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# Ten Principles for Achieving Region 2040 Centers

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TEN PRINCIPLES  
FOR

# **A**chieving Region 2040 Centers



Leland Consulting Group  
Parsons Brinckerhoff

# Ten Principles for Achieving Region 2040 Centers



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Cover Illustration was redrawn from Farr Associates Architecture and Urban Design.

# Participants

## PHASE III STEERING COMMITTEE

Andy Cotugno  
*Metro Planning Director*

Mary Weber  
*Community Planning Manager*

Brenda Bernards  
*Senior Regional Planner*  
*Metro Project manager*

Hal Bergsma  
*City of Beaverton*

Bob Clay  
*City of Portland*

Michael Dennis  
*Tri-Met*

Maggie Dickerson  
*Clackamas County*

Meg Fernekees  
*DLCD*

Marc Guichard  
*Metro TOD Program*

Lidwien Rahman  
*ODOT*

Amy Rose  
*Metro*

Elissa Gertler  
*Portland Development Commission*

## CONSULTANT TEAM

David C. Leland, CRE  
*Project Principal*  
*Managing Director, Leland Consulting Group*

GB Arrington  
*Project Principal*  
*Senior Professional Associate, Parsons Brinckerhoff*

Shelby T. Edwards  
*Project Manager*  
*Associate, Leland Consulting Group*

Kimberly K. Iboshi Sloop  
*Project Consultant*  
*Planning & Policy Analyst, Parsons Brinckerhoff*

Stephen Oringdulph  
*Graphic Designer, Parsons Brinckerhoff*

The Project Team and the Steering Committee thank the numerous developers, real estate professionals, the Oregon Chapter of The Counselors of Real Estate, community leaders and public officials for their generous and candid contributions to this project.

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# Introduction

Oregon is recognized nationally as a leader in the way it adopts and implements policies about how its land will be used – using a blend of thoughtful public policy, rigorous attention to technical research, a willingness to think and act creatively, and a commitment to meaningful public participation. Oregonians understand the importance of managing growth wisely and have witnessed in their own communities the effects of good land-use policy. We are ahead of the game compared to most metropolitan areas, but have yet to realize the full potential of 2040.

Oregon's land-use leadership began in 1973 when the state adopted unprecedented state land-use laws and again in 1995 when the Metro regional government adopted its Region 2040 Growth Concept. It is important to note that both efforts were momentous in their results and in their process. They had no precedent, no case studies from which to learn, and no prior models as a basis for knowledge. State and regional efforts truly have been, and are, viewed as innovative and ahead of their time.



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A key component of the Region 2040 Growth Concept is that land within the urban growth boundary, or UGB, should be used more intensely, thus saving farm and forest land from being developed as well as effectively using infrastructure. As a result, the growth concept required that future growth occur primarily in the following hierarchy of urban concentrations:



Since Metro adopted its Region 2040 Growth Concept, the regional government has continually monitored and evaluated development activity in the region – recognizing that it is vitally important to conduct regular checks to see what is working and what needs extra attention. As part of that effort, Metro has initiated specific studies to examine the effectiveness of regional and town centers. A concern at this point is that while medium- and high-density housing is progressing well, the rate of both employment concentrations and retail development in centers are lagging.

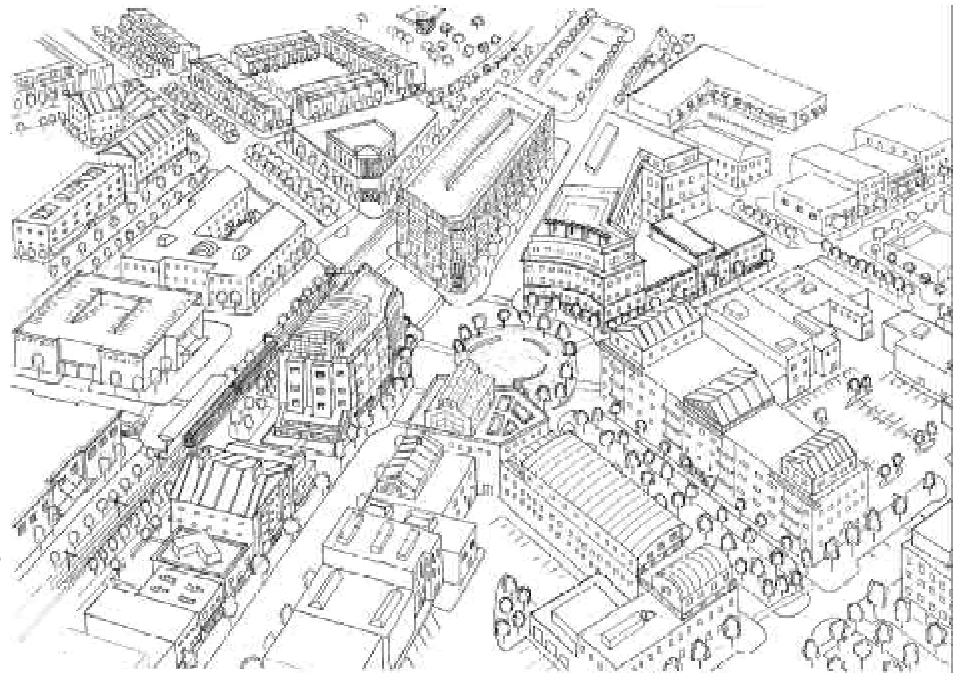
- Central City – Downtown Portland, with the region’s highest numbers of jobs, housing and recreational opportunities.
- Regional Centers – Large regional cores that serve as a hub for employment and housing; serve about 100,000 people.
- Station Communities – Highly concentrated areas that fan out in a 1/2-mile perimeter around major transit stations, providing services, recreational amenities and high-density housing that is convenient to mass transit.
- Town Centers – Smaller but still significant areas that serve as the heart of medium-size communities; serve about 10,000-50,000 people.
- Main Streets – Small but vital cores that serve as the focus of neighborhoods, providing specialized services and shops, along with nearby housing.

Metro retained the consulting team of Leland Consulting Group (real estate strategists) and Parsons Brinckerhoff (planners and policy analysts) to prepare potential strategies for bolstering investment and growth in centers. The team devised a set of guiding principles that serves as the backbone of this document and of future discussions. These ten guiding principles were derived based on several factors, including:

- Review of Metro research and related reports.
- Discussions with Metro senior managers.
- Experience with Metro and many jurisdictions within the region.
- Experience with developers, lenders and investors.
- Confidential interviews with developers, builders, mortgage lenders, commercial real estate brokers, mayors, city managers and planning directors.



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Redrawn from Farr Associates Architecture and Urban Design.

- Workshops with the Metro Phase III Centers Steering Committee and interviews with the State of Oregon's Community Solution Team.
- Experience with downtowns, various types of centers, transit villages and corridors.
- Experience in project negotiations for complex, mixed-use partnerships that involved both the public and private sector.

The principles are designed to be both timeless and interactive. That is, the principles work together and apply to centers of all size, mix of uses, character and stage of development, and should be applicable both now and in the future.





Leland Consulting

## A Bold Strategy

Since these Ten Principles are dynamic and action-oriented, it is important to emphasize that this document is not a study. Studies should and do have their place in any successful planning program, but there are times when something more is required. Now is such a time. This is a document that addresses the future in a proactive way – intending to create a change in perception, which leads to alterations in attitude, and ultimately can change behavior. That desired behavior is an enhanced partnership between regional government, local government and the private sector – working together to bring about quality development and the meaningful growth of centers. We assume our audience comes from a range of backgrounds, interests and professions. The overriding goal is that “Principles for Centers” will help recognize existing barriers

to development, provide tools for removing those barriers, and stimulate investments in our region’s centers. If the process is successful, it will be because the message and lessons within the Ten Principles are understood and supported by the public and private sector interests alike.

