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Oak Grove Neighborhood Center Plan

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Adam Bartini, Åsa Bergman, Alicia Crain, Carley Francis, Kathryn McGovern, and Nathan McNeil

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Oak Grove Neighborhood Center Plan
FOOTHILL PLANNING ASSOCIATES WOULD LIKE TO THANK...

Oak Grove residents and businesses for supporting our work, telling us about their community, and providing great feedback on our ideas.

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- Oak Lodge Community Council: Eleanore Hunter, Chair
- Clackamas County Urban Green: Chips Janger, Ed Riddle and Charlie Stephens

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- Sumner Sharpe, Portland State University

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- Basil Christopher, Oregon Department of Transportation
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- Gail Curtis, Oregon Department of Transportation
- Shari Gilevich, Clackamas County Planning Division
- Robert Hixson, Clackamas County Department of Transportation and Development
- Lori Mastratonio-Meuser, Pedestrian Coordinator, Clackamas County Planning Department
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Meeting Space:
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- Oak Grove Coffee House
- Rose Villa

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Oak Grove is an unincorporated community in Clackamas County, Oregon. Residents are interested in ecological, economic and social sustainability and concerned about changes to the character of their neighborhood related to potential growth. Oak Grove does not currently have a plan to guide growth or change in their community.

By 2030, the Portland region is expected to grow by one million people; Clackamas County is estimated to grow by 300,000. Anticipated infrastructure improvements in Oak Grove include construction of a light rail station to connect the area to downtown Portland and a multi-use path, the Trolley Trail, eventually tying the light rail station to the Oak Grove business district.

The community is bisected by a state highway, McLoughlin Boulevard. Designated as a “corridor” in Metro’s 2040 plan, the region expects McLoughlin to remain important for moving people and goods and to be a focus for more compact development. Small businesses in Oak Grove Boulevard’s business district struggle to compete with businesses on busier McLoughlin. The neighborhood lacks a visible identity, is 46% covered with impervious surface, and has a poor pedestrian environment.

The Neighborhood Center Plan focuses on the Oak Grove business district, McLoughlin Boulevard and ways to increase direct and indirect benefits from expected improvements to create a more livable and sustainable Oak Grove. The concurrent McLoughlin Area Plan (MAP) process will soon begin using community-defined guiding principles and goals to complete their work to guide future planning, programming, and development within the area. Recommendations from the Oak Grove Neighborhood Center Plan may be incorporated and implemented through the MAP.

**Oak Grove Community Perspectives**

The community is concerned that:

- less desirable aspects of McLoughlin will spill into Oak Grove neighborhoods;
- they will have little control over change in Oak Grove;
- projected increases in population, traffic and density will result in the loss of neighborhood character and an increase in crime; and,
- new development will not match the existing neighborhood style.

The community wants:

- safe, vibrant, walkable streets;
- more shops, restaurants, and businesses to serve the local community;
- consistent neighborhood character and feel; and,
- more opportunities to interact with nature.

**Key Recommendations**

Livability and sustainability in Oak Grove would benefit from improving the pedestrian network, encouraging business coordination and community events and demonstrating identity through neighborhood signs.

**McLoughlin Boulevard**

- Promote nodal rather than strip development
- Complete sidewalks; install buffers and street trees
- Improve street definition
- Improve east-west connectivity through new and existing crosswalks and formalizing paths to disconnected streets

**Oak Grove Boulevard**

- Increase neighborhood services
- Refine streetscape
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle environment
- Increase access to green space
- Develop preferred ways to accommodate future growth

Oak Grove will face challenges in implementing recommended changes. Some policy tools which may help with implementation include: continued advocacy for implementation of existing plans; special zoning or overlay areas to specify redevelopment requirements; special highway designations such as the special transportation area (STA) and urban business area (UBA); and the Clackamas County capital improvements project list.

In the near term, the community can engage in local programming activities to build a sense of place and neighborhood capacity while pursuing long-term improvements. Program recommendations include increasing the number of organized community events (e.g., farmer’s markets, art fairs, block parties) and improving business coordination throughout the area (e.g., business roundtables, standardization of business hours).
INTRODUCTION
Oak Grove is an unincorporated area of Clackamas County, Oregon. Clackamas County coordinates with the area through a Community Planning Organization. McLoughlin Boulevard, Oregon state highway 99E, bisects the community east and west.

McLoughlin Boulevard is the center of most commercial activity in the area, though the Oak Grove historic business district serves some local needs. Planned infrastructure improvements are expected to affect both locations.

The Neighborhood Center Plan focuses on the business district, McLoughlin Boulevard and ways to increase direct and indirect benefits from these planned improvements.

ABOUT THE PROBLEM
By 2030, the Portland region is expected to grow by a million people. Clackamas County is estimated to grow by 300,000. Oak Grove will experience some of this population growth, which could change neighborhood character.

Current development is mostly auto-oriented. Many community-focused businesses once located on Oak Grove Boulevard have closed or moved to McLoughlin. Today, even along McLoughlin, community-serving businesses are struggling to survive. Both Oak Grove and McLoughlin Boulevards have commercial vacancies.

Planning and redevelopment efforts are underway in Oak Grove. Initiatives include the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail project’s Park Avenue station; the McLoughlin Area Plan (MAP); redevelopment of the Trolley Trail; and the Oak Lodge Sanitary District’s Surface Water Management Strategic Plan.

Residents of Oak Grove are interested in ecological, economic and social sustainability and have a history of environmental stewardship, especially associated with tree canopy preservation.

ABOUT THE PROJECT
Residents are proud and protective of Oak Grove. However, the community will likely miss the full potential of planned public investments without a clear vision for Oak Grove’s future.

The project uses prior plans, community input, practicality and consideration of coming investments to identify opportunities and ways to improve livability. The ideas presented seek to improve livability through a comprehensive lens of sustainability: ecological, economic and social. Oak Grove has the opportunity to achieve thriving, connected, sustainable, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly commercial districts, which serve the needs of a growing community.
About the Clients

The Oak Lodge Community Council (OLCC) is the Community Planning Organization (CPO) serving approximately 25,000 residents in the unincorporated area extending south from Milwaukie and north from Jennings Lodge, between the Willamette River and Oatfield Ridge. CPOs involve citizens in land use planning and provide a recognized communication link between citizens, community groups, service districts, and county, state and federal agencies. OLCC is an entirely volunteer organization and is regarded as the most active, vocal and effective CPO in Clackamas County.

Clackamas County Urban Green (UG) is an informal community organization that seeks to protect and restore urban ecosystems and serves as a catalyst for projects that build social, ecological and shared economic capital. UG partners with community organizations, Clackamas County, Metro, and other regional agencies interested in improving community health, vitality and prosperity.

About Foothill Planning

Foothill Planning Associates is six Portland State University students in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program. The Oak Grove Neighborhood Center Plan is the culminating product of Planning Workshop, the capstone of the MURP program.

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Alicia Crain - Public Outreach Coordinator
Carley Francis - Research & Policy Coordinator
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OAK GROVE HISTORY
19TH CENTURY

Starting in the 1830s, white settlers arrived in Oak Grove and concentrated by the Willamette River, a valuable transportation resource. Many of these early settlers received land through federal land grants. Legend has it that early surveyors named the area “Oak Grove” after lunching underneath a grove of white oak trees near present-day Oak Grove Boulevard and Rupert Drive.

From early settlement until construction of the trolley line, Oak Grove had a rural, small-town feel with family farms scattered across the landscape. In anticipation of the streetcar line from Portland to Oregon City, Oak Grove was platted in 1890. Many homes along the streetcar line were built with their front doors facing the streetcar, which started service in February 1893. Even with the streetcar, the community maintained its rural feel and became a popular place for Portland business owners to raise families, maintain gardens and orchards, and raise small livestock.

20TH CENTURY

The streetcar reached the height of its popularity in the 1920s and ridership was dwindling by mid-century. During the streetcar peak era, the Oak Grove business district hosted a full-service grocery, a meat market, a confectionary, shoe stores, a drug store, a telephone company, restaurants and more. In the same area, the community’s elementary and high schools served as centers of community life.

