limited to the single activity of getting the required number of cars per hour from here to there, our streets are actually a complex setting for urban life. They are the dominant way that we all experience the city, and each has a meaning that cannot be understood apart from its houses, shops, history, and habits. In some cases a single street can represent something essential to a city's public life. Fifth Avenue is New York, Market Street is San Francisco and Peacock Lane is Christmas in Portland.

Streets should not be conceived of only as a way to make our cars happy. They are places we should often enjoy. Otherwise, they simply become Highway, Arterial, Collector and Local Access, and then are sub-divided into streets-within-streets as Express Lane, Truck Route and Loading Zone, just like anywhere else. While driving from one edge of our metropolitan area to the other may be seen as a drive through an engineering hierarchy of local to collector to arterial to highway and back finally to a local street, the real meaning and memory of the experience is very different. It is a movement through the visible structure of our landscape and the visible evolution of our cities and suburbs. We can see generations of history, habits, storefronts, trees and the great variety of the roadside in a one hour trip. In the most memorable and pleasant places the road and the street seem to share in the surrounding land-uses of city centers, neighborhoods, shopping districts or outlying farmland.

Planning our new streets and roads is one of the most important aspects of planning new communities. The street's traditional legal purpose has been to provide access, light and air. Comprehensive street planning is an essential framework for making quality places through city growth, and should be recognized as inseparable from our land use planning goals. (The city of Portland has adopted such an understanding in their Arterial Streets Classification Policies.) Streets are about one-third of the metropolitan landscape. The quiet streets of our neighborhoods, the busy street of the shopping district and the rural road in the city are part of our public open space, and of our shared urban image. Understanding the complex place of streets and roads in our urban fabric, their landscape functions, as well as traffic and safety issues, is crucial to making everyone's every-day experience secure and rewarding, and to creating a strong sense of place in our expanding communities.

Throughout much of our metropolitan area we still enjoy the experience of two-lane rural roads in the city. They have a significant place in our urban street system, taking us from community to community while preserving a vital sense of leaving one place and arriving in another. As they rise and fall with our natural topography, taking us into deep shade and out again, they provide us with a roadside experience of forest, farmland, nurseries and memorable views. They remind us that we have a town and country history even as suburban growth threatens to overwhelm it. We can still chose a 'scenic route', and travel it deeper into the urban core than is possible anywhere else. Preservation of some roads as part of our regional street system is critical to maintaining our sense of place.

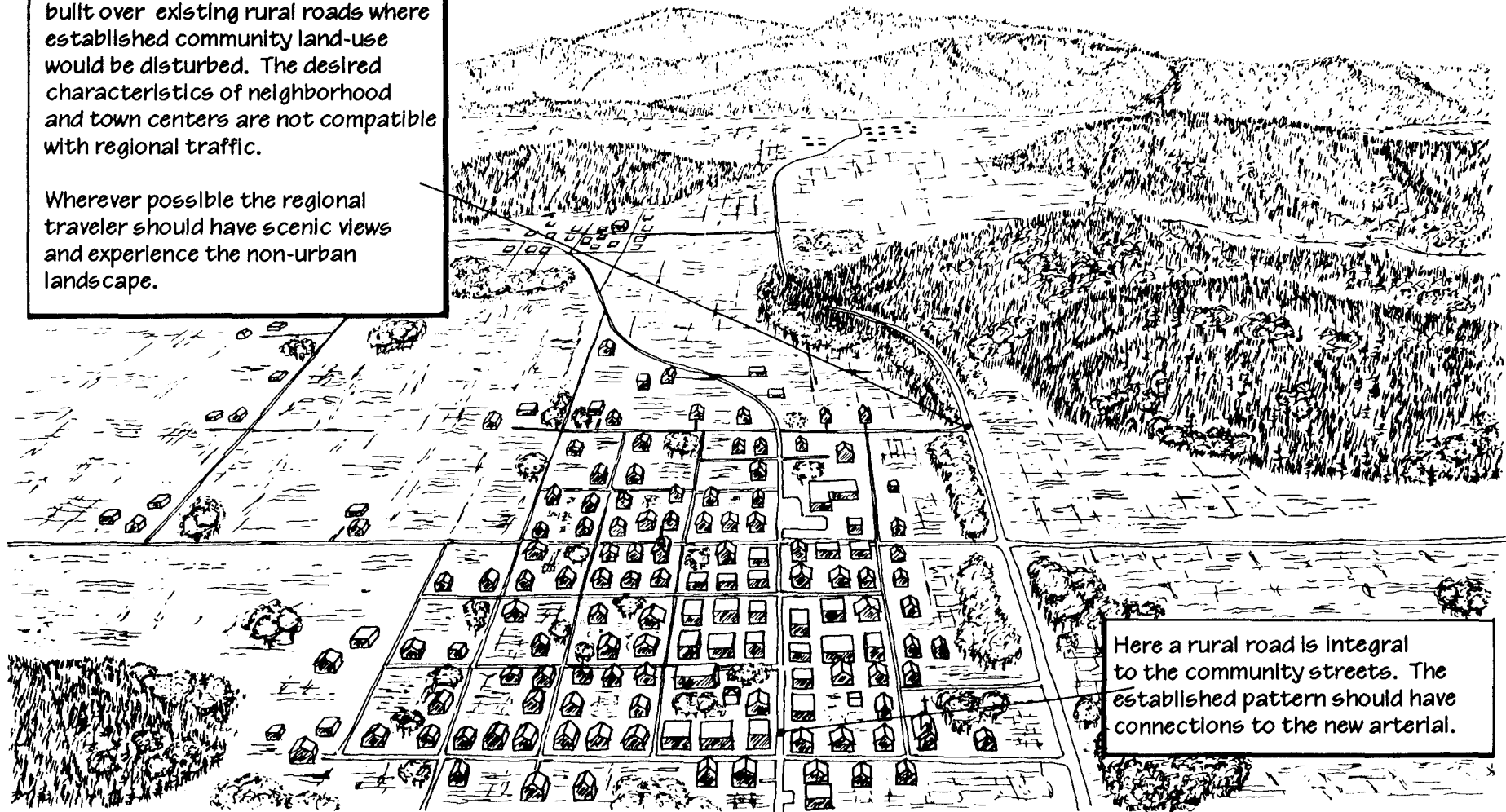
In planning new communities the neighborhood street will be our most important street. The fundamental concept should be that of the street as an integral part of the neighborhood space and as a potential social setting. It should be planned as a place for trees, parked cars, people and houses. Street trees, on-street parking and widths much narrower than current suburban codes should become the standards. We should return to our traditional street pattern of the grid. It is compact, efficient, disperses traffic well and creates a strong sense of neighborhood. The contemporary excess of curvilinear and cul-de-sac street patterns should not continue to create the not-greater Portland form of suburban growth. For the most part it has proved to isolate our homes inside property lines and to be over-paved and inefficient, dumping traffic congestion onto single collector streets and freeways. It is, in fact, the pattern of sprawl.