A lesson learned repeatedly is that the single most significant factor in whether a center will be developed successfully is, quite simply, people. Whether as individuals or as part of a larger institution, people can make or break a successful development project and successful center, depending on their attitude toward public-private partnerships, innovative solutions and problem solving. The reader will note this prevailing theme throughout most of the Ten Principles. Recognizing the role of people – whether championing the forward-thinkers or nudging the naysayers – is no magic bullet. But it is a tried and true tenet that merits a great deal of new strategic thinking and positive action.

# Capturing That Pioneer Spirit

Oregonians have long blazed a trail in the area of land use and planning, whereas many metropolitan areas are just beginning the journey. But true pioneers do not rest on their laurels; instead, they keep asking questions, they keep pushing for new and better ideas, and they constantly question the status quo. Right now, Metro and its partners – local governments, citizens and the business community – have made great strides in managing growth wisely but are temporarily stuck in the status quo when it comes to invigorating the region's centers.

Much of the agency's focus thus far has been on regulation. While important, regulation by itself will not lead to successful centers. New navigational tools, more clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and forging innovative relationships should be developed to complement a strong foundation of regulation.

The Region 2040 Growth Concept Map has been a useful planning guide, but it needs to move beyond the "purple dots" – those areas on the map that mark the location of regional and town centers. While the dots identify the centers and outline their basic function, they should be fleshed out to recognize the many types of centers, their critical relationship to corridors, and the underlying markets and the effects on centers.

## Defining a Center

Although every center is distinctive, and in some cases unique, they all contain some common, essential elements, including:

- A sense of vitality, with a compact urban form that is oriented toward walking and a mix of uses
- A commitment to innovative development, a flexible approach, and the removal of barriers
- Evidence of leadership and community vision
- Excellent accessibility to transit and major roads
- An environment that fosters safe, enjoyable walking among the various uses
- Responsiveness to the fundamentals of market supply and demand
- A mix of land uses (residential, retail, employment, civic, cultural, and recreational) and a connectedness between those uses and center districts

This is another important journey – this time toward an innovative, active strategy that will bolster the region's centers and ultimately the region's future livability. The Leland Consulting Group/Parsons Brinckerhoff team has attempted to assist Metro and its regional partners in developing a new set of navigational tools to help make the journey as successful as possible.



# The Ten Principles for Centers

1. All Centers are Not Created Equal
2. Understanding Market Impact
3. Private Investment Follows Public Commitment
4. Reward Leadership
5. Build Communities, Not Projects
6. Remove Barriers
7. Metro as Coach
8. Balance the Automobile
9. Celebrate Success
10. Take the Long View



# 1

# All Centers Are Not Created Equal

The Metro 2040 Growth Concept includes 37 regional and town centers and an even larger array of main streets and station communities – each of which represents a distinctive place with its own history, personality, character, condition, and state of development. It is important to note that any strategy related to centers must be flexible enough to acknowledge and accommodate those differences, even among centers of similar size. Not all centers will achieve, or should achieve, the same mix or level of employment, housing and population densities, retail and services, civic and cultural facilities, and amenities and recreational elements.

Implementing 2040 centers represents the single most important element in achieving the goals outlined in the regional growth concept. Pursuing a cookie-cutter approach toward these centers will only weaken, rather than strengthen, the 2040 implementation strategy of concentrating land use. As such, policy must be sensitive to the different starting points, assets and market positioning of each center.

Each center actually is a collection of districts. Within any given center there might be a retail core, a civic component, a concentration of employment-related uses, and usually several adjacent neighborhoods or a concentration of housing within the center. It is entirely appropriate that the various districts within each center perform to different standards. The intensity of development for the retail district will be different than the housing or employment districts. The public and common areas such as the streetscape, signage, street furniture, lighting, parks, open spaces, public squares, environmental enclaves, and civic buildings should tie these districts together into a seamless, appealing overall center. In addition, each center has its own public-private partnerships, creating an individual flavor that melds the old and the new.

## The Role of Corridors



Because of the unique nature of centers, it is inappropriate to establish uniform density targets and implementation formulas across the board. Each center must find its own way and its own voice, and regulation should not serve as a hindrance. Centers serve a local population and the vision for that center should be defined locally.

The relationship between corridors and centers, so far, has not been integrated effectively in this region. Deteriorating urban corridors have been identified by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) as one of the most pressing problems facing American cities. Unfortunately, tired commercial strips and strip centers, extremely land intensive uses (e.g., used car lots), buildings in disrepair, and overwhelming and unattractive signage are characteristics of many corridors. Yet corridors and centers share a common link, since corridors form the gateway to many centers and can, if properly planned and directed, serve as a valuable supporting resource for centers. As a result, corridors should not be neglected. Nor should they be treated as an isolated problem or as an entirely separate urban form. They should be treated as another important piece of the comprehensive and effective regional or town center. Centers sometimes array along a corridor such as the case of Milwaukie, Gladstone and Oregon City – pulse points of development and activity along the common Highway 99 corridor. Corridors should be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis to determine the relationship to the adjacent center.



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transportation and plenty of transportation choices, the region can create centers that become the focus of economic activity and real estate investment.

Primary infrastructure elements for a center include:

- High level of accessibility for vehicles on the regional transportation system.
- High level of transit accessibility on both the regional and local transportation systems.
- Well connected network of small streets within the center.
- An environment and series of amenities that encourage walking.
- Distinctive informal public gathering spaces.
- Amenities such as public art, street trees, landscaping, lighting, and other factors that create a sense of place.
- Parking management strategies such as shared parking and/or structured parking to avoid a vast sea of surface parking lots.

## Different Needs for Different Centers

There is no simple formula or rule of thumb for deciding what level of amenity and infrastructure is needed to make a center attractive for development. Since each center is unique, so are its individual's needs.

Having said that, there are certain key infrastructure elements that must exist for any center to be successful. First and foremost on any list is transportation, or rather, several types of transportation. By providing extremely accessible

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### STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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1. Broaden the definition of centers to accommodate the unique nature of each individual place.
2. Consider revising current policy to reflect the important connection between centers and their adjacent corridors.





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# 2

# Understanding Market Impact

*Nationwide, family sizes are shrinking. In the Portland metro area, more than 60 percent of all households have one or two people – potential candidates for urban housing in centers.*

US Census

*65 percent of retail sales are made after 5:30 p.m. and on weekends.*

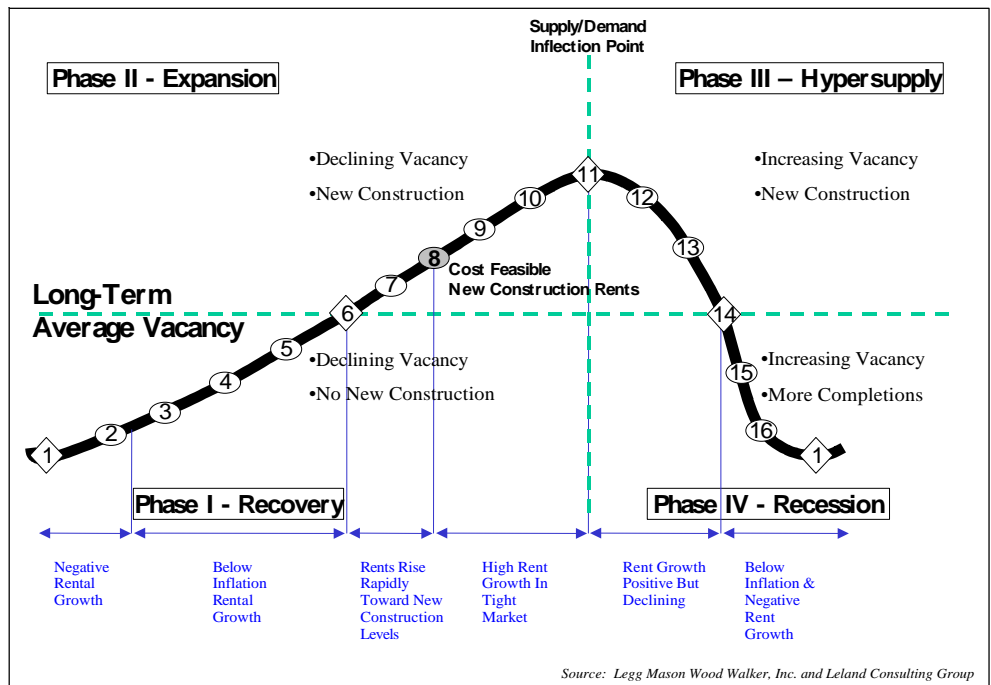
Gibbs Planning Group

A center's success depends largely on whether its public and private backers understand the demographics and market trends that influence a particular center and its associated districts. Just as “centers are not created equal,” centers do not have equal market opportunity based on location, state of evolution, willingness to partner (with the private sector), competition and related factors and conditions.