McLoughlin was first built as the Pacific Highway in 1914. The paving of the highway as a four-lane road in 1934 heralded the beginning of a long decline for the Oak Grove business district. Though contested by the community, streetcar service ended in 1958 and contributed to the area’s growing dependence on the automobile.

McLoughlin Boulevard became the focal point of the transportation system. Since this time, the Oak Grove business district has seen disinvestment. What was once a thriving local shopping and service hub is now a small strip of a schools, residences and windowless industrial buildings and a few shops.
Planning Context
Many previous and current planning efforts focus on Oak Grove and the broader Oak Lodge area. These plans are a starting point in understanding the future of Oak Grove and community preferences. Public involvement has been a component of each plan, however, details and findings related to community preferences are somewhat sparse, making neighborhood interests hard to discern.

In spite of these issues, the Oak Grove community has seen or will see many of the changes discussed in this planning effort, including light rail, infill development, a changing business landscape and construction of the Trolley Trail. Cherished aspects of Oak Grove, like the traditional neighborhoods with historic homes and the white oak tree canopy, have been subject to development pressures with little, if any, guidance or control by the community.

**Clackamas County Comprehensive Plan**

The Clackamas County Comprehensive Plan documents a deficiency in parks in Oak Grove. McLoughlin-specific recommendations call for a local transit shuttle and assert that office or commercial uses must connect to neighborhoods with excellent pedestrian connections.

Energy and environmental concerns are woven throughout the land use and transportation sections, generally highlighting and recommending a balanced approach to development. Particularly notable is the call for shared parking facilities and the potential to minimize required parking through enhanced multi-modal amenities or non-drive alone transportation incentives. This plan sets targets for mode share and vehicle miles traveled per capita reductions.

Other County plans deal specifically with bicycle and pedestrian facilities, historic preservation, zoning and environmentally sensitive areas.

**Oak Grove Community Transportation and Growth Management Plan - 1995**

Clackamas County led this effort with and for Oak Grove in response to the designation of Oak Grove as a “town center” by the regional planning organization, Metro. A town center is part of Metro’s overall concept for compact development along corridors with focused nodes (e.g. town centers) to become more compact and less auto-dependent. Clackamas County elected officials originally requested this designation. The planning process was contentious and, at the end, the stakeholder group recommended to remove the town center designation, not implement the draft plan and leave the existing county comprehensive plan in place. Some members of the community felt that this planning process was not transparent, while others felt it was deliberately misleading.

**McLoughlin Corridor Land Use and Transportation Study - 1999**

This plan recommends substantial improvements to the streetscape including completing the sidewalk system on both sides of McLoughlin with planted buffers, pedestrian-oriented lighting and planted medians at certain intersections. Without specific funding mechanisms identified, implementation relies on improvements made as private property is redeveloped or capital improvements occur. Due to this limitation, many areas along McLoughlin do not have sidewalks. The plan discusses access management, recommending intersection spacing of at least a quarter mile, private drives at least 300-500 feet apart, signals a quarter to a half mile apart and minimal use of medians for access control. Further exploration of a median buffer at the Oak Grove Boulevard intersection is recommended to
improve the pedestrian crossing.

TROLLEY TRAIL MASTER PLAN - 2004
This plan recommends development of the Trolley Trail into a paved, multi-use path connecting Milwaukie to Gladstone. Engineering plans are now complete, funding has been secured and construction will begin in summer 2010. The trail will improve crossings at intersections with Park, Courtney, and Oak Grove, including installation of two benches and curb extensions at Oak Grove Boulevard. From Courtney to Oak Grove, the Trolley Trail will be part of Arista Drive. In this section, the trail comprises a wide sidewalk on the east side of the street and shared vehicle/bicycle lanes. When off-road, the trail will be an 8-12 foot paved path. Historic markers will be placed near each original trolley stop.

ACTION PLAN FOR A SUSTAINABLE CLACKAMAS COUNTY - 2008
The Action Plan sets Clackamas County on a path toward a more ecologically, economically and socially sound future. Many of the goals, actions and tasks called out in the plan are specific to building the County’s understanding, capacity and flexibility around sustainability. There is minimal guidance for growing sustainably in small areas or through projects, however, two goals provide a basis for the consideration of sustainability in the Neighborhood Center Plan:

• Support and encourage green standards for development, planning and infrastructure; and,
• Build community, health, vibrancy and resiliency.

ONGOING PROCESSES
There are three planning processes currently underway in and around Oak Grove. These include the McLoughlin Area Plan (Clackamas County), Surface Water Management Strategic Plan (Oak Lodge Sanitary District) and the Park Avenue MAX station (TriMet).

MCLOUGHLIN AREA PLAN (MAP)
Facilitated by Clackamas County, this process seeks to enhance and revitalize the neighborhoods and communities in unincorporated Clackamas County along McLoughlin: Oak Lodge and Jennings Lodge. Phase one is coming to a close and has focused on developing a set of guiding principles that are focused in six areas: economic vitality, transportation, social, design, environmental and administrative. These principles will be used in phase two to guide future planning, programming and development in the area. The Neighborhood Center Plan is being developed with an eye toward contributing specific improvement or project ideas to the MAP.

MAP Vision Statement
In the future, our community fabric of thriving neighborhoods, shops, restaurants and services is green and sustainable; healthy and safe; woven together by walkable tree-lined streets, trails, natural areas and open spaces; and strengthened by our diversified local economy, great educational opportunities and engaged citizens.

SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN
Surface water management is guided by the Clean Water Act and managed in Oak Grove by the Oak Lodge Sanitary District (OLSD). This planning process will help guide decision making for the next five to ten years and help allocate limited resources. OLSD wants to address their customers’ growing interest in environmental issues, increase understanding of the surface water program, and deal with functional needs like flooding control, changing land use patterns and updating obsolete standards.
**Park Avenue MAX Station**

Construction of the Portland-Milwaukie light rail (PMLR) line is expected to begin in 2012 and be completed in 2015. This line will end at Park Avenue with a station and park-and-ride facility. Detailed station area planning will begin in 2010 and is funded through a Transportation and Growth Management grant. Clackamas County Urban Green, in conjunction with TriMet, received a Nature in Neighborhoods (NIN) grant from Metro aimed at expanding and restoring habitat through riparian forest expansion and parking garage habitat planting. This unique approach could serve as a model for future transit stations and park-and-ride developments.

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**Overall Concept Diagram - Site Elements**

*Park Avenue Park and Ride - Nature in Neighborhoods - 11.02.09*

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**Nature in Neighborhoods project for PMLR Park Avenue station**

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**Exhibit C**

- A 11,000 SF expansion of existing Courtney Creek riparian forest along the western edge of the site will include 4000 SF of stormwater treatment for McLoughlin Blvd. Rainfall from approximately 6000 SF of roadway and another 6000 SF of maintenance property will be collected in a water quality manhole at the SE corner of the parking garage to provide preliminary treatment and removal of solids and oils. The stormwater then travels via an underground pipe along the south edge of the parking garage to the stormwater sewer for further treatment. The overflow for the facility then joins the existing Courtney Creek at an overflow inlet just to the south. Currently, the stormwater is untreated drains directly to Courtney Creek, and eventually Kellogg Lake.

- A portion of the parking garage stormwater and other impervious site improvements will be treated in a swale along the west side of the garage. As part of the NIN program, the riparian forest habitat will be expanded to the maximum available area to extend the existing forest to the north.

- Stormwater from an additional 10,000 SF of McLoughlin Blvd (between Park Avenue and the northern access drive of the parking garage) will be collected via catch basins and piped to a 5000 SF treatment swale near the NE corner of garage.

- Removal of invasive species and limited replanting will be performed to help restore existing riparian forest.

**Trolley Trail Riparian Forest**

- Stormwater from station platforms, parking garages and plaza north of Park Avenue will be treated in a swale along the east side of the Trolley Trail. As part of the NIN program, the riparian forest habitat will be expanded to the maximum available area between the trail, buildings and plaza.