The streets of our new neighborhood centers should be places where we feel encouraged to walk around and see people. Buildings with windows and doorways should form the edges of streets. Lanes should be given to people and parking as well as to travel, very much in they style of our own best tradition of older transit-era shopping districts. It is an experience quite different from the worst of our commercial strip development, where there is no place or way for people to be and move safely; and our greatest desire is to escape the street, abandoning it to fast moving traffic and little, if any, positive 'street life'.

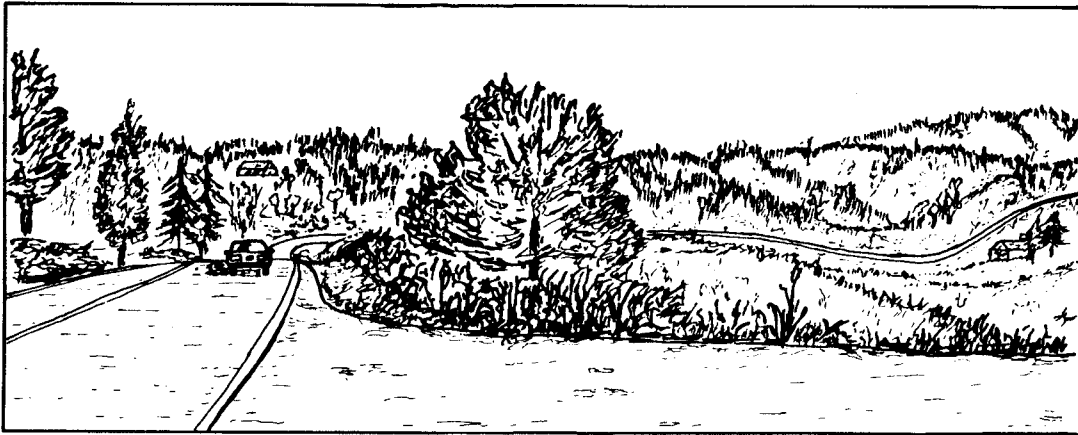
The New Arterial Street

New arterial streets should not be built over existing rural roads where established community land-use would be disturbed. The desired characteristics of neighborhood and town centers are not compatible with regional traffic.

Wherever possible the regional traveler should have scenic views and experience the non-urban landscape.



Here a rural road is integral to the community streets. The established pattern should have connections to the new arterial.

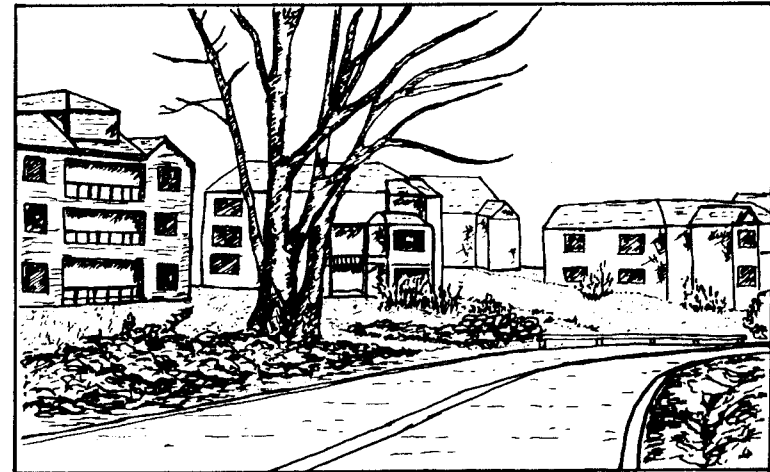


THE RURAL ROAD IN THE CITY

Rosemont Road, Cornell Road and many more of our two-lane roads have become familiar places. They are our back roads and part of the open space between our communities. Driving one of these roads is still a drive in the country --right in the city. We need these to keep our sense of place.

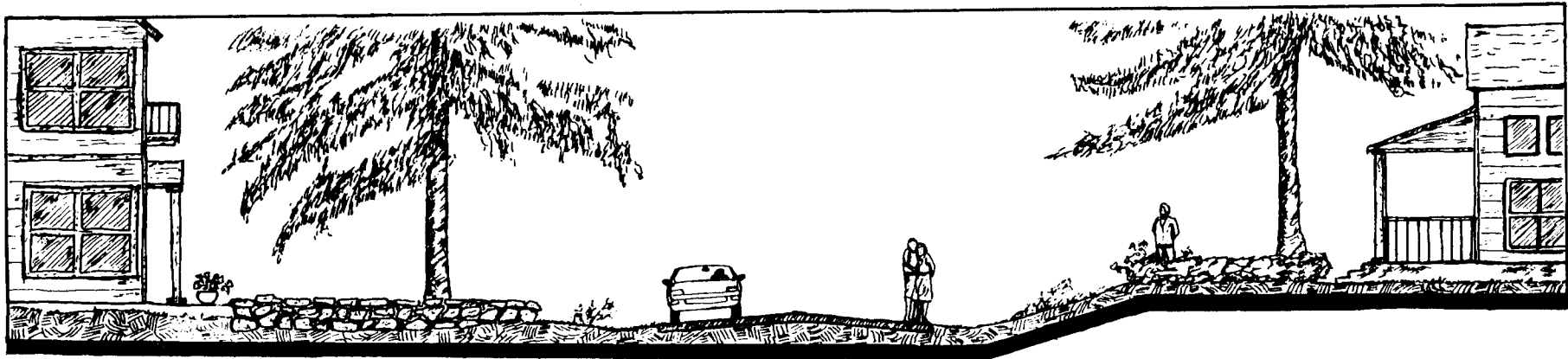
THE LOSS OF THE RURAL ROAD

Unfortunately, urban growth pressure threatens to convert many remaining roads into sub-division collector streets. Continuous development of the roadside will be at the expense of our experience of travelling between distinct communities. Appreciation of the great variety in our landscape will be diminished, and we risk being left only with our destinations; everything in-between becoming uninteresting and indistinguishable from everywhere else.