Real estate markets, in essence, translate into people. In the real estate context, a market means a place to live, work, shop, visit, and play. To understand what a center can expect in terms of real estate growth, each community must look first at its center's size, character, role in the market, and the population and visitors to be served. Household growth, household size, income, nearby employment and other population characteristics also help define market opportunity. Markets are the expression of people's needs and desires, as well as real estate's ability to satisfy those needs and desires. In other words:

- Household growth determines housing needs and capacity.
- Income and other demographic characteristics determine retail needs and spending patterns.
- Employment determines office and industrial space needs.
- Population growth and policy determine public uses, institutions and the role of government.

Markets consist of people who make decisions about how and where they spend their money, the kind of housing they will live in, and what recreational and entertainment opportunities to pursue. Except where poverty or subsidy is involved, people make discretionary choices about where and how they spend their time and money.



*Real estate markets are cyclical due to a time lag between demand and supply for physical space.*

## Market Study vs. Market Strategy

### Market Study

- Supply and Demand (what can you get – a formula)
- Limited “shelf life” – not as short as an appraisal but not more than 18 months
- Tends to be site specific

### Market Strategy

- Goal driven (what do you want – a strategy)
- Longer term perspective
- An evolving approach with multiple solutions
- Responsive to incentives and public intervention
- Requires public participation and investment
- Fluid and flexible

It is important to understand a center’s position and potential in the context of the larger Portland metropolitan market, since at some levels of development, centers can compete with one another. More often, a center will compete with a freestanding concentration of activity such as a business park, a regional shopping center or a power center. To identify opportunities for investment and growth, government must understand and evaluate trends in residential, retail, office, civic, cultural, and community development from both a regional and local market perspective. A market analysis should consider the complexities of location, the market area or geography to be served, the competition, land values, density levels, access, price, quality, and demand. A good market analysis serves as the foundation for any investment recruitment effort.

Following a sound market analysis, a center must be the focus of a distinct market-based development strategy. Market-based strategies – not studies – are essential since specific markets (e.g., the short-term opportunity for a grocery store at a specific location) are constantly changing. Investment decisions are based on the market, and if the target market does not exist or is not strong enough, investors will not put forth the capital.

# What do centers have going for them?

PriceWaterhouseCoopers in its annual real estate market report “Emerging Trends in Real Estate” noted that “properties in better-planned, growth-constrained markets hold value better in down markets and appreciate more in up cycles. Areas with sensible zoning (integrating commercial, retail and residential), parks, and street grids with sidewalks will age better than places oriented to disconnected subdivisions and shopping strips...” In other words, market demand does exist for quality, mixed-use development and redevelopment, and the market is responding to that demand.

*“The urban growth boundary remains the developer’s unacknowledged best friend by keeping land prices high enough and developable land scarce enough to ensure that most projects do not get financing without substantial proof of viability.”*

Grubb & Ellis 2002 Real Estate Forecast

*“...big cities contend with chronic affordable-housing shortages for low and middle income workers – the backbone of the service industry and municipal governments...this must continue to be a high priority if city neighborhoods are to thrive and support business growth.”*

Emerging Trends in Real Estate 2002

2. Provide ongoing and regular discussions between the private and public sector to examine (and better understand) trends such as lending practices, appraisal issues and techniques, loan underwriting guidelines, cost of debt and equity, land values and rents by area, and other issues. Changes in lending underwriting, appraisal instruction, and insurance underwriting will effect investment and the way in which public private partnerships are written.
3. Provide opportunities for planners and other government staff members to view an investment situation from the investor’s point of view.
4. Provide ongoing updates to Metro and city and county staff about changes in the marketplace, particularly the fast-moving retail industry.

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## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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1. Provide educational material and resources to local jurisdictions about markets, market research, market strategies and related topics. Help them to become more knowledgeable about investment, analyze the likelihood of reaching lease or sales goals, capture necessary revenues, etc. If the public sector is to truly partner with the private sector, jurisdictional staff and policy makers need to understand markets, their dynamics, how they are measured, the factors that effect change and other characteristics that impact sales or rents, revenues and timing.



# 3

# Private Investment Follows Public Commitment

The history of downtown and center revitalization strongly supports the strategy that the public sector must take the primary leadership role and the initiative before the private sector is willing to commit time and money. In addition, public leadership is needed not as a center is being developed, but throughout the life span of the center. That initiative process of the public being first, setting the stage, paving the way can be comprehensive:

- Assuring that the political will is aligned with the center objectives.
- Prepare new and modified policies and revise codes to achieve the center goals, both at the regional and local level.
- Commit necessary staff and capital resources to carry out development.

As part of the research for developing this “Ten Principles for Centers,” consultants interviewed many members of the development community. Their comments revealed an interest – in many cases a strong interest – in building in centers. But repeatedly, they cited “difficulty and cost” as factors that prevented them from seriously pursuing that interest.



## Public and Private Sector Goal Setting and Expectations

The public sector (cities, counties, other local governments, regional, state and federal agencies) and the private sector (developers, lenders, investors, builders and others) look at a potential project in a center quite differently. The public sector looks long term – defining its goals publicly, dealing with both public perceptions and the political climate while also seeking assurance from the private sector.

The private sector, on the other hand, largely focuses on the short term, the period when an investment is most vulnerable. The private sector defines its objective privately – capital, market and operating risk evaluations in relation to investment. The private sector wants speed and flexibility.

These goals (assurance versus speed and flexibility) are not mutually exclusive. In centers, the public sector is looking for developers who are capable – meaning they understand the intense public scrutiny and will not back out, have experience with the urban development process, can point to a successful track record, and are appropriately funded. The private sector seeks a committed public partner with a strong political will, a stable elected body and planning commission, a dedicated staff with a focus on implementation, and the ability to bring creative policy and financial incentives to the project. Both sides need each other.



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## Time and Assurance

One of the private sector's most significant concerns about developing in centers is the amount of time it takes to get the necessary approvals. Assuming the market exists and the preliminary financial analysis is positive, fear of the approval process still prevents some qualified and capable developers from going ahead. It is essential, then, to address that very real issue and barrier to implementation. A key factor in moving forward on the region's centers is to design an accelerated process that:

- Provides much more certainty for developers generally and, in particular, with developers who have experience and demonstrated ability and willingness to produce quality projects;

- Helps everyone meet the design guidelines and objectives; and
- Fosters a true partnership between developers and other members of the community. One aspect of the process in particular – a true partnering during the approvals phase – is fundamentally missing in essentially all centers. We as a community must find strategies for making good development in centers easier and more predictable.