- A new retaining wall of up to 14’ tall is required along the west edge of the Trolley Trail. The wall will be terraced with landscaping to minimize its scale and to provide additional habitat along the trail corridor.
Planning Process
**PLANNING PROCESS**

**DEFINITION OF PROJECT AREA**
OLCC, Urban Green and neighborhood stakeholders expressed interest in improving the pedestrian environment on McLoughlin and redeveloping the Oak Grove business district to support community needs. Combined with important future investments in the community like the Trolley Trail and the PMLR, these locations form a small wedge stretching from the Park Avenue Station to Oak Grove Boulevard and from the Trolley Trail to McLoughlin.

The Neighborhood Center Plan focuses on identifying opportunities and improvements for Oak Grove and McLoughlin Boulevards, however, public involvement efforts targeted Oak Grove more broadly.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH AND PARTICIPATION**
Foothill conducted an extensive public outreach effort aimed at identifying needs, opportunities and constraints. This effort included participation in community meetings, on-site research, stakeholder interviews, business surveys, a walking workshop and community open house and presentation. For more information on each of these individual processes, including summary reports, see Appendices 2, 4, 6 and 8. To learn about the community and identify stakeholders, Foothill attended numerous public meetings including meetings for MAP, Oak Lodge Community Council, Oak Lodge Sanitary District, Trolley Trail, MAX, and the Oak Lodge History Detectives. See Appendix 3 for a list of meetings attended.

**STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND BUSINESS SURVEYS**
The interviewed stakeholders represented a diverse set of interests in the community, including civically active long-term residents, local schools, local religious institutions, the business and development community, local mobile home communities, and retirement communities. A total of 23 business interviews/surveys were collected from establishments on McLoughlin and Oak Grove.

The stakeholder interviews revealed desires for better sidewalks and crosswalks, more neighborhood-oriented businesses and restaurants, better visibility for Oak Grove businesses from McLoughlin, a community center, and more public art. Businesses were interested in street furniture and trees, better east-west connectivity, parking preservation, street lighting, and the creation of a more coordinated, cooperative business environment.

**SITE INVENTORY**
On-site research included a neighborhood street inventory to identify existing conditions, assets and needs, including absence or presence of sidewalks and informal footpaths. With community ideas in mind, this inventory was a starting point for the recommendations in this plan and helped to frame questions asked during the walking workshop.

*Project area*  
*Site inventory*
**Walking Workshop**

The walking workshop was held in April with twenty-five community members. Participants chose between walks on McLoughlin or Oak Grove Boulevard. During the walks, participants were asked what they liked and did not like about the area. Particular attention was paid to the pedestrian environment, underutilized lots, and opportunities for revitalization. After the walk, participants reconvened to put their ideas directly onto large maps of the tour areas and to discuss their thoughts as a group.

**Open House and Presentation**

Community perspectives were used to develop a variety of ideas for projects, programs and policies that could support a more livable and sustainable Oak Grove. A technical advisory committee informed the planning and public outreach process and provided professional perspectives on the feasibility of specific ideas and project recommendations. Preliminary ideas were shared during an open house and presentation to approximately eighty people at the OLCC monthly meeting in May.
EMERGING CONCERNS AND ASPIRATIONS

Through the public process, a number of key concerns emerged:

- Keep less desirable aspects of McLoughlin separate from Oak Grove neighborhoods
- Lack of control over change in Oak Grove
- Loss of neighborhood feel through increased population, traffic and density
- Fear of potential increases in crime due to incoming MAX line and Trolley Trail redevelopment
- New development out of character with existing neighborhood

Many community members expressed related aspirations:

- Safe, vibrant, walkable streets
- More shops, restaurants and businesses to serve the local community
- Retain neighborhood character and feel
- More opportunities to interact with nature

Foothill members take questions from Oak Grove residents at the May 26 Open House
EXISTING CONDITIONS
ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS
Oak Grove’s automobile dependent development has greatly reduced the amount of open green space: 46% of land in the project area is covered by impervious surface (Figure 1). Primarily in the form of streets, parking lots and large retail store rooftops, these surfaces artificially increase temperatures, increase polluted water runoff and negatively impact quality of life. The tree canopy has been greatly diminished through development and is hardly evident within the Oak Grove business district or along McLoughlin.

Figure 2 illustrates other sensitive environmental areas protected by local regulations. These protections apply to sensitive floodplain areas that are particularly vulnerable to development, including riparian and upland wildlife zones and wetland areas. The park deficiency is also clearly identified.

The freshwater supply is provided by the Oak Lodge Water District, while surface water, stormwater and sewer treatment is handled by the Oak Lodge Sanitary District. There is not a combined sewer overflow in this area, so dispensing of sewage directly into the Willamette during storm events is not a concern. Meeting freshwater quality and temperature standards has not been a significant problem for the community to date.
Demographics

Oak Grove experienced a modest population increase of 1.85% between the 1990 and 2000 Census. As of 2009, Clackamas County population had increased 38.5% since 1990. Metro forecasts an additional 300,000 people will live in the county by 2030. This increase will likely place pressure on Oak Grove for greater housing density, especially given the proximity to the future Park Avenue MAX station.

Oak Grove is not particularly racially diverse as shown by Figure 3, though the Hispanic population increased from 3.3% to 5.9% between 1990 and 2000. Oak Grove has several retirement communities. The 65 and older age group comprises over 20% of the Oak Grove population, compared with only 11% county-wide.

Figures 4 and 5 show median income and population density. The census block in the heart of the project area, which includes several mobile home communities, has a low average income and relatively high population density. River Road and Oatfield act as boundaries between income levels and population densities. Home ownership is relatively low in Oak Grove at 57% in 2000, compared with 71% throughout Clackamas County.
ZONING AND LAND USE
The Oak Grove business district has vacant businesses, lacks some basic amenities like a grocery store, post office and restaurants, and is not well known outside of the surrounding neighborhood. In addition to the lack of public open space, there is also a lack of community spaces in Oak Grove.

Dominated by industrial facades, aging storefronts and underutilized space, Oak Grove Boulevard holds great potential as a neighborhood center. Two commercially zoned areas are located on Oak Grove, which is otherwise zoned medium density residential. The rest of the project area is zoned low density residential, with the exception of some open space zoning, primarily at the school locations.

McLoughlin Boulevard attracts shoppers due to its big box retail and grocery stores; fast food and other restaurants; and, car sales and services. Vast and underutilized parking lots separate the street from the built environment. McLoughlin is zoned general commercial (C3) in the project area and is flanked by medium density residential zoning on either side (see Figure 6). McLoughlin also has many vacant properties, offering opportunities for interim uses or redevelopment.
TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW
McLoughlin is controlled by the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and serves as a major transportation corridor through Oak Grove. The area is not well served by transit beyond one frequent bus service route on McLoughlin.

East-west connectivity is generally poor, especially for pedestrians. This is partly due to a lack of crosswalks across McLoughlin, River Road and at other key intersections. Sidewalks offer poor connectivity, causing residents to walk in the streets or through parking lots.

The future PMLR terminus station at Park Avenue will provide an additional transportation option to points north, but will not improve local transportation options. Trolley Trail redevelopment will provide improved bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, particularly between the Oak Grove business district and the Park Avenue MAX station.

EXISTING AUTOMOBILE FACILITIES AND TRAFFIC
McLoughlin Boulevard is a regional highway that carries about 39,000 vehicles per day. River Road, to the west, is a local alternative thoroughfare to McLoughlin. Traffic volumes on Oak Grove Boulevard vary widely between segments. Just west of McLoughlin volumes are about 50 percent higher than in the Oak Grove business district (see Figure 7). Courtney is an east-west arterial connecting River Road and McLoughlin. Even though Courtney has no commercial or workplace destinations, traffic volumes are around 30 percent higher than on Oak Grove through the business district.