THE STREET AS NEIGHBORHOOD SPACE

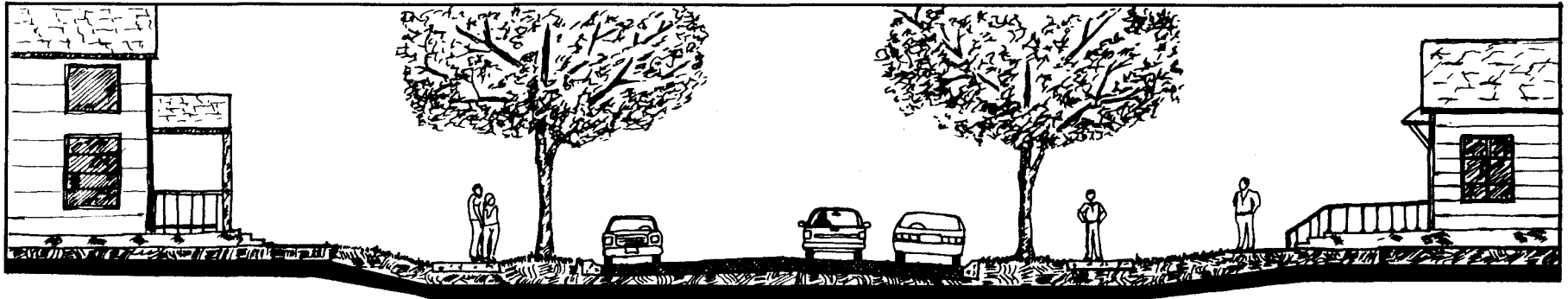
Riverwood and Palatine Hill are but two of the many areas in greater Portland where neighborhoods are characterized by narrow, uncurbed streets. They fit easily into the changing terrain and tall trees, with a minimum of disturbance to the feel of the natural landscape, or the traditional neighborhood grid. They create a feeling of 'our' street, and of streets subordinate to the homes and landscape. Cars move slowly and we feel at ease walking here. These streets function very well with a pavement width of about 20 feet, compared to excessive and dominating widths of 40 feet in many of our new subdivisions.



The narrowness of this street, and the large trees and houses close to it, make it a real part of the neighborhood space. It is quiet and comfortable both as a social setting and as a place to drive.

THE TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD STREET

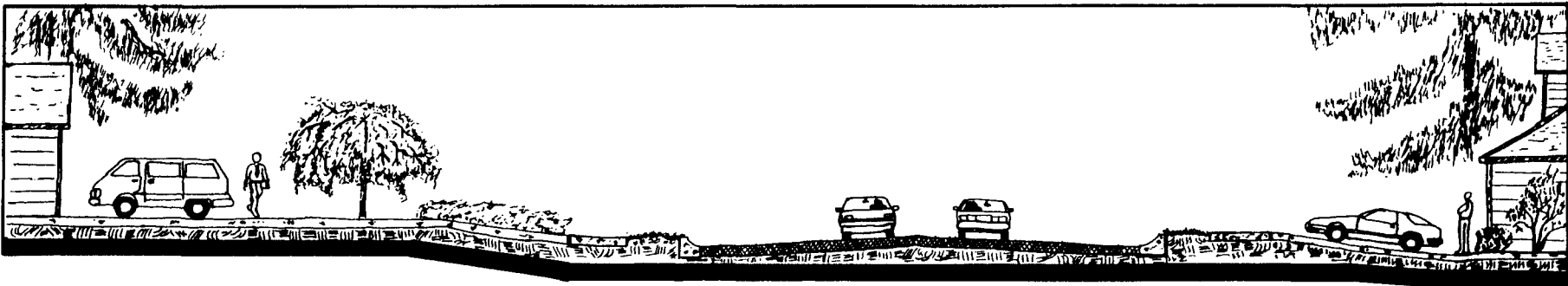
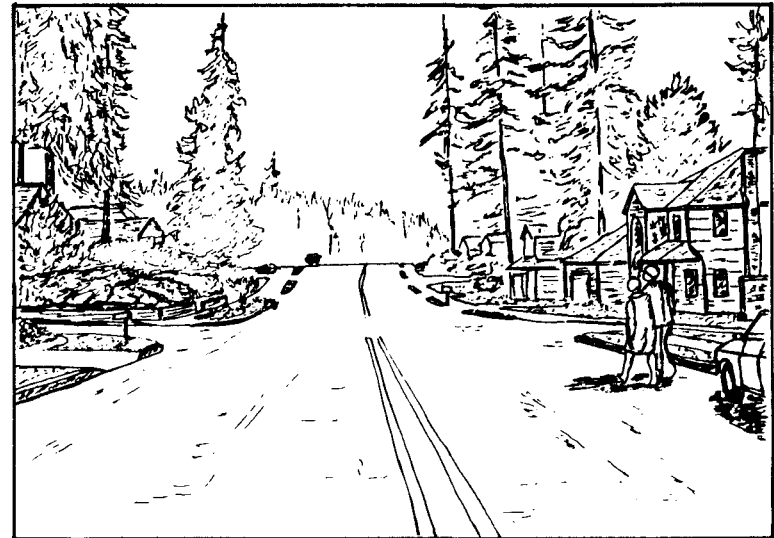
Many of our region's older cities' neighborhoods were developed along two-lane but narrow streets with parking at the curbs. This should be the predominant street in our new urban growth. It encourages slower traffic; and, in the traditional grid pattern, more dispersed traffic but permits truck access. It does these things while remaining a very social street suitable to single-family and multi-family housing. It belongs in our region.