Interviews with the development community reveal an interest, even a strong interest from some developers, to build in centers. "Difficulty and cost" was heard over and over by the private sector; difficulty and cost is what is keeping many away. Even high quality, established development organizations are fearful of an endless approval process, uncertainty, the cost of holding property during processing, and staff and consultant costs associated with processing and related difficulties.



# Infrastructure

Developing an adequate level of infrastructure and amenities prior to development also is an important strategic necessity. A developer with a quality project is much more likely to move ahead if there are infrastructure elements and amenities – such as streets, water and sewer, utilities, nearby police and fire facilities, schools, and parks and open spaces – already in place. These favorable elements will serve dual purposes: to make an area more attractive to the market and to break down barriers for developers who otherwise might avoid that location.

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## **STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS**

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1. Prepare new and modified policies and revise codes to achieve the center goals.
2. Commit necessary staff and capital resources to carry out development.
3. Establishment of an internal staffing team whose responsibility is implementation rather than regulation. Such an internal implementation team should be championed at a high level – the Mayor, City Manager, or Assistant City Manager.



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## Tualatin Commons Case Study - How private investment follows public commitment

The planning initiative for Tualatin Commons began with the goal of giving Tualatin a true civic and commercial downtown. The new 19-acre city center has given Tualatin a unique and positive identity.

Based on citizen response from public meetings, the Tualatin Development Commission and the Economic Development Department used the following objectives to guide the redevelopment effort.

1. Provide strong civic focus using public facilities and public spaces
2. Encourage and influence diverse private development
3. Promote pedestrian and vehicular circulation
4. Promote day and night uses for downtown
5. Create a strong visual impression at major entrances
6. Enhance economic vitality for all downtown businesses
7. Provide convenient and adequate parking
8. Establish linkages to other uses downtown and to the Community Park
9. Retain retail market share downtown
10. Build a downtown for the long term (50 or more years)

The City bought the 19-acre site in 1987. Tualatin Commons was planned as a mixed-use redevelopment consisting of offices, row houses, combination live/work units, a hotel, restaurants and public spaces. It replaced a collection of low or inappropriate uses, including an abandoned dog food factory, and mitigated flood plain issues through the construction of a 3.1-acre lake. The lake serves as a stellar community amenity, increasing the marketability of developments adjacent to it.

The Development Commission mandated that three of the seven development parcels had to be committed to purchase before construction of the Commons (and the use of public money) could begin.

The success of Tualatin Commons can be attributed to strong leadership in the Economic Development Department and the City's strategic use of the following tools:

- Public purchase of property and timely sale to developers
- The City's ability to hold the land allowed developers to avoid high carrying costs
- The use of urban renewal funds to leverage investment
- The active and consistent involvement of both official and citizen "champions" of the project
- A greatly streamlined approvals process that allowed developers to move forward rapidly
- The City's provision of all necessary infrastructure

Tualatin Commons sits in the heart of the Central Urban Renewal District, formed in 1975, and has experienced a 4-to-1 return on investment for the City over a seven-year period.



Persons Brinkerhoff

# 4

# Reward Leadership

Leadership is essential to every center’s success, with great leadership producing great results. There should be “champions” designated early in the center planning process to provide motivation and resolve issues. Ideally, the relevant government agency should identify both an internal staff person and a political leader for this role. The political leader would be responsible for pulling together the human infrastructure – such as business leaders, developers, lenders, citizen activists, neighborhood groups, realtors and other interested parties – to secure support and provide motivation. An internal staff person can help coordinate the multiple departments within the local government, quickly resolve issues and act as liaison to policy makers. A high-level partnership between both public and private leaders is crucial for smooth and effective implementation.

It could be argued that leadership is the most essential element in a center’s success. It is leadership from both the public and private sectors that articulates the community’s vision and keeps things moving. A key criterion for determining whether to allocate regional or state funds for center development should be a notable demonstration of committed leadership. This commitment is exemplified by:

- Unanimous, or at least strong, support from the public sector’s political leaders and planning commission for a center revitalization program.
- Designating an internal staffing team whose responsibility is implementation rather than regulation. The internal implementation team should be supported at a high level (e.g., the mayor, city manager or assistant city manager).



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- A written budgetary commitment to staff the implementation team and support a yet-to-be determined level of capital improvements for the center.

Without establishing these commitments (including staffing and budgeting), center revitalization most likely will falter, if not fail altogether. Government leaders must be willing to modify the culture of local government by:

- Recognizing the need for interdepartmental cooperation to ensure a fast, smooth development process.
- Focusing on establishing and strengthening quality relationships with the private sector.
- Streamlining regulations that frequently only protect the worst from happening and by shifting the approval process to reward quality design and responsible development through fast track approvals, public endorsements in public meetings and similar proactive efforts.

If professional city or county staff members want to be effective in helping shape positive change in the region’s centers, they must have the assurance and backing from their leaders.

In addition, leadership plays other equally important roles. Leaders should demonstrate that the process of change can work in a way that helps the entire community – by showing fairness and respect to neighborhoods, by attracting investment capital, and by establishing a city process that works with developers and

investors and not against them. Sponsoring and guiding economic development is another key responsibility for leaders, since growth and positive changes will not occur without jobs.

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## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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1. Publicly recognize great leadership ... repeatedly.
2. Consider establishing a “master developers program” that recognizes high-quality developers who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, experience and skill. This helps citizens, the public sector, and investors have more confidence in the project and the developer, and also can help facilitate a fast track approval process. The program should be open to all and recognize the best.
3. Tie regional and State funding allocations to a qualitative assessment of leadership commitment to strengthen the likelihood of success.

# 5

# Build Communities, Not Projects

*Place Making is the essence of real estate development.*

**D**eveloping centers is all about “place making,” or creating a sense of place and community. The areas between the buildings and the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch all contribute to creating the special places that make people feel connected and make them want to return again and again.

The advantage that centers have over other places is density – the opportunity for interaction with other people. Successful centers are the ones that make the transition from density to community, creating an active environment where people want to gather, meet others and socialize. The creation of a place results in tangible rewards, such as new tenants and customers as well as an improved market position. Place Making works when people want to return to the center again and again. It is inviting, secure, friendly, and interesting.



## A Vision and a Strategy

To create the type of vibrant, compact, mixed-use centers envisioned in the 2040 Growth Concept, a strategic plan is essential. The plan can provide the vision and strategy for how all the individual pieces can work together to create a better whole. Every decision (whether major transportation issues or the aesthetics of street trees) should be made in context of the bigger vision and on retaining vitality and urban character.

Each part of a center – including civic functions, retail services, housing types, and jobs – must be connected to one another. The key

is to remain consistently true to the vision, rather than just building projects. A vision guides how all the large and small pieces come together over time to create a sense of place.

Placing a residential multifamily structure, a single-family subdivision and a strip mall together in one area does not create a center. A true center must have an overall vision or strategy threaded throughout every aspect of the area. It also must have connections between the places (such as sidewalks connecting the developments and the tree-lined streets), amenities (the hanging flower baskets, neighborhood park and benches), and the parking (tucked behind the building or located in a structure lined with ground floor retail) to make it a people place.

Great urban ideas all too frequently die when they are separated out from the whole. Frequently the “how” it is done becomes more important than the “if” it is done. For the average person visiting a center, the placement of attractive trashcans or benches along the street does just as much, if not more, to create a sense of community as redeveloping a vacant lot into a multi-million dollar building. Small things well done can make a big difference.



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## Great Centers Have Great Streets

Attention to the “public realm” is essential in creating successful centers. As such, strong centers must have the right type of streets since these function as de facto “great rooms” where the informal exchange among people occurs. Every transportation improvement (such as roads, transit stations and sidewalks) is an opportunity to define, enhance or damage the public realm.