On average, afternoon peak hour traffic is expected to more than double by 2035. A TriMet study conducted as part of PMLR planning projects increased volumes on McLoughlin associated with park-and-rides at four stations: Park Avenue, Tacoma, Lake Road and Milwaukie. In the afternoons, heavy traffic on McLoughlin and traffic from the Park Avenue park-and-ride will increase the congestion at the intersection of McLoughlin and Park. In addition to more cars, more pedestrians are also expected in the station area. Walkers will likely use the signalized crossing at Park to cross McLoughlin or travel along Park and the Trolley Trail into the neighborhood. Increased pedestrian traffic is expected to conflict with vehicle traffic moving through McLoughlin and Park.

Figure 7. Existing and projected traffic volumes for focus streets in project area

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<td>65%</td>
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Existing Transit Facilities
Four bus lines operate in or near the study area. Lines 33 and 99 on McLoughlin connect to downtown Portland, while lines 32 (Oatfield Road) and 34 (River Road) connect from the Milwaukie transit center. Line 33 is a frequent service bus route and the major bus line in the project area. Figure 8 shows weekday boardings and alightings in the project area. Over 1,000 boardings and alightings take place between Park Avenue and Silverleaf Lane (south of Oak Grove Boulevard) on an average weekday, creating substantial pedestrian activity on McLoughlin going to and from transit stops. While the most heavily used bus stops along McLoughlin are at the major signalized intersections of Oak Grove Boulevard, Courtney and Park Avenue, there are many daily boardings and alighting at other locations, none of which have crosswalks. At a number of locations, including the fourth busiest stop in the project area, Silverleaf Lane, bus riders were observed crossing McLoughlin outside of marked crosswalks and signalized intersections.

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Existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities
As evidenced in Figure 9, east-west connectivity is especially poor. A lack of crosswalks, particularly across McLoughlin, River Road, Oak Grove at Rupert Drive and Oak Grove at River Road, hinder pedestrian movement. This makes getting around the neighborhood particularly difficult for some of the older residents that live in the retirement communities on the western edge of the project area.
**SIDEWALKS**

Although new sidewalks have been added in some places along McLoughlin, there are still numerous gaps and incomplete sections. Sidewalks offer poor connectivity, causing residents to walk on the shoulder or through parking lots on McLoughlin.

The new sidewalks on McLoughlin have been fitted with wheelchair accessible curb cuts, however, the incomplete sidewalk network has resulted in some curb cuts simply depositing pedestrians onto McLoughlin (e.g. at the Bomber restaurant, the curb cut leads into the bike lane). Most residential streets, often with very low traffic volumes, have no or very limited sidewalks.

Oak Grove Boulevard, from McLoughlin to Rupert Drive, only has a sidewalk on the north side of the street. Sidewalks through downtown Oak Grove are available for most of the segment between Rupert and River Road, but are inconsistent and often very narrow. Though traffic on Courtney is higher than on Oak Grove, it has no sidewalks. With the opening of the Trolley Trail, increased pedestrian and bicycle volumes can be expected at key crossings with Arista, Oak Grove, Courtney and Park Avenue, potentially warranting a larger data collection effort on pedestrian and bicycle volumes.

**CROSSWALKS**

Crosswalks exist mainly at signalized intersections. The crosswalk data in Figure 10 is used by Metro for planning efforts to improve transit access. Many bus stops are located far from crosswalks and pedestrians crossing McLoughlin mid-block are a common and dangerous reality.

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*Figure 10. Bus stops, sidewalks and crosswalks: For all streets except McLoughlin, a dark green line symbolizes sidewalks on both sides of the street as of 2002. A light green line indicates sidewalk on one side of the street in 2002. The sidewalk coverage on McLoughlin has been updated to reflect existing conditions.*
BICYCLE FACILITIES
Bike lanes are provided on major transportation arterials like McLoughlin, River Road, and Oak Grove Boulevard, however a lack of safety buffers and poor road maintenance prevents many from utilizing these facilities.

FUTURE: TROLLEY TRAIL
Converted from a former streetcar line, the six-mile Trolley Trail connects with the Springwater Corridor and the I-205 trails to make a 20-mile loop between Portland, Milwaukie, Gladstone, Oregon City and Gresham. The trail stands to become an important component of the Oak Grove community’s transportation infrastructure, once it is paved. A comparable trail section through Johnson Creek has 1,000 daily users according to Metro’s 2008 Trail Counts.

FUTURE: PORTLAND MILWAUKIE LIGHT RAIL
The future PMLR terminus station at Park Avenue will provide an additional transportation option to points north. Projected daily ridership of the PMLR Park Avenue station for 2030 is 4,700 alightings and boardings. Forty percent of riders are expected to access the station by bus, thirty percent by foot, while the remaining thirty percent are expected to park-and-ride.
Project Area
Recommendations
Recommendations

Introduction
Oak Grove livability and sustainability can be improved through neighborhood-wide improvements. Some of these tie the Oak Grove Boulevard and McLoughlin Boulevard zones together in a consistent and cohesive manner, so that visitors entering Oak Grove via River Road, McLoughlin, the Trolley Trail, or PMLR see the same neighborhood identifiers and design treatments.

Creating a Recognizable Identity
Both along McLoughlin and in the Oak Grove business district, opportunities exist to strengthen identity through signs, gateways and common neighborhood amenities, including lining major streets with small banners on light posts, or placing larger neighborhood signs and information kiosks at key intersections.

The McLoughlin Area Plan community visioning process identified the intersection of Oak Grove and McLoughlin as a community gateway. Along Oak Grove, more opportunities exist for creating gateways at the entry points: River Road, Arista Drive/Trolley Trail and Rupert Drive. Depending on time and funding availability, a gateway could be something small, like temporary neighborhood signs, or large, like painting or using special paving surfaces in the intersection or crosswalks.

Communicating a neighborhood identity can help locals and through-travelers know Oak Grove as its own place. Having a clear identity can help create a stronger sense of place and support marketing the area for new local businesses and starting up community events.

Street Definition
In high traffic areas, motor vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians and parked vehicles should each have clearly dedicated space for safety. Many streets in Oak Grove lack definition, as parking lots seamlessly merge with streets that have wide travel lanes and disconnected sidewalks. Street definition can be improved by creating a stronger street edge and defining space within the right-of-way by:

- bringing buildings closer to the street;
- installing buffers and medians;
- planting street trees;
- painting high-visibility crosswalks and bicycle lanes;
- implementing access management; and,
- providing turn lanes and bus pull-outs, as appropriate.

For example, the McLoughlin Corridor Study recognizes McLoughlin as a major transit street and recommends that buildings be located no more than 20 feet back from the road. At McLoughlin and Oak Grove, designated by Metro as a “Boulevard” intersection, the plan recommended a pedestrian refuge, improved access management and tactics to minimize pedestrian crossing distance.

While 20-foot setbacks may be sufficient as a corridor-wide strategy, nodal development would require smaller setbacks within those regions, bringing buildings to the street and visually alerting drivers that they have entered a different type of area.
ENHANCING THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT
A safer and more comfortable pedestrian environment can encourage walking for recreation and running errands. In addition to completing the sidewalk network, improvements can include:

- safe and conveniently located crosswalks
- footpaths to improve connectivity
- making the network comfortable, easy to use and safe through shaded walkways, fully accessible routes, pedestrian-scale lighting and clear delineation from other modes
- landscaped buffers with trees

Making the pedestrian environment more inviting and useful to the neighborhood can increase the number and types of trips made on foot. This increased foot traffic can improve each walker’s sense of safety knowing that others are out walking as well. Businesses can benefit from increased exposure to potential customers.

CROSSWALKS
Essential to a complete sidewalk network is the careful design and implementation of crosswalks.

According to Oregon state law any intersection is a crosswalk, but drivers do not always stop for pedestrians at intersections. Highly-visible zebra style crosswalks can encourage motorists to stop. At signalized intersections, allowing pedestrians to start crossing before vehicles can increase their visibility to drivers, and providing more time to cross the street can broaden the range of pedestrians who successfully complete the crossing during the walk phase. Installing a refuge island between the directions of vehicle travel provides walkers the option of crossing the street in two steps.