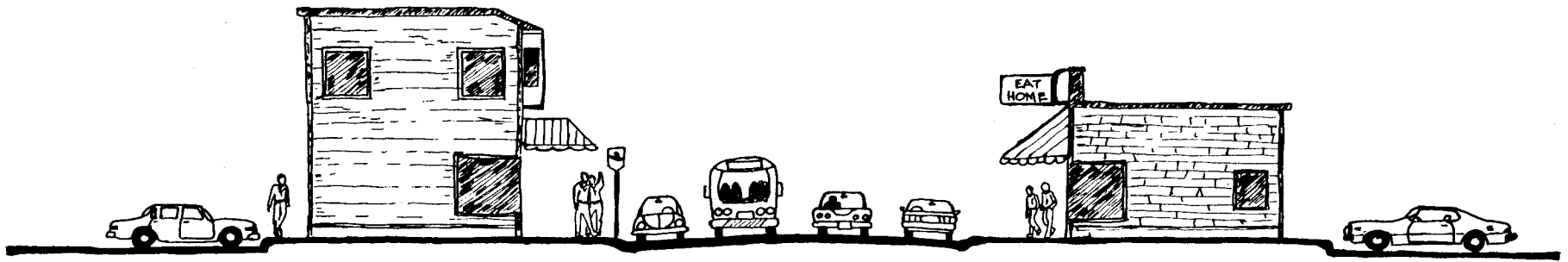
A canopy of trees and the parked cars create a comfortable pedestrian space. We are encouraged to walk, talk and play, and the social setting of our shared front yards seems to include the street itself. Traffic will move slowly along streets whose edges seem to be built of trees, yards, houses and human activity.

A STREET MORE FOR CARS THAN FOR NEIGHBORS

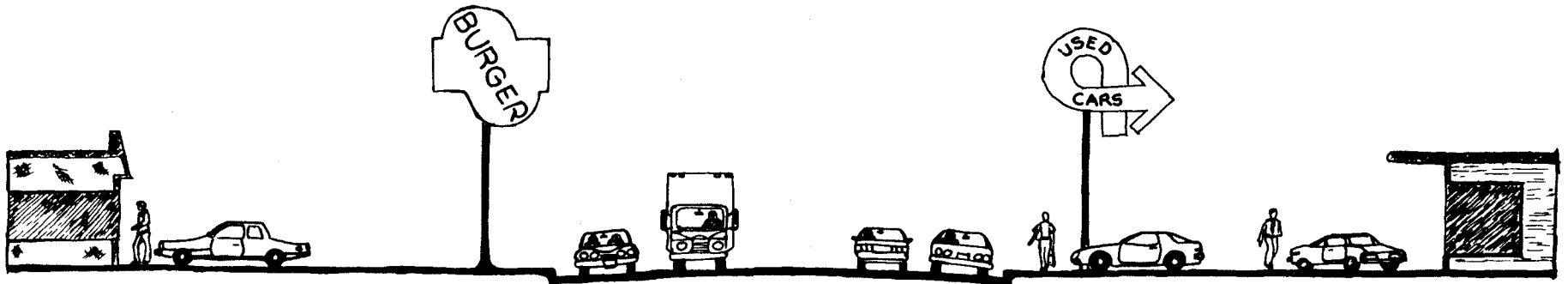
Many of our new suburban residential streets have taken on more of an appearance of highways than neighborhood streets. This over-wide and under-used pavement, its 40 foot width written into sub-division building codes, encourages faster traffic and a perception of car space rather than one of neighborhood space. These streets are often formed at their edges by driveways and garages as much as by house fronts or human places and activity. They often have too little traffic for so much street-space and this inefficiency is compounded where too many dead-end streets and cul-de-sacs finally feed into traffic congestion on a single busy street or freeway.



This street is much less sociable, and provides less sense of 'ownership' than our traditional neighborhood streets. It feels more like a way to get past isolated houses than a part of the place itself. It is a simplified setting for moving cars rather than a more complex setting for neighborhood life. It is wider than necessary even for truck access.



The Neighborhood Commerce Street Experienced as a Place: This street has a friendly mixed-use feeling. Parking is on-street, providing a buffer between the sidewalk and traffic, or in the rear. There are bus stops, wide sidewalks for strolling or sitting and buildings with windows to pass and look into. We feel encouraged to walk around and see people, talk to them or linger under an awning or a tree.



The Lack of 'Place' in the Commercial Strip: This street, on the other hand, feels like auto-only space, creating pedestrian tension and discomfort. The entire street width has been given over to travel lanes and the off-street parking only adds to the amount of paved-over no-person's land isolating the buildings and areas of human activity. Rather than buildings, it is parking lots that we must walk past, often with no safe sidewalk anywhere. Even in our cars we are likely to feel uncomfortable here.