## Managing the Center

Designating a person or group to provide undivided attention to promoting, implementing and improving centers is an excellent way to make sure a center remains true to its vision. The downtown association of Houston, Texas, *Central Houston Inc.*, is a good example of an effective way to manage a center. This Texas business association negotiated the acquisition of the site for the new Reliant Football Stadium, oversaw the preparation of master plans to guide redevelopment of a main street corridor, and is overseeing the design, fund raising



and ultimately the construction and operation of a new downtown square anchored by two light-rail stations..

*Design of the community is the most frequently cited aspect of what residents like about Orenco Station.*

Dr. Bruce Podobnik, Lewis & Clark College

Building a sense of community will help spark a center's development and evolution. Not every person or organization is willing or able to function as a pioneer or champion. There is great hesitancy in the investment community to be first. Investors and developers want a "sure thing." For this reason, community building becomes much more important than simply project building. Proposing a new stand-alone housing project in a center may not succeed. Several housing projects grouped together with appropriate public realm investment, however, can bolster marketing strength, offer choice and contribute to a sense of community. Successful centers often have dozens of projects occurring at the same time – from painting streetlights, to infilling new homes, to redeveloping an office building into a mixed-use building. The constant activity shows investors and developers that the center is vital and growing and that it is a worthy investment. Success breeds success.

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## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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1. Keep the whole picture in mind by asking how each project connects to one another. Can projects be developed together? Can they be built differently, in a different location, with a different design, to create a more active place? Can the infusion of a public element make the difference between a good project and a great community?
2. Consider making "public realm" elements part of the baseline required in transportation investments and an eligible funding activity for transportation funding. Elements could include street trees, benches and other pedestrian amenities.
3. Create a design guidebook to share design guidelines for centers as well as best-practice examples. The document should not dictate the type of guidelines that should be in place but rather, provide examples that will help local governments and the development community decide which example best fits their situation.
4. To keep a center vibrant and provide a sense of place, emphasize the need for entertainment uses as well as programmed cultural and recreational events.



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5. Create a management organization at the local level that promotes and operates centers. Similar to the Association of Portland Progress, this type of organization can be involved in the planning, oversight, fund raising, implementation and management of public improvements in centers.
6. Structured parking often is not possible for developers to build because of high construction costs relative to achievable rents. Public investment can focus its financial resources on structured parking. When all other essential components are in place to propel the center to its next stage of intensity, public subsidy can be a logical and productive way to make the parking component feasible for development. Since parking structures are expensive, the benefits must be high to warrant the public expenditure.
7. Adopt a public policy or investment strategy that focuses public buildings and facilities into the centers where possible.
8. Create a working, up-to-date library of all projects in a center. This package can be used to show investors the range of successful activity occurring in a specific center.

## Many, Many Projects

Creating more vibrant communities requires an implementation strategy that includes many projects moving forward simultaneously. A great plan always promotes multiple projects, large and small, moving forward together. A center should have at

least 20 to 25 projects underway at the same time to insure implementation of a visionary plan. Without this level of intensity, implementation will stall. Dozens of concurrent actions are required to create the needed energy for center revitalization. The definition of what constitutes a project is broad, including buildings, regulatory policy, code revisions, and organizations or programs that affect the community. In

becoming a part of the plan, a project can broaden its initial constituency by adapting to the needs and concerns of others, creating a win-win situation. With multiple projects, success breeds success. Investors, developers, and lenders seek out environments with market opportunity and areas with prospects for success. A short list of examples includes:

- Window boxes
- Street planters
- Newspaper stands
- Informational signs
- Banners
- Parking Garages
- Land assemblage
- Sidewalk improvement
- Urban Renewal Districts
- Trashcans

- Lighting
- Park revitalization
- Farmers markets
- Transit
- Flower baskets
- Bike racks
- Sidewalk vendors
- Joint use parking
- Zoning code revisions
- Benches

- Public promenades
- Merchants Association
- Building renovation
- Housing
- Seasonal lighting
- Infrastructure improvements
- Master planning
- Lodging
- Design standards
- Landscaping



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## Gresham Civic Neighborhood Case Study -

Gresham Civic Neighborhood and Downtown Gresham are examples of the benefits of taking the long-term view and sticking with it. Starting with Transit Station Area Planning in the 1970s, the 130-acre Gresham Civic Neighborhood site was identified as part of revitalizing Gresham’s central area and restoring a true heart for the community. The City showed leadership by passing on numerous proposals and waiting to say “yes” to the project that met its objectives.

The City adopted The Gresham Civic Neighborhood Development Plan in 1995 featuring transit-centered, mixed-use, urban development. The Plan identified three regional components for priority funding and development: a new MAX station, a city plaza, and a new north/south main street. Additionally, the City created SDC credits for developers to build local infrastructure. With a vision in hand, Gresham was able to leverage regional transportation investments to support the Plan.

In 1996, regional funds were allocated and Civic Drive, running north/south through Civic Neighborhood, and a new City Hall were constructed. In partnership with Tri-Met, the City changed the design of a road planned to serve the building by relocating the road away from the MAX station to create a plaza at the station. The City Hall center includes the MAX stop, City Hall, and a Municipal Building that houses Gresham-Barlow School District, Fire & Emergency Services, and Police.

Finally, Tri-Met agreed to construct a second LRT station on the site tied to the Civic Neighborhood once a guaranteed number of “originating trips” could be reached. This requirement also includes a need for mixed-use development at the station. With the completion of the first part of Phase II of the Civic Neighborhood, the new station will open. A congressional funding request for the plan is pending this year.

Phase I of Gresham Civic Neighborhood, commonly known as Gresham Station, is a 24.5-acre retail complex. The grand opening was held in November 2000. Less than 18 months later, the Station was at 95% capacity.

Metro’s TOD program has acquired some key parcels adjacent to the future MAX station for dense residential development as part of Phase II of the Civic Neighborhood. Other aspects of Phase II will include office, retail, and mixed-use facilities.

# 6

# Remove Barriers

**A**t the heart of new implementation strategies for centers is the compelling need to overcome or remove barriers that stand in the way. Centers should be the easiest and most desirable places to develop good projects ... in short, they should be recognized for their role as the region's development hot spots.

Barriers can be described as anything that unreasonably blocks or impedes a project's ability to move forward. Barriers can vary widely – some are physical, some are political, some are tied to fear or lack of understanding, and some are timing. Some barriers relate to preparing for future development and investment, while others involve correcting problems of the past. An effective implementation strategy for centers should address issues related to the past, present and future. And since barriers tend to either prevent or inhibit implementation, the issue needs to be addressed and dealt with directly.

Most barriers fall into one or more of these five categories:

- 1. Physical barriers** generally involve a lack of or deteriorated infrastructure, poorly maintained real estate, concentrations of undesirable land uses, and other conditions of a physical nature that restrict or inhibit desired development and livability.
- 2. Financial barriers** relate to problems with raising necessary capital (either private or public) to carry out desired development. The problem may be a lack of willing lenders, under-funded government programs, weak rents that will not support new construction, excessively high land costs and similar conditions.

*Compact develop in Centers can help reduce infrastructure costs (such as for water, sewage, roads) to local governments and property owners by up to 25% through compact and infill development.*

Costs of Sprawl Revised



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- 3. Market barriers** can be both real and perceived and generally take the form of resistance to investing in a particular area. The resistance can stem from existence of physical barriers, inadequate traffic to support new retail, overpowering competition nearby, concentrations of crime, lack of similar uses, inadequate purchasing power, or fear of breaking a price barrier in a given center.
- 4. Regulatory barriers** consist of governmental codes, policies and procedures that restrict or discourage centers. It is crucial that the region take a critical look at the codes, policies and procedures that stand in the way of beneficial center development. Code cleanup and streamlining can help to overcome the developer concerns about “difficulty and cost” perceived as impediments to building in centers.
- 5. Political barriers** can occur at the neighborhood level (“not in my backyard”), at the city professional staff level, or at the elected official level. Political barriers frequently stem from a resistance to change and then carry over into developers’ ability to implement positive change. Political barriers and lack of leadership go hand in hand.