New crosswalks should be considered along McLoughlin between the signalized intersections. A signal or a median island would likely be necessary to effectively add new crosswalks on this busy street. If new signals are not possible, medians could be placed at midpoints between existing signals or located to balance pedestrian convenience with minimal motor vehicle interference.

CONNECTIVITY
Oak Grove has strong north-south connections, but east-west connections are generally lacking, creating a challenge for area circulation. Many local streets dead-end before they connect to McLoughlin.

Improving existing crosswalks and constructing new crosswalks that are convenient to pedestrians and highly visible to drivers is important to addressing poor connectivity. Completion of the sidewalk network and formalizing footpaths across open space can increase connectivity for pedestrians and encourage walking.

As mentioned, TriMet bus lines serving River Road, McLoughlin, and Oatfield Road pick up and leave over a thousand passengers each day. After deboarding, passengers travel by foot or bicycle, facing significant challenges as they seek to cross these three roads. These streets also act as barriers for individuals making local trips in the neighborhood.

As noted, the current and expected transit service in the area will be oriented north-south. No service runs east-west across the community. This gap in service prevents many community members from using transit for local trips and makes accessing transit for longer regional trips a discouraging endeavor.
Recommendations

Encouraging TriMet to work with Clackamas County and community partners (e.g. Willamette View or Rose Villa retirement communities) to develop an Oak Grove shuttle service could increase the pool of transit users and make Oak Grove more accessible. This idea was recommended in the Draft 1995 Oak Grove Plan and the McLoughlin Corridor Study.

Landscaped Buffers with Trees
Buffers increase separation between pedestrians and automobile traffic and can be paved or planted. This space can improve the pedestrian and natural environments and increase perceptions of safety. Buffer benefits include:

- Space for street trees, sign posts, utility poles, mailboxes and fire hydrants without cluttering the sidewalk
- Refuge space for motor vehicles to wait for a gap in traffic after crossing the sidewalk
- Better alignment across intersections for sidewalks, curb cuts and crosswalks
- Easier travel by people with mobility devices, as driveway slopes occur in the buffer, not the sidewalk (greater cross-slopes can challenge navigation)
- Infiltrate stormwater runoff and provide habitat
- Aesthetic enhancements
Oak Grove Boulevard Recommendations
Oak Grove Boulevard: Findings

Introduction

Oak Grove Boulevard is a unique place that once served as the Oak Grove commercial backbone, supported by the trolley stop at Arista Drive. It still provides the neighborhood with places to shop, eat and work. Pedestrian and bicycle traffic will likely increase with the Trolley Trail improvement and future Park Avenue MAX station.

The community cares about this street and generally wants additional amenities without drastically changing its character. The business district is buffered from McLoughlin by residential neighborhoods. The boulevard could be a good walking street with its historic buildings and pedestrian scale.

Currently Oak Grove Boulevard has features that likely deter walkers and bicyclists. Unmarked pedestrian crossings at River Road and Rupert Drive may intimidate or be a barrier to potential users. Sidewalks in the district are incomplete, narrow and sometimes cluttered with utility poles, overhanging vehicles or newspaper boxes. The commercial area on Oak Grove has few trees providing little to no shade or heat absorption.

Community members are concerned about speeding vehicles along Oak Grove Boulevard, the site of three schools. Oak Grove Boulevard is signed for 35 mph except in a short school zone section which restricts travel to 20 mph during school hours. The inconsistent speed limits may contribute to driver confusion and poor compliance.

Current zoning allows for commercial and mixed uses, supporting community interest in additional shops and restaurants. Existing commercial spaces are small and have low rent.

There is underutilized space, from underdeveloped lots to informal parking that is indistinguishable from the street. The street has more space for motor vehicles and parking than may be necessary. Underutilized sites could be redeveloped to provide greater benefit to the neighborhood.
**IMPROVEMENT IDEAS**

Establishing the Oak Grove business district as a destination can be achieved through enhancing neighborhood identity, increasing neighborhood services, improving the streetscape, encouraging active transportation, increasing access to green space and accommodating growth.

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**ENHANCING NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY**

Oak Grove’s unique neighborhood identity and sense of place can be strengthened by:

- **Developing and installing Oak Grove signs, banners or other neighborhood identity markers.**
- **Constructing informational kiosks at major cross streets (e.g. River Road, Arista Drive) with space for community postings, historic information, etc.**
- **Developing gateway treatments for the intersections with Rupert Drive and River Road.**
- **Promoting historic designation opportunities for individual properties.**
INCREASING NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

The Oak Grove community expressed desires for more services in the district that meet local needs. Some stakeholders want to capitalize on the Trolley Trail and the Park Avenue MAX Station by increasing services that would attract users of these facilities into the district. Possible services include:

- Food-oriented services (e.g. bakery, fresh produce market, specialty grocer, ice cream shop, deli, mid-range cafe or bistro, wine bar)
- Neighborhood-oriented services (e.g. post office, copy shop, shoe store, public meeting and performance spaces)
- Trolley Trail-oriented services (e.g. bicycle/fitness shop, public restrooms)
- Unique attractions (e.g. art gallery, history museum, craft shop, bed & breakfast)

Small shops and businesses provide a community with jobs, shopping opportunities, activity, and character.
IMPROVING THE STREETSCAPE

Several changes could enhance the streetscape to support a vibrant, livable neighborhood center.

- **Widen sidewalks to allow for both walking and potential sidewalk features like outdoor seating, newspaper boxes, or street trees.**
- **Install pedestrian-oriented lighting to enhance the evening environment, provide a sense of safety and contribute to neighborhood identity.**
- **Change the direction of the angled parking to back-in (see sidebar).**
- **Install traffic signal or pedestrian signal at River Road.**
- **Investigate other crossing improvements for River Road.**
- **Complete the sidewalk network, especially in front of the church at Rupert Drive, keeping in mind the parking needs of the area.**

Wide sidewalks and well-marked crosswalks can help a community foster a walkable village environment.

**BACK-IN ANGLE PARKING**

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials’ 1999 Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities notes that “on-street parking can affect bicyclist safety... Diagonal and perpendicular parking arrangements are not compatible with bicycle facilities... They should be avoided wherever possible.”

Back-in angle parking is used in cities across America. A four-year study in Tucson found 3-4 accidents per month on streets with front-in parking compared to zero accidents on streets with back-in angle parking.

While entering a front-in angle parking space is easy, leaving it requires backing into traffic without seeing it. When leaving a back-in angle parking space, the driver is facing the street closer to the lane of traffic the vehicle will enter, greatly reducing sight impairments.

This difference is especially important where there are bicycle lanes. Backing out of a front-in space requires the vehicle to cross the bicycle lane when visibility is most restricted. Backing into a back-in space provides the driver with the same sight lines as parallel parking.
**Encouraging Active Transportation**

Many streetscape enhancement ideas could also improve the pedestrian and bicycle environment.

- Visually or physically narrow the vehicle space through curb extensions, wider sidewalks, street trees and/or integrated stormwater facilities.

- Install bike parking, particularly near the Trolley Trail intersection.

- Paint crosswalks at intersections with Rupert Drive, Arista Drive, and River Road.

- Implement three-way stops at both intersections of Oak Grove Boulevard and Rupert Drive for pedestrian and bicycle safety, and to raise driver awareness of entering a pedestrian district.

- Lower speed limit to 30 mph, closer to the school zone speed and better suited to a neighborhood center.

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**Integrated Stormwater**

Expanded tree canopy and green spaces provide opportunities to absorb and infiltrate stormwater, but more can be done by integrating stormwater treatment.

Instead of treating runoff as a burden to the community, it should be utilized. Stormwater infrastructure such as bioswales can serve as educational tools that inform the community about water pollution and the impact that our built environment has on freshwater ecosystems.

The current curb extension at Oak Grove Boulevard and Lee Avenue provides a perfect opportunity for this type of demonstration project. As in the public plaza (see page 48), rain can be captured from rooftops and other impervious surfaces and used in gardens that beautify the business district.