Form City Edges Well to Bring Home the Countryside

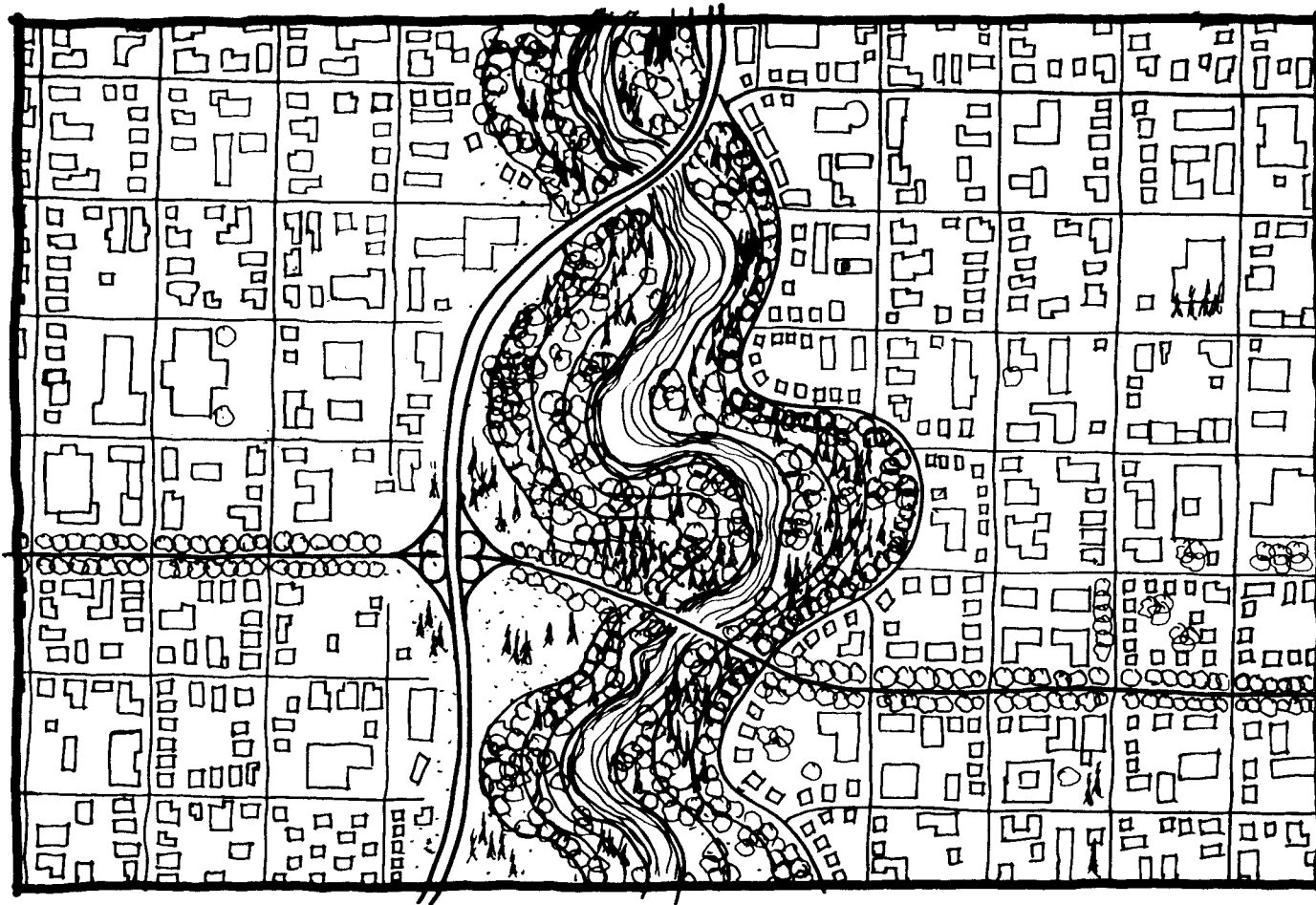
In our mind's eye we can picture what our state looks like. We have a mental map of its edges, and of the mountain passes, ports and bridges by which we enter and leave. We have a mental map of our neighborhood. There is no reason, except for one, that we should not have an equally clear image of the edges and shape of our regional urban area. That one reason is suburban sprawl. The phrase brings to mind an unpleasant picture. We characterize it as sprawling because that is how it can appear to us from virtually every vantage point.

In our region, the clarity of the urban edge, and our strong sense of transition from suburb to forest and agricultural land, then back again, is part of a much more positive image of our region. When we know where the edges are we come to anticipate them, remember them and create our sense of place from them. Their absence in our metropolitan landscape would be a loss of what have been the benefits of our relatively compact and bounded growth. Clear edges have provided a consistent and coherent visual context for our city and our agricultural land uses and natural areas. We still enjoy the contrasting experiences of city and country to a much greater degree than most metropolitan areas. It is an experience all our own that we enjoy by design, not by happenstance.

Our compactness also reduces the infrastructure costs required to supply basic services to areas of new growth, and can reduce land speculation. The public costs of sprawl have been well documented.

As we decide where new urban edges should be, it is the landscape, above all else, that can tell us. Natural features such as rivers, wetlands, floodplains, ridges, forest edges, hillsides and lava domes present opportunities for legible edges. These are the edges that will bring the countryside home and be clearly sensible and intact.

The following illustrations are examples of how new urban growth might continue to have contact with the beautiful outside-city landscape and clear and legible boundaries to define the shape of the metropolitan area. In imagining how these edges might look, we are, quite literally, 'taking a look' at our future. It is what we will see as we come and go; the 'picture' we will have of our greater city and its immediate context.



Use Greenways to Clarify Edges Between Districts: Within the urbanized part of the region, wetlands, rivers, streams, floodplains and forested hillsides are all opportunities for contrasting natural greenways. They can be green seams in a distinct but interwoven urban fabric. Road and street placement can reinforce these natural boundaries between districts. Shown here, one road parallels a river, accentuating its role as a boundary, while another crosses it, carrying with it a continuous planting of large street trees that help bind the two districts to their shared green edge.