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## Development “hot spots”

Centers should be the region’s development hot spots, or the easiest and most in-demand place for new development to occur. Developers who propose quality projects in centers should be able to partner effectively with the public sector via targeted public investments and “implementers” on local government staff who can navigate through the process and provide both flexibility and certainty.

At present, both the public and private sectors feel frustrated about the level and type of process that guides development. The complaint is that the regulatory framework seems to function only as a way to keep bad projects out, instead of rewarding good plans and positive development. Tackling the regulatory framework to provide more certainty, simplicity and a clear predictable path should be a high priority in any strategy for

centers. Process should not be an “end”, but rather, a predictable “means” to successful center development and revitalization.

Just as important as regulations **in** centers is the regulatory framework **outside** centers. The region has a limited market for the dense, compact, mixed-use development being sought in centers. Continuing to prune back the amount of land zoned for retail, office and commercial development outside of centers where it makes sense can help stimulate center growth and revitalization. This is particularly encouraged as a means of dealing with deteriorating, functionally obsolete strip centers and tired, freestanding retail along corridors.



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## Spend Money to Save Money

Centers present a classic dilemma when it comes to infrastructure: it is necessary to spend money to save money. At a regional scale, centers can reduce total infrastructure costs (such as for water supply, sewers and roads) to local governments and property owners by up to 25 percent through compact and infill development. However, public and private infrastructure costs for an individual center may be significantly higher in two important respects:

- First, it costs more to provide public infrastructure in a center simply because there is a higher volume of need, activity, people and services.

- Second, the center model places a heavier demand on public infrastructure compared to traditional suburban development patterns. A suburban cul-de-sac, for example, has much fewer linear feet of roads and sidewalks that require financing than an urban center with a more complex grid of streets and sidewalks.

The result often can be higher public and private costs for the center model on a project-by-project level but lower costs at a regional level. So while the total regional cost of public and private infrastructure investments may be lower, the public costs for infrastructure and the private costs for individual private development projects tend to be higher in centers. Achieving regional cost economies therefore, will require regional financial assistance to the local level to offset the higher costs at the center.



Urban infill development usually is more expensive for the developer for a variety of reasons:

- Costs increase even more when retail is located below residential because of commercial code requirements.
- Stringent requirements about floor area ratio (the relationship between a parcel of land and the amount of space a building takes up on that parcel) and parking requirements do, as currently written in many jurisdictions, result in higher costs.
- In addition, most new urban infill projects must meet high “amenity” or appearance standards and face an extended permitting and approval process – significantly increasing the time, and therefore, the cost of a project.

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## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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1. Appoint a centers ombudsman. Create a public-private centers management organization that will communicate the vision, promote the center, create momentum, and serve as an advocate for development and investment in the center.
2. Adopt an attitude of “we are open for business.” One community’s barrier can be another’s opportunity. Do not underestimate the value of sending a clear signal to the development community that “we are open for business, our city is a willing partner for quality development, and we are ready to work with you.”





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3. Rezone outside centers. To help revitalize centers, consider selectively pruning back retail and employment uses in some nearby corridors and employment areas that may be encroaching on development that should be occurring in centers.
4. Simplify development in centers. There is considerable frustration across the public and private sectors about the level and type of process that currently guides development. The regulatory process is seen as overly scripted, highly bureaucratic and difficult to navigate. Hire some local government staff members who are “implementers” instead of regulators.
5. Create a fund that provides economic incentives for center development. Explore creating a regional fund dedicated to making strategic infrastructure investments in centers. There is a need to target public investments toward infrastructure in individual centers to help offset the higher costs for individual projects. Investment can also be targeted specifically at buildings facing added cost penalties due to the requirements of higher density and mixed-use.

# 7

# Metro As Coach

**M**etro has a new role to play – one where the regional agency provides enhanced leadership, support and encouragement to local governments as they move forward with implementing Region 2040.

Early in the Region 2040 process, Metro played a strategic role, partnering with local governments, the business community and general public to create a vision for the region. During the transition toward making that vision a reality, Metro has become a regulator, requiring local governments to adopt policies and plans consistent with Region 2040. Although the existing regional regulatory framework creates an important foundation for centers, regulation alone cannot and will not result in strong, successful center development.

It is time now for Metro to move forward and take the next step in the successful implementation of Region 2040. Local governments are the experts in knowing what is best in their communities. They may or may not know how to make it happen and they do not always have the resources to make it happen. This provides a new opportunity and responsibility for Metro to step in and help local governments make regional and town centers a reality as envisioned in Region 2040. Metro should provide and/or supplement the strategy, administration, support and strategic capital to support the local governments. The agency's role should be one of teacher, coach and resource, educating local governments and developers about best practices in the region. At the same time, Metro should work nationally to link local governments and developers with financing mechanisms and should assist with code writing or review when necessary. This assistance should be done in partnership – not as a mandate or through regulation.



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## TOD Program Case Study –

Metro's transit-oriented development (TOD) implementation program facilitates the construction of transit villages and projects throughout the Portland region. Operating through cooperative agreements with local jurisdictions and developers, the program uses federal TOD funds to acquire sites and easements to offset the very high costs associated with this type of development.

This program has been successful in developing a series of innovative funding tools and was the first of its kind nationwide. The TOD program has a thorough inventory of existing examples of creative lower-cost parking solutions that should be profiled and communicated to local jurisdictions and the development community.

Local governments also need to redefine their role. They need to view Metro as an assistant and resource and not as Big Brother watching over them. Given the limited resources available at the local government level, having a regional clearinghouse of information and data should allow local governments to move forward faster in their center development. Local governments need to ask for specific assistance and not wait for Metro to come to them. A valuable regional resource will be wasted if local governments do not take advantage of it. This opportunity not only has the potential to create successful centers, but it also can be the beginning of many beneficial new partnerships between Metro and local governments.

There may be limited opportunities for Metro to assume a teacher/coach role when it comes to implementing specific local projects. These opportunities should be taken strategically and designed to facilitate center development.

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## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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1. Build a database of successes throughout the region of development products and strategies that are being sought in centers. This information can be used in a recruitment, equity raising effort, or loan package to help demonstrate what already has been accomplished both in the region and in the specific center.

## Pleasant Valley Case Study

Although not a center, Pleasant Valley is a good example of public-public partnering to address growth issues. Metro took a leadership role in the Pleasant Valley Urban Reserve Area. This 1,500-acre urban reserve area in Pleasant Valley was being considered for annexation inside the urban growth boundary. Three cities and two counties could provide urban services for the area. Metro staff helped the affected local governments determine governance and service provision issues and also assisted with public involvement activities and education. The project resulted in agreement by the affected local governments on the future service providers and incorporation patterns for the area, as well as a preliminary design concept and guidelines.



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2. Provide expert panels to educate local governments and developers about center development.
3. Provide technical assistance, such as writing model codes or other consultant assistance.
4. Create a database of financial tools.
5. Develop center marketing materials, such as information that illustrates available sites, the regulatory framework, discussion of incentives, demographics, and real estate market information.
6. Share stories of successful centers and interesting new development trends with the news media.
7. Build a database of centers and their pertinent information to distribute to developers and investors.
8. Sponsor workshops to share with other local governments the process and stages of center development.
9. Connect local governments and developers with financial resources.
10. Create an awards program to recognize innovative center development.
11. Provide financial incentive programs.
12. Set priorities.



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# 8

# Balance the Automobile

**T**he future success or failure of this region's strategy for regional and town centers is linked inextricably to transportation. The reality is that the majority of trips to and from centers today and in the future will be by car. Finding a peaceful coexistence with the automobile is crucial for a successful center.