Captured stormwater can be incorporated into water features and local art displays that celebrate Oak Grove’s location along the Willamette River. Rainwater can also be captured in barrels or cisterns for use in community or private gardens.
Increasing Access to Green Space

Oak Grove is a park-deficient community and has limited options for new open green space. There are some opportunities for capitalizing upon existing assets:

- **New Urban High School sports field:** soften the edge of New Urban High School’s field to allow this green space to serve as a community amenity.

- **Behind the Oak Grove United Methodist Church:** green space that could be opened to the neighborhood through a shared use agreement.

- **Sojourner Elementary School field:** current gardening area could be expanded to address local interest in community gardens.

- **Privately-owned undeveloped lots:** public plazas or green spaces could be developed through shared use agreements, purchase, or donation. Properties along the Trolley Trail are prime locations to create a network of public open space.
**ACCOMMODATING GROWTH**

Oak Grove is an attractive, affordable neighborhood that will be increasingly accessible with the Trolley Trail and light rail improvements. These factors make it likely that the neighborhood population will increase. Growth can be accommodated without significantly changing neighborhood character.

- Create design guidelines to direct and guide the look of infill development.
- Encourage two or three story mixed-use development in the business district.
- Establish or extend shared parking agreements to make use of underutilized parking capacity.
- Consider time-limited or metered parking in the future; revenue could fund community programs or small infrastructure projects.

New housing and mixed-use developments come in all shapes and sizes.
The Oak Grove business district hosts a number of sites that could be used to provide new community gathering places, educational opportunities, easily accessible green space, to accommodate growth or to help activate the street through facade improvements. Some of these are identified below.

1. Vista Market
2. Sojourner Elementary School
3. Bioswale Demonstration Project
4. New Urban High School Field
5. RV Parking Lot
6. Pioneer Auction Gallery
7. Cranston Machinery Co.
8. O.G. United Methodist Green Space
STREETSCAPE REDESIGN

Oak Grove Boulevard between Arista Drive and Rupert Drive serves as the center of the local business district. Its current form, however, caters to the automobile at the expense of active transportation users. The Trolley Trail’s redevelopment will likely result in thousands of potential customers for existing and future businesses in the district. In order to effectively capitalize on this public investment, the district needs a facelift to better accommodate all users and provide better services to residents and visitors.

This concept primarily uses visual cues to narrow the motorized vehicle space along Oak Grove Boulevard. Curb extensions are shown at intersections, similar to the future condition of Oak Grove Boulevard and Arista Drive/Trolley Trail. Wider sidewalks can accommodate trees along with pedestrian-scale lighting, neighborhood signs, and street furniture. One auto parking spot can be converted to ten to twelve bicycle parking spots or a stormwater bioswale.
STREETSCAPE REDESIGN

EXISTING

Oak Grove Boulevard looking east from Arista Drive

PROPOSED

Oak Grove Boulevard looking west from Rupert Drive

EXISTING

PROPOSED

Oak Grove Boulevard looking west from Rupert Drive
Oak Grove Boulevard: Design Concepts

Streetscape Redesign - Active Façades

In order to make the district more inviting to residents and visitors, special attention should be paid to the inactive façades of Cranston’s Machinery and Pioneer Auction House. These businesses are important to the economy of Oak Grove, but the current feel of these buildings contributes to an uncomfortable pedestrian environment.

Façade improvements could be made to address this without reducing the economic viability of these businesses. Small Parts Manufacturing (SPM) on Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, in NE Portland is an example of this that has an active façade with windows, awnings, and landscaping.

Cranston’s Machinery and Pioneer Auction House façades

Parking for SPM employees is located in the rear of the building, away from the main pedestrian area on MLK, and is camouflaged with landscaping, which could be constructed as a stormwater bioswale or raingarden.

Oak Grove Neighborhood Center Plan
LINEAR PARK AND CENTRAL PLAZA

This visual shows a concept for integrating the neighborhood, Trolley Trail and New Urban High School field, which ineffectively doubles as a public open space. Currently, the field is fenced off from the community with a few small openings providing some access.
**Linear Park and Central Plaza**

A linear park could replace the current chain link fence bounding the eastern edge and provide some resting places for users of the Trolley Trail, in the first step of a phased development approach.

On the southern side of the school field is a rental storage lot for recreational vehicles and an apartment complex that is currently for sale. The RV lot could be transformed into a community plaza to connect the Oak Grove business district with the linear park. This plaza could feature a rain garden, a stage for outdoor performances, a water feature incorporating local art, as well as additional tree canopy.
LINEAR PARK AND CENTRAL PLAZA

In the final step of a phased redevelopment approach, the apartment complex property on the western edge of the RV lot could be redeveloped as a mixed-use building with residential or office space above and retail or an outdoor cafe below, with building frontage on both the street and plaza.
McLoughlin Boulevard Recommendations
**McLoughlin Boulevard: Findings**

**Introduction**

McLoughlin Boulevard is important to residents for shopping and accessing regional destinations. However, residents are concerned about negative aspects of McLoughlin spilling into their neighborhood.

Strip development characterizes McLoughlin, with low to moderate density businesses lining both sides of the corridor. Residents lament the number of building vacancies and adult-oriented businesses. Commuters can drive through the corridor without realizing they are in Oak Grove.

McLoughlin Boulevard lacks definition: the street blends into the shoulder, the bike lane, the sidewalk, and storefront parking lots. People on foot, bicycle or mobility device face an uninviting setting and challenges traveling along or across McLoughlin Boulevard. Sidewalks are missing in many locations and trees or planted buffers are few and far between.

East-west movement is particularly difficult along McLoughlin. Three signalized intersections with crosswalks, about a half mile apart, exist in the study area (Park Avenue, Courtney Avenue, and Oak Grove Boulevard). There are no painted or signalized crosswalks in between. Large commercial lots block side streets from intersecting McLoughlin. These dead ends and cul-de-sacs force pedestrians and cyclists to take indirect routes to McLoughlin businesses.

McLoughlin also presents opportunities to Oak Grove. In addition to shopping and transportation services, McLoughlin’s high traffic volumes represent potential customers. Several of the major intersections along McLoughlin are natural locations for business clusters.
**IMPROVEMENT IDEAS**

Revitalizing McLoughlin Boulevard can be accomplished by reinforcing Oak Grove’s identity, refining the streetscape, improving east-west connectivity, and promoting nodal commercial development.

**REINFORCING NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY**

The identity of Oak Grove can be strengthened along McLoughlin through signs, banners and other unique symbols. These could take the following forms:

- Developing and installing Oak Grove signs, banners or other neighborhood identity markers
- Developing a gateway treatment at McLoughlin and Oak Grove Boulevards
- Constructing informational kiosks as part of Oak Grove Boulevard gateway treatment with space for community postings, historic information, etc.
- Incorporating unique symbols into design of commercial nodes
- Promoting historic designation opportunities for individual properties

*Possible ways to reinforce a community identity are with welcome signs, arches, banners, information kiosks and unique street furniture.*
Refining the Streetscape

Steps to enhance McLoughlin’s streetscape and improve comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists include:

- Completing sidewalks on both sides of the street, providing eight-foot sidewalks with a ten-foot landscaped buffer as prescribed in the McLoughlin Corridor Study
- Building wider (up to twelve feet) sidewalks in commercial nodes to accommodate higher pedestrian densities, street furniture, and signage
- Constructing landscaped medians with pedestrian refuges in designated node areas
- Clearly differentiating bicycle lane from shoulder area
- Improving access management
- Providing exclusive right turn lanes
- Moving bus stops to far side of signalized intersections to eliminate conflicts with right turns
- Adopting minimum or zero setback standards to bring buildings closer to the street

If the street is attractive, drivers have a reason to slow down.

McLoughlin Corridor Study

Planted buffers, medians, and unique crosswalks make the streetscape a more attractive and comfortable experience.
**IMPROVING EAST-WEST CONNECTIVITY**

The following recommendations could alleviate some of the challenges faced by pedestrians and bicyclists seeking to access or cross McLoughlin.