Present

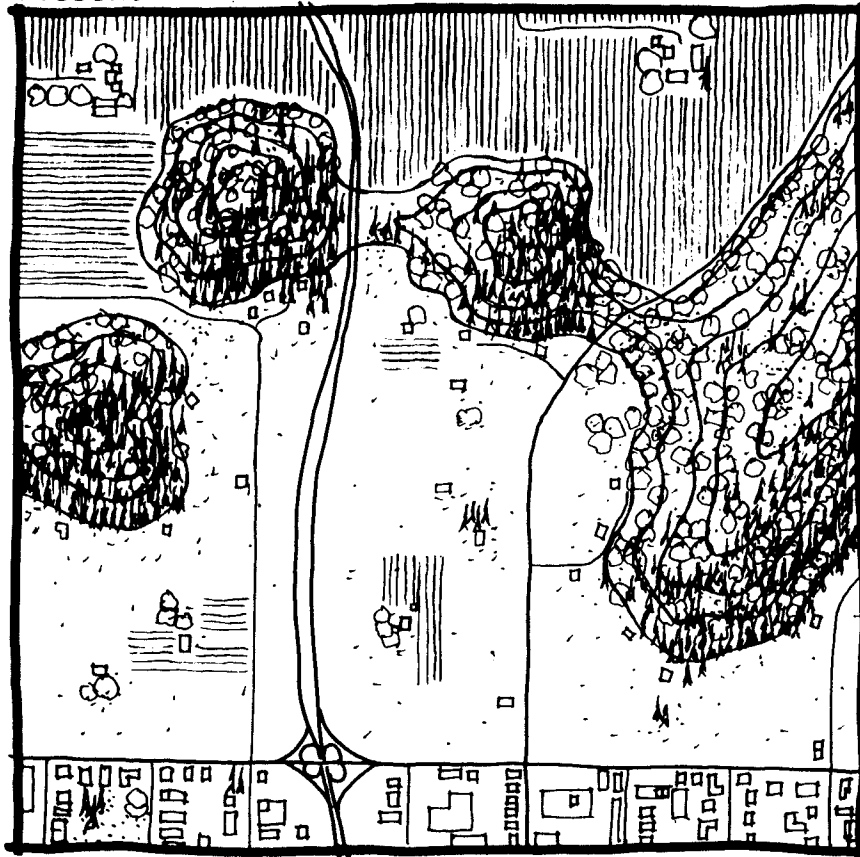


Future

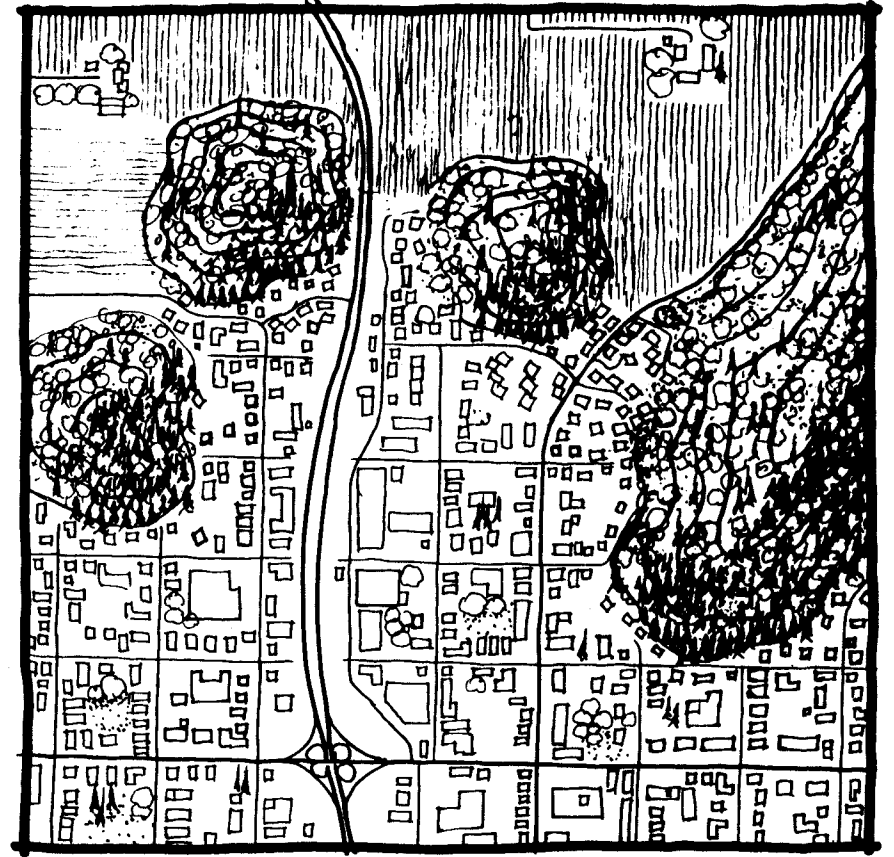


Place the New Urban Edge Along Canyons and Rivers: Canyons and rivers are two of the clearest natural edges in the landscape. Associating the new urban edge with these landforms enhances our visual setting of city and country and our experience of crossing from one to the other. Preservation of riparian vegetation will provide a pleasant contrasting buffer of green along the urban side, and for residents near there an appropriate transition to the non-urban landscape beyond.