Superior transportation accessibility is a distinguishing characteristic centers enjoy compared to many other places in the region. Every center must find the right balance between having excellent automobile access and having too much traffic. Without traffic a center cannot exist. Too much traffic, or poorly planned traffic, can create such a level of congestion and inconvenience that shoppers and other visitors will avoid the center.

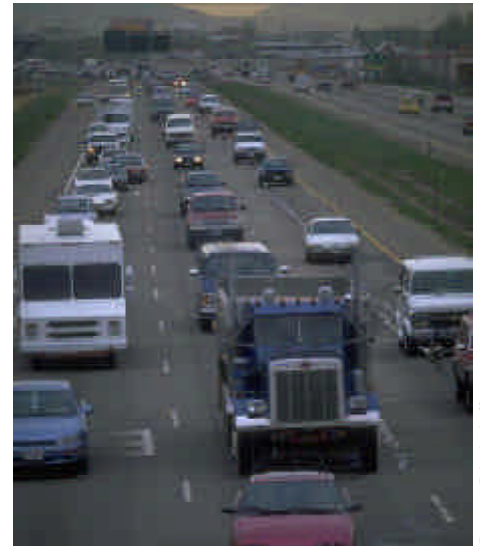
The transportation strategy for a center revolves around finding the balancing point between traffic moving through the center and traffic whose destination is the center itself. The needs of these two kinds of traffic (center destined and pass through) provide an inherent point of conflict; the center must strive to serve both masters:

- Superior accessibility to centers – with a combination of road and transit improvements, centers can enjoy substantial accessibility advantages compared to other places within the region.
- Superior accessibility within centers – regardless of how visitors get to a center, or for those who live in a center, being able to walk easily and safely to multiple destinations is a necessity.

# Good Congestion vs. Bad Congestion

For many years, American consumers heard that all cholesterol was bad. Then the news came down that there was “good” cholesterol and “bad” cholesterol. The same holds true for traffic congestion. Sitting in the car in traffic may lead someone to think that all congestion is bad. But the reality is that some types of congestion are not only tolerable, they are good for the region’s short- and long-term health. Slowing down drivers so they can “visually shop from their cars” as they move through a center is positive. The same is true for parking – a center can be over parked (too many spaces) and create a sense of emptiness.

Portland’s Northwest 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue is an example of good congestion – it accommodates plenty of transportation choices such as walking, cars, buses, rail and bicycles. All of the people using those transportation options are seeking something – whether it is a nice meal, access to their live-work unit, a new pair of pants, or a couple of relaxing hours in a day spa – on one of the hottest streets in town. Good land-use planning results in good congestion. If you try to over-solve the “problem” of good congestion by widening the road, the result ends up being a center with inadequate pedestrian facilities – a death knell for any center. Roads and streets through



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a center should serve as “seams,” holding the two sides together rather than an “edge,” which separates the two sides.

The flip side is that the region certainly has its share of bad congestion, which is the result of an imbalance between transportation and land use. These are situations in which vehicles must travel fairly long distances to reach areas where services and shops are inaccessible to pedestrians. As with good congestion, widening roads does nothing to fix the imbalance if it only fuels the cycle of sprawl. Traffic problems may not have traffic solutions – effective land use can go a long way to correcting traffic problems.

In addition, not having congestion at all can be a bigger problem than having it. If there is no congestion in a particular area, that probably means no one really wants to go there.



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## More Streets and Fewer Arterials

## Parking

The traditional town grid is based on a fine network of small streets and roads. A bird's eye view of Portland and the surrounding cities would reveal many more acres of land devoted to streets in Portland than its neighbors. The suburbs' problem is the opposite – too few small streets and too many big roads (arterials). Portland's transportation system works because there are plenty of streets to choose from, not just a few major arterials.

We know from research and experience that the pattern of streets in an area greatly influences travel patterns in a community. People in areas with a tight grid of streets and a mix of land uses walk more, use transit more and take up to half as many automobile trips than their neighbors in typical suburbs. Interestingly, while residents of these communities use the car less, they take more total trips – meaning lots of short walking trips.

A center's economic success flows from, and depends on, plentiful parking. Unfortunately, conventional approaches to parking (such as large parking lots between the street and the businesses) can undermine the vitality and pedestrian atmosphere needed in a center. Parking should be treated as a separate land use within centers, serving all uses within the centers. It is inadequate to address parking as a piece of each commercial, residential or office use. Parking management should precede building more parking. Rather, it should first make effective use of existing resources and then build more parking when needed.



# The Pedestrian in Charge

It is important to expend considerable time, energy and money to get people to a center and to provide them with plenty of transportation options. But once they arrive, there is one irrefutable tenet: they should be able to walk wherever they want within the center. In a center, the pedestrian reigns. Walking in a center has requirements. It should be interesting and secure. Destinations are needed, as is a continuity of pedestrian-friendly improvements. Shops need to be side-by-side, pulling a walker/shopper along from one interesting store to another. Vacant lots and other holes along the way frequently disrupt pedestrian flow.

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## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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1. Reduce the amount of parking – not necessarily overall, but for each of the land uses. Reducing the amount of parking will help the center achieve the right degree of compactness and density, thus reducing unnecessary traffic circulation. Metro’s code takes a positive step in that direction by reducing the amount of parking in areas with good transit. With joint-use or shared parking (where several businesses share parking facilities), a center can reduce its amount of parking by 20 to 25 percent.
2. Manage the use of parking. A center must manage its parking system to make sure it is functioning correctly once the initial cushion of oversupply diminishes. Developing a parking management district for the center deserves prime consideration. Are employers and employees parking in front of their stores and creating a parking problem? Are commuters tying up spaces all day when free street parking is provided? Ask the right questions.
3. Use parking structures. A center should provide mechanisms to allow parking to move into structures over time. For now, land prices in most town centers will not support the high cost of structured parking. If structured parking is required, public financial assistance is almost certainly necessary.
4. Develop a grid of streets. Pedestrians and cars are well served with a dense grid of streets with ample sidewalks. The grid provides alternatives for local traffic flow and helps avoid unnecessary congestion, whether trips are through traffic or internal.
5. Make parking compact, easy and convenient. This reduces the number of cars circling and looking for parking. This also reduces the number of large, single-use parking lots that separate uses and make pedestrian travel difficult.

6. Institute access management. This strategy would examine and manage all aspects of gaining access to the center – parking, traffic calming and slowing techniques, the number of curb cuts and access points to arterials, and signal coordination.
7. Provide quality transit. It is important to provide a variety of transit options to achieve fast, reliable service between centers. Examples of those options include: light rail and frequent buses, fare less service within centers, and flexible mini-buses to adjacent neighborhoods and employment areas.
8. Incorporate good street design.



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## Orenco Transportation Case Study -

The Orenco Station center in Hillsboro exemplifies most of the transportation elements sought in a center – narrow streets, wide sidewalks, high quality bus and light-rail service, excellent road access, parking reductions, and placement of parking behind retail buildings. All of that translates into great performance; a recent study found that 22% of Orenco residents commute by transit.



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Early in the project, the developer, PacTrust, decided to develop the northern portion of the site first to create a viable town center, which it felt was necessary to attract residential tenants. To do this, the company wanted to tap into Cornell Road traffic, which does not run close to the transit station. Most transit-oriented communities that have relied primarily on transit traffic for their retail component have not fared well.

The decision to locate along Cornell Road posed another question: should the town center be on the south side of the road, should it straddle the road, or should it be on the north side? PacTrust decided that locating on the south side would relegate the north side to second-class status and that straddling the busy street would be unwise this early in the project. Locating on the north, however, created its own dilemma, since light rail was at one end of the development and the town center was at the other. PacTrust decided to locate the center on the north side of Cornell Road.