- **Lengthening pedestrian signal to allow adequate crossing time for slow-moving pedestrians**
- **Providing advanced walk signal to enable pedestrians to begin to cross before left-turning traffic gets green signal**
- **Repainting crosswalks in the more visible “zebra” style**
- **Formalizing active transportation pathways from neighborhoods to McLoughlin commercial areas. New development should include connections and minimize barriers.**
- **Adding crosswalks with median islands close to the midpoints between signalized intersections to enable two-phased pedestrian crossing**
  
  Possible locations:
  - North of Maple St.
  - South of Smith’s Mobile Estates near The Bomber restaurant
- **Adding crosswalks at strategic locations that minimize restrictions on motor vehicle movements**
  
  Possible locations:
  - South of McLoughlin Way
  - South of Silver Springs Road
MCLoughlin Boulevard: Recommendations

Mid-Block Crosswalks

Signalized crosswalks exist at three intersections: Oak Grove Boulevard, Courtney Avenue, and Park Avenue. These are approximately one half-mile apart. Adding physically protected, clearly marked mid-block crossings could improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety as well as enhance east-west connectivity along the corridor.
DEVELOPING NODES
Focusing new development in nodes along McLoughlin is preferred by residents and would be appropriate at major intersections such as Oak Grove Boulevard, Courtney, and Park. It could be achieved by:

- Concentrating new development at major intersections
- Encouraging development regulations that reduce setbacks (bringing buildings to the street) and require parking to be located in the rear, preferably accessed by a side street
- Promoting a variety of shops and services at nodes so that shoppers can combine trips
- Coordinating with pedestrian improvements and transit stops to ease access, improve safety, and ensure a more pleasant overall experience

PROMOTING NODAL DEVELOPMENT
The nodal form of development has numerous advantages over strip development in the context of McLoughlin Boulevard – particularly if restaurants, cafes, and smaller retail establishments are concentrated in these areas. These include

- reducing the need for unsafe mid-block crossings;
- enabling safer crossings by aligning with transit stops;
- creating interesting destination locations along the corridor, thereby reducing traffic speeds;
- making shopping more convenient and more easily completed without a car; and
- benefiting businesses through co-location of similar business types.

Recommended Nodes on McLoughlin

1. Park Avenue
2. Courtney Avenue
3. Oak Grove Boulevard

North
This one-mile stretch of McLoughlin hosts a number of underutilized or vacant sites that could be redeveloped into business clusters, small parks, neighborhood plazas or community centers. Some of these are identified below.

1. Former Parr Lumber Site
2. Former Jiffy Lube Site
3. Oak Grove Square
4. McLoughlin Way
5. Courtney Plaza
6. Elks Lodge Site

North
McLoughlin Boulevard: Design Concepts

Former Jiffy Lube Site

The northeast corner of McLoughlin and Oak Grove is the former location of a Jiffy Lube and now serves as an underutilized edge of the Fred Meyer parking lot. This site provides an excellent opportunity for a partnership between the Oak Grove community and Fred Meyer with benefits to both parties.

The corner could be transformed into a pleasant outdoor space, with abundant tree canopy, bioswales to treat stormwater runoff from the large parking lot, and a gathering place for both Fred Meyer and Oak Grove community events.
Existing poor street definition on McLoughlin Boulevard could be improved with the addition of a planted buffer, street trees, complete sidewalks, and pedestrian-oriented lighting.
**STREET DEFINITION**

The existing stretch of McLoughlin Boulevard reads like a wide open space. Street trees and reduced setbacks on new development create a sense of enclosure, which has been shown to calm traffic.
Corner of Oak Grove Boulevard and McLoughlin Boulevard

The intersection of Oak Grove Boulevard and McLoughlin is an important commercial center for Oak Grove. It is also ripe for transformation into a vibrant community-serving, pedestrian-friendly node. Three out of four corners of this intersection can be enhanced to strengthen Oak Grove identity and further reinforce this intersection as a commercial node.

McLoughlin Way and Oak Grove Square

The twenty-five foot grass and dirt slope between McLoughlin Way and McLoughlin Boulevard is state property, sits mostly unused today, and provides a unique opportunity to jump-start change in the corridor.

Adjacent to the McLoughlin Way site is Oak Grove Square, an underutilized shopping development with two vacant former chain restaurants facing McLoughlin Boulevard, a sizeable parking lot, and a row of shops and offices.

Existing

Underutilized public land between McLoughlin Boulevard and McLoughlin Way

Existing

Oak Grove Square shown above McLoughlin Way
A small pathway, benches, and a bioswale could be designed on the lower part of the McLoughlin Way site benefitting businesses. Partnerships could be explored with adjacent businesses for shared maintenance agreements. In the longer-term, McLoughlin Way and Oak Grove Square could form a convenient location for an Oak Grove transit hub.
McLOUGHLIN WAY AND OAK GROVE SQUARE

Zoning changes, such as a reduced maximum setback, could foster a more pedestrian-friendly environment with opportunities for new businesses, pleasant connections between buildings, and office uses on second floors.

A tree-lined pathway from McLoughlin Way through the site to Oak Grove Boulevard would tie the areas together and provide opportunities for the clustering of complementary businesses.

A plaza between buildings facing McLoughlin Boulevard would provide leisure space to shoppers or office workers and connect McLoughlin to the paths in Oak Grove Square.

Pedestrian-oriented lighting and uniform Oak Grove signage could be installed to make the space feel safe, identifiable and unique.
COURTNEY AVENUE
Between Oak Grove Boulevard and Park Avenue lies a struggling strip mall on the west side of McLoughlin, with a large fenced-in grass lot behind it. A proposed two-story building could feature a retail/office mix with parking in the back instead of in the front. Entrances to shops could face the sidewalk, complemented by entrances in the back. A small community park with a playground and picnic tables could put the empty, fenced-in grass lot to use and create an east-west connection to surrounding apartment complexes and mobile home lots.
PROGRAMMING
RECOMMENDATIONS
Many of the specific projects discussed previously are long-term possibilities that depend on funding availability, regulatory approval, and/or political and public support. However, there are many things the community can do today to activate the neighborhood and address concerns.

**Community Events**

**Farmers Markets**
Farmers markets are a community-building tool and provide convenient access to healthy foods, in addition to creating a community destination. A market could also serve as an economic development tool, as market patrons will likely frequent other Oak Grove businesses and vendors will provide income to the market host. Along Rupert Drive, the Oak Grove United Methodist Church’s front parking lot provides a good opportunity for utilizing space that is largely vacant outside of Sunday service and weekday business hours.

**Block Parties**
Block parties are designed to build community by providing a forum for neighbors to meet one another. These events are also important for stimulating community activism, as neighbors can educate one another about community issues through information kiosks, demonstration projects or group activities. The block party could also take the form of an Oak Grove Boulevard street fair combined with extended shopping hours to simultaneously benefit local businesses. Utilizing existing assets like Rivervilla Park on the Willamette River or promoting an event to celebrate the upcoming Trolley Trail redevelopment are other convenient opportunities that promote and celebrate the neighborhood identity.

**Community Gardens**
Many residents have expressed interest in additional community gardening opportunities. Shared space agreements with area schools, churches and existing parks could be pursued for creating gardens on currently underutilized spaces. There are numerous programs and resources for learning about community gardening, including the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability’s Urban Growth Bounty program, the Portland Fruit Tree Project, and Oregon State University Extension Services. Using the public right of way and green spaces for new fruit- and nut-generating species is another form of community gardening that could beautify the streetscape and build community, while also producing local food.
BUSINESS COORDINATION
While business coordination can take on different levels of complexity, it can be as simple as neighboring businesses talking with one another, understanding each others’ needs and possibly discovering mutually beneficial goals.

- Business roundtables can be informal or membership-based groups where area businesses discuss issues in the local business community, including things like street cleaning, marketing storefront façade improvements or parking issues. The purpose is to discover how individual business resources can be maximized to address common needs.
- Standardizing business hours is a strategy that provides a convenience to the consumer and allows for area businesses to capitalize upon each others’ success. The concept of business clustering is not new - Oak Grove Boulevard and many businesses on McLoughlin have the opportunity to capitalize on these clusters when consumers can accomplish multiple errands at one time. This strategy cannot be effective if businesses have irregular hours.