Present

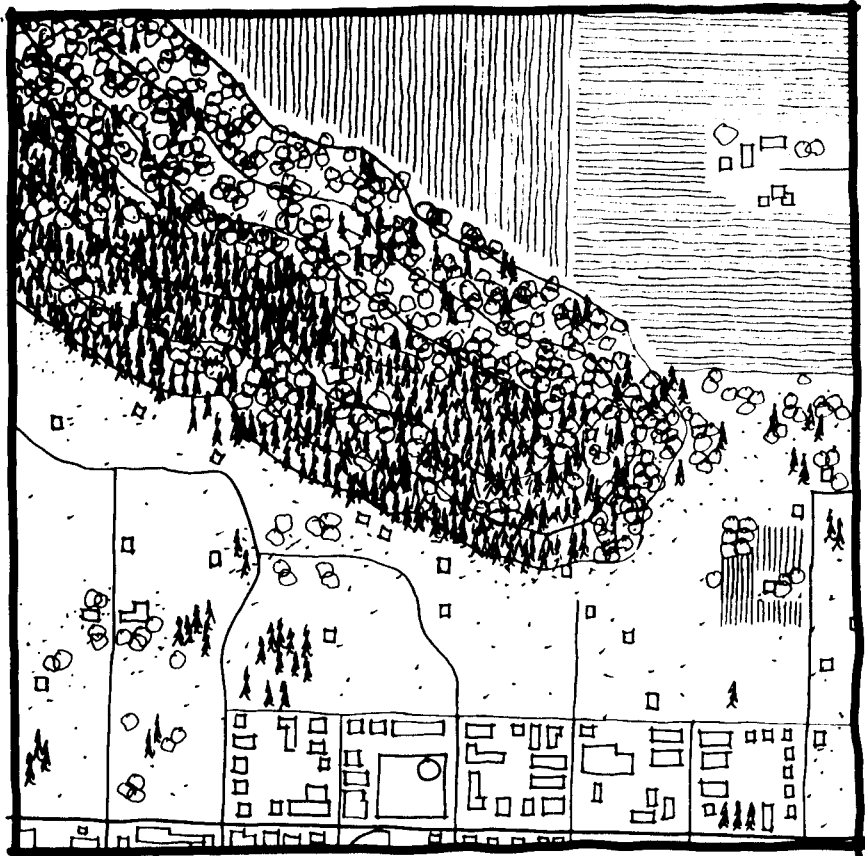


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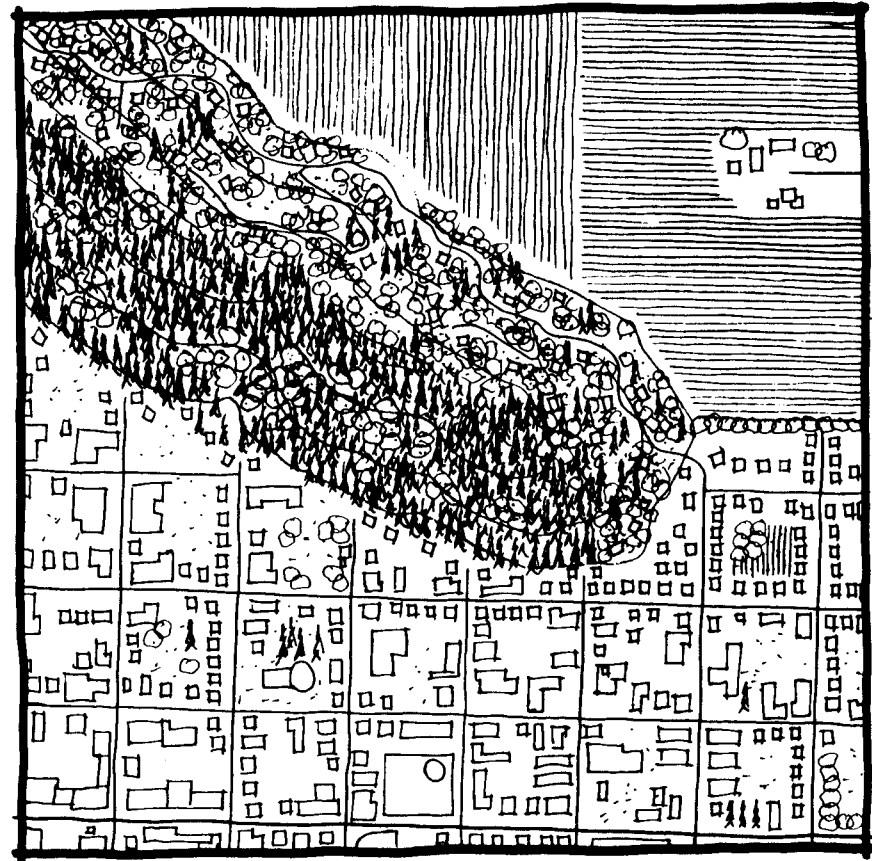


Use the shape of Hills and Domes to Form Strong Urban Edges: In our region of strong contrasts between city and country the forested lava domes and hillsides can accentuate these contrasts. They should remain the high, visible edges between urban and forested slopes or agricultural valley floors. On the right compact urban development has been expanded only to the base of the domes and hills, preserving farms in the large valley beyond and allowing nearby urban residents to see forested slopes as part of their home landscape. The small passes between the domes should act as natural gateways, with city on one side and country on the other. Sensitive placement of roads and associated land uses will heighten our experience of entry and transition at these passes.