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Washington County's transportation plan called for Cornell Road to be expanded from five to seven lanes. PacTrust was concerned the pedestrian-oriented town center would not work with a seven-lane arterial. The company fought to secure a binding commitment from the County not to widen Cornell Road. That ultimately required a change in regional and state policy, stating that areas with planned high density and quality transit options were not required to widen roads.

# Celebrate Success

This region's innovative growth management programs, most notably Region 2040, are a testament to the degree in which this community cares about the land and future livability. Region 2040 is a success, both nationally and to some degree, locally. One factor that would help citizens, the business community, investors and local governments see how successful Region 2040 has been is to see and hear about projects (existing, underway and planned) that should be heralded.

Celebrating success is a key principle that should be used to create and enhance centers. Investors, appraisers, lenders, developers, politicians, planners, architects, governmental staff, and residents are interested in and attracted to success stories. People need to know about the many positive accomplishments occurring in our region.

This principle speaks to acknowledging the success that has occurred or is underway in the region's various centers. Too frequently, comments are made that centers are "not working." This is highly inaccurate, although they may be working differently than originally anticipated.

Success in centers can take many forms. It can include development of well-conceived plans, infrastructure improvements, quality built environments, increased levels of private investment, improvements in sidewalks and streetscapes, public amenities, civic plazas, new newspaper boxes, or an art mural. Even the behind-the-scenes successes – such as efforts to create an appropriate development climate and government processes that facilitate smart growth – are important to share with other community partners.

The key is to emphasize success at all scales, whether it is the new hanging baskets and trashcans or the large development project.



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## STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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1. Build an ongoing database of center projects constructed during the past eight years, projects under construction, and projects under consideration or in the planning stage. This information would be distributed to local jurisdictions and the media.
2. Construct an economic profile of projects and centers. The purpose of this strategy is to provide an ongoing documented database of the economics involved in center development. This information would be available to developers as they prepare loan packages, appraisals, investor solicitations, and other financial-related uses.
3. Form a partnership with the media. This would occur at both the regional and local level and should include newspapers, magazines, television, radio and web sites. In addition, many newspapers from around the country continue to write stories about the way the Portland region successfully manages its growth. Having some key center projects included in those national stories would be useful in communicating success. The purpose of a partnership with the media is to inform the general public about successes in the region's centers. Include human interest stories about people who bring about successful centers; testimonials from center developers and lenders; stories about the elected officials and community leaders that made it happen.
4. Explain the value and function of centers to various audiences – including many people in the development community who do not fully understand the intricacies of centers and corridors. Metro needs to better explain the intent and purpose of centers as part of Region 2040.

# 10

# Take the Long View

*“there is no finish line”*

**T**rite as it may seem, Rome wasn't built in a day ... and neither are centers. Centers develop and evolve over time, often 10 or 20 years or more, depending on their size, scope and vision. Each center develops at its own pace, in its own way.

In broad, fairly simplistic terms it is helpful to think about the evolution of centers in three stages: planning, emerging and maturing. The reality of each center, of course, is more complex than that. Centers consist of a series of sub-districts such as retail, office, entertainment and residential. Given the evolutionary nature of centers, it would not be uncommon to have one center with different sub-districts simultaneously in each of the three phases.

Most centers will reach their full potential with time. Some centers will mature quickly, while others may take decades. Some centers may not fully develop and be redefined in time. Just like full-size cities or communities, a center cannot be expected to move at a predictable or even a consistent rate. Centers go through stages where growth occurs rapidly, while other times things slow considerably. Growth will usually coincide with market cycles, with development occurring in times of economic prosperity. Even during those slow-growth or lean times, small steps can still be taken that will keep centers moving toward their full potential. Even a center that supposedly has reached its full potential really has not done so – since centers constantly change and evolve.

The way a center evolves has significant implications when it comes to attracting investors and developers. The public policy embodied in Region 2040 ultimately guides development and investment into centers. We, as a community and a region, must work to achieve a combination of renewed energy and patience. Renewed energy comes in the form of



being proactive and making policy, human resource, and capital investment decisions to invigorate our centers. Patience comes into play by acknowledging that centers are not created equal and that they will grow at different rates.

The responsibility for helping centers reach their full potential lies with local governments, developers and Metro. Barriers to development must be removed, and opportunities must be recognized and acted upon to ensure that center development can occur in the long term. A singular process cannot be identified that will serve to move all centers through the stages of

development. Different tools are needed at different times, and the toolbox used by local governments and developers should include different techniques for each stage of development.

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## **STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS**

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1. Strategically use public resources. Identify how and where investing public funds can get the most leverage for future development.
2. Include in the planning process a phasing schedule that identifies what should (and could) occur in what

order, but not necessarily following a specific timeline for development. By identifying the order of development and public improvements required, it will be easier to see how each project fits into the bigger picture.

3. Preserve future development opportunities through regulation or even through public acquisition of property. Allow certain non-center development in the short term, with the requirement that it be modified once the center can support it. It may not be the best use of public resources, for example, to build a parking structure in a center that is just beginning its development process. A requirement for structured parking also makes the project too costly for a developer. By allowing surface parking in the short term and requiring structured parking in the future, the land will be preserved for an appropriate future use while still encouraging the developer to proceed with the project.
4. Allow the strategy to develop over time. There is no way, of course, to predict what the future will hold. What seems like a viable plan today may not be feasible in ten years. Plans must be reviewed and modified throughout every center's life cycle.





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## Lloyd District Case Study -

The Lloyd District has evolved from a series of disconnected, auto-oriented, commercial activities in the 1960s to a mixed-use center focused around four MAX stations. The long-term vision of the Lloyd family was to create a downtown east. Until the coming of MAX, that vision was not realized. The District has been the beneficiary of nearly four out of ten dollars invested adjacent to the original MAX line.

The Lloyd District is a rich mix of public and private leadership, integrated large-scale investments (light rail, streetscape, convention center, Rose Garden, traffic calming) and private initiative:

- The Convention Center, built in 1990, is currently expanding from 400,000 square feet to 655,000 square feet. The link to light rail was important enough to the Convention Center that they paid for a new station. The new Convention Center station and plaza create the front door for arriving and departing conventioners.
- Melvin Simon and Associates bought and completed a \$200 million renovation and expansion of the 1.3 million square foot Lloyd Center Mall.
- Light rail has been a focal point for Ashford Development in its plans to develop 70 acres of land they acquired paralleling MAX in the Lloyd Center area.
- Liberty Insurance recently completed a \$40 million 350,000 square foot 17 story headquarters facing onto the Seventh Avenue MAX station.

The 20,340-seat Rose Garden opened in 1995 nestled between the Rose Garden MAX Station, the Convention Center and the existing 12,666-seat Memorial Coliseum. The Trailblazers bet \$228 million of their money against \$37 million in public funds on a master plan that relies on a strong transit and pedestrian emphasis to succeed. Like its neighbor the Convention Center, the Rose Garden is designed with transit in mind. The two projects have a combined total of just 3,446 off-street parking spaces for over 1.1 million square feet of space.

The success of the Lloyd District as a center is yet to be determined, however, in comparison to any other center in the region, it has come further in the scale of its transportation and land use transformation.

# Conclusion

**T**his region should be proud of its many accomplishments in managing growth wisely – both in the way the land is used and in the way economic vitality remains a constant goal. Every day and in every corner of this region, business leaders, local and regional governments, investors and citizens can point to on-the-ground examples of how we are achieving our goals outlined in the Region 2040 program.

Regional and town centers function as an important chapter in this success story, yet still remain somewhat elusive. Creating fully successful centers is not beyond our grasp. We need to evolve our tactics and strategies, just as a center itself evolves over time and under varying market conditions. Only then will these icons of smart growth and economic prosperity reach their full potential as our region's centers.