ENHANCE SECURITY
One concern highlighted during various public outreach efforts was a fear that crime would increase due to Trolley Trail redevelopment, the incoming PMLR and population density increases. While this is not a certainty, there are several measures that the community can pursue to ensure that current safety levels are maintained or even improved.

- Activate the public space and street with more family and community-oriented activities. Similar to any neighborhood watch program, having eyes on the street can reduce the potential for crime. Currently, vacant businesses and blank facades provide a relatively barren streetscape.
- Add pedestrian-oriented lighting. Pedestrian-scale lighting helps improve pedestrian comfort, while also enhancing the character and identity of Oak Grove. The McLoughlin Corridor Study calls for street lighting along the entire corridor and pedestrian-scale lighting at boulevard intersections. Similar lighting along Oak Grove Boulevard will greatly improve nighttime walkability.
- Visible security around Park Avenue station area and along Trolley Trail. This can be a partnership with TriMet, Clackamas County police and/or neighborhood watch programs. Community volunteers can supplement security budgets that might have limited capacity.
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Policy Tools
While it is difficult to retroactively address development issues, policy mechanisms can guide future development and community change. Several of the possibilities described require governmental authority to implement, though community pressure can help move initiatives forward.

ADVOCATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING PLANS
Many existing plans for the Oak Grove area, including the McLoughlin Corridor Study and the Action Plan for a Sustainable Clackamas County, have recommended promising policies and projects that are not being fully implemented. It is the citizens’ responsibility to hold government accountable for these plans and advocate for their implementation.

DESIGN GUIDELINES/ZONING CODE OVERLAYS
Design guidelines and zoning code overlays are two related tools that Oak Grove can use to make sure new development and land uses are consistent with the public interest. Enforcement of specific design guidelines or zoning code overlays could benefit Oak Grove in a number of ways:

- Impervious Surface - Incorporate a stringent allowable percentage of impervious surface on new developments, based on type of land use. This could be paired with a requirement that all, or a significant percentage, of stormwater be retained or infiltrated onsite. Considering the large parking lots and impervious roof surfaces of McLoughlin big-box retail, this type of policy could have a big impact. These strategies are consistent with the Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design (LEED) Neighborhood Development rating system. The Clackamas County proposed zoning amendments related to water runoff management fall far short of this standard.

- Tree coverage – Ample tree coverage standards for new development could help to increase shading and habitat and could help to counter the urban heat island effect, even in highly impervious areas. Current Clackamas County code does not require street trees in front of building facades.

- Form-based code – A form-based approach to zoning influences physical form by illustrating expected outcomes both graphically and with photographs. The Clark County, WA Highway 99 Sub-Area Plan, which deals with a stretch of road very similar to McLoughlin, utilizes this approach. This type of code is highly dependent upon public participation and can be used to create active environments for pedestrians and/or bicyclists. It also can dictate building setbacks and parking locations to create more active streetscapes, promote mixed-use through building form and can be used to match architectural styles in order to preserve neighborhood character.

- Transparency - New development guidelines can include requirements for the percentage of window coverage on building fronts which will improve streetscape attractiveness and provide for more eyes on the street.

- Protecting affordable housing – New guidelines could mandate that some percentage of affordable housing is included in any new residential development project. This is especially important in Oak Grove, given the lower median income levels discussed previously.
Special Highway Designations

Special Transportation Area (STA)
A Special Transportation Area (STA) is a highway segment designation that may be applied when the segment bisects an existing/planned business district or community center. The designation is a way for communities to reduce the posted speed limit, giving more priority to pedestrians, bicyclists and transit. The accompanying design characteristics of an STA call for mixed-use, reduced building setbacks, ample sidewalks and crossings, convenient automobile and pedestrian circulation, and parking lots located behind or on the side of buildings.

As an area between a city limit and the urban growth boundary that is currently experiencing a pattern of strip development, the Oak Grove stretch of McLoughlin Boulevard is eligible for STA designation consideration. Just north of Oak Grove, the City of Milwaukie has already established an STA on a portion of McLoughlin.

Urban Business Area (UBA)
An Urban Business Area (UBA) is a highway segment designation that recognizes pockets of commercial activity or future nodes where vehicular accessibility is important to continued economic vitality. The designation prioritizes commercial clustering, shared parking lots, and multimodal access management strategies.

At this time, UBAs may only be located on statewide highways where speeds are less than 35 miles per hour; currently, McLoughlin has a posted speed of 40 miles per hour. However, the access management strategies employed in a UBA could certainly be of value to the Oak Grove community regardless of designation and the designation itself may be of interest at some point in the future.
**Small Business Development**

Enhancing local support of small businesses, through incentives and new policy programs, could have a significant impact on the Oak Grove Boulevard business climate. Current programs at the County level focus more on identifying state and federal assistance options and “how-to” resources for starting your own business. While these resources are valuable, policy changes may prove more effective in terms of economic development impacts.

- The Portland Development Commission’s business clustering concept seeks to develop inter-related business types in proximity to one another. A policy geared toward the development of Clackamas County neighborhood centers could be similarly effective. This type of program could bring many neighborhood services and entertainment options to the area including small grocers, bicycle shops, restaurants and other business types discussed previously. The cluster could be based upon the need to satisfy daily shopping needs in one location.

- Clackamas County currently operates its North Clackamas Enterprise Zone, which promotes business development in industrial zones through tax abatement incentives for the new investment. This type of program could also be offered for small businesses, providing financial incentive for businesses to locate in Oak Grove, while the County would not have to provide any direct funding. There is simply a delay in tax collection from these new businesses.

**Capital Improvement Projects List**

A community needs to be prepared with the knowledge of how they want their community to change. One outcome of the McLoughlin Area Plan will likely be project ideas to add to the county’s capital improvement projects list. This is an excellent platform for Oak Grove to assert some of its needs and desires.
IMPLEMENTATION
IMPLEMENTATION

The Neighborhood Center Plan focuses on identifying neighborhood improvements to address community goals and needs. The plan recommendations are aimed at initiating action but do not address how to fund these initiatives. The following mechanisms could help Oak Grove realize recommended projects and programs.

**Local Improvement Districts**

A Local Improvement District (LID) is a method by which a group of property owners can share in the cost of transportation infrastructure improvements or other types of public improvements. In Oregon, cities and counties have the authority to initiate an LID, or the public can petition for one. Clackamas County currently uses LIDs for roadway improvements, but LIDs can also be used for sidewalks and curbs, recreational facilities and street lighting. This is a viable financing strategy for Oak Grove improvements. There are ways to opt out of LID participation.

**Partnerships – Private, Non-profit and Public Entities**

Seeking out opportunities for creative partnerships to share physical, fiscal and technical resources is another method to accomplish neighborhood improvements. While the County may have a limited budget, they can pursue projects and coordinate improvements with private entities or non-profits.

The Oak Lodge Sanitary District’s Surface Water Management strategic planning is focused on cooperation with multiple partners to get the most value and community benefit from limited funds. Friends of Trees has a history of pursuing joint projects with government, utilities and other entities and could be a valuable partner for “greening” Oak Grove.

The proposed Fred Meyer plaza area is a great example of a potential public-private partnership. The community would gain valuable public space, while Fred Meyer would gain marketing exposure and goodwill that would likely lead to economic benefits.

**Business Improvement Districts**

The Business Improvement District (BID) model is used throughout the United States, typically funding programs like shared marketing efforts, maintenance and security services. BIDs do not usually fund infrastructure projects. There are limitations with BIDs due to annual revenue being capped at one percent of assessed property value. Oregon state law prohibits BIDs from being used in residential zones.

The Lloyd Transportation Management Association (LTMA) is a successful Portland example of a BID. The LTMA BID is a major source of funding for transportation demand management and public safety programs, as well as small transportation infrastructure projects. A BID could be a useful financing strategy in Oak Grove for the recommended business programming ideas.
**Urban Renewal Funding**

Urban renewal is typically funded through tax increment financing (TIF). TIF funds are derived from the increase in taxable property values over time within an urban renewal