Present

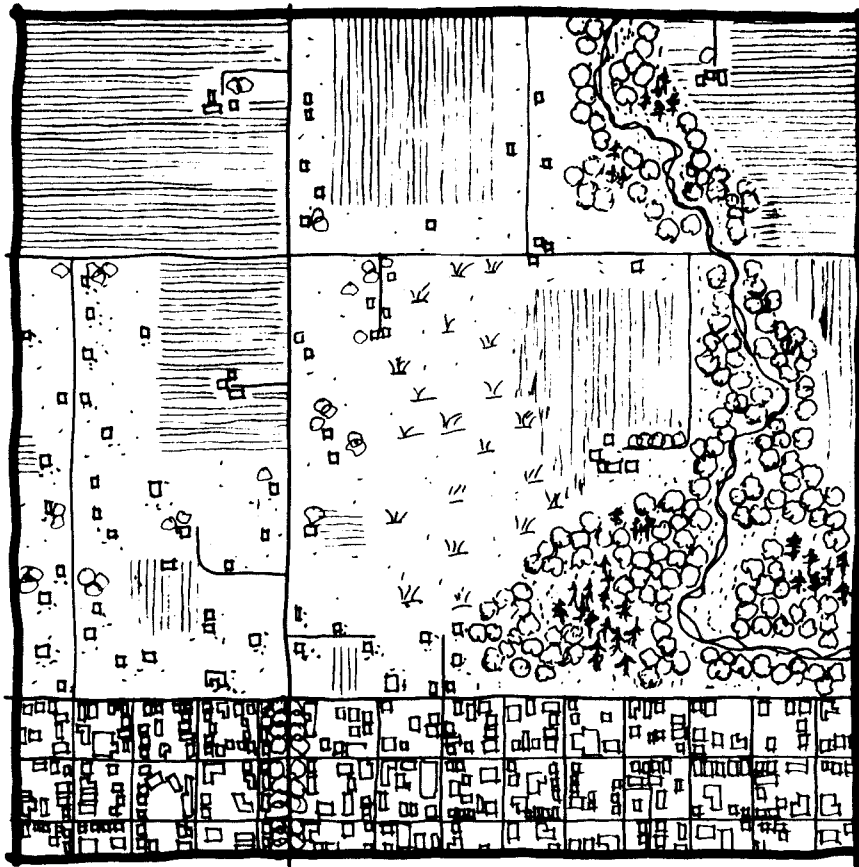


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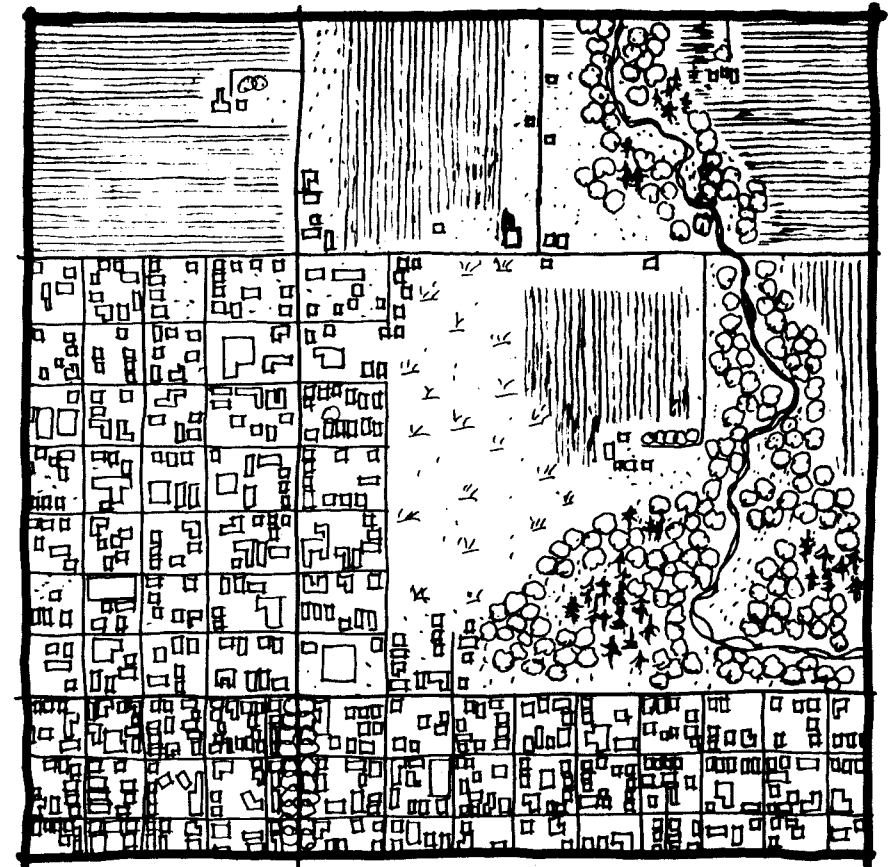


Take Advantage of Ridges to Display the Rural Landscape for the City: New urban edges can be extended to the base of forested and agricultural hillsides. A sharp and contrasting boundary should be created by bringing the city to the country and the country to the city. On the opposite hillside, low density development within the existing forest cover allows residents there to experience an urban forest and views of the rural valley beyond the ridge. The hilltop facing the city should be reserved as a public open space that serves the entire neighborhood and provides a scenic forested ridge-top for the city. The city and the natural landscape will have achieved an optimum balance of land-use and preservation.

Present



Future



Let Natural Areas and Visible Farms Form City Edges: Here, there is no strong landform to serve as an urban boundary and the existing land-use is characterized by a confusion of compact residential development and small parcels of rural 'hobby farms' or large lot residences. Our urban growth should extend its compact form and restore the clarity and the contrast of residential and agricultural or natural land uses. The new urban edge, as illustrated on the right, should be drawn up to the large farms of productive agricultural land and along existing natural features such as wetlands, forest patches and the undisturbed riparian habitat zone of a river or creek.

Maintain "Infill Pressure" to Keep the Whole Region Alive

Unlike most American cities, greater Portland is still full of life and working throughout. The absence of large, abandoned or shunned places within our region sets our landscape's identity apart from other metropolitan areas. It makes us notice, as we drive around, that we live in a healthy region that is working right. It also complements the way the developed urban areas of the region stand clearly apart from, and yet so near to, the rural landscape setting that defines where the regional city is. This too is unlike most other American cities which sprawl at the edges where there are large areas that are neither clearly urban nor rural and gaps that not working as city or country. This regional quality of well defined, functioning places everywhere is a special attribute of our landscape worth keeping.

This is not just because the region is relatively young as a large urban area. Many other urban areas of similar age and size, such as greater Phoenix and Fresno, already have dead, unwanted and growing central landscapes and are over-extending themselves always further out, haphazardly at their dispersed edges. In our region, the central downtown is always unusually lively for a major city, the residential areas close to downtown are very popular as places to live, the industrial zones are busy and the poorer neighborhoods are being refurbished more than in other metropolitan areas. Our suburban communities share these signs of vitality right next to active rural landscapes of farms and country homes.

We can't take it for granted that this will remain so as the region grows over the next 60 years. Development pressures outward will always be strongest. Americans seek less urban places to live and work and development profits are usually highest on the fringe where communities can be made anew to meet the latest desires of businesses and households.

The first nine landscape essentials found in this book reflect the likelihood that some portion of the region's growth will be outward. They suggest how new development can be formed with the landscape and peoples' needs to make our own kind of special places. But, the specialness of the whole region also derives in part from its limited outward growth and inner health. This too must be considered.

In exploring the region toward identifying the first nine landscape essentials we were impressed by the beauty of the landscapes just outside the region's developed urban areas. We must maintain them in their present character as much as possible as we pursue quality growth patterns where they must occur. Maintaining "infill pressure" and a compact regional urban pattern is as important as any other idea in this book.

We must recognize the importance of the urban growth boundary not just in preventing sprawl. It also focuses development inward as it seeks available sites. This encourages the revitalization of areas throughout the urbanized region through infill, neighborhood rehabilitation, industrial renovation and the creation of quality living places of increased urban density. It works more effectively than traditional tax-payer subsidized urban renewal projects can by themselves. These forces will keep the region and its landscape evolving as a whole, vital place.

As the urban growth boundary must be expanded to accommodate large increases in the region's population, and to provide legally required amounts of buildable land, it should do so slowly. This can serve to maintain private investment pressures everywhere needed within the boundary, while allowing enough growth outward to prevent destructive change pressures upon still viable communities within the boundary. If the urban growth boundary must instead be expanded extensively and quickly, regional land use permitting linkages should be established to reward developers who revitalize areas inside built-up areas with more favorable development terms in areas newly opened for urbanization. This policy could also reward developers who increase supplies of low-income housing throughout the region.

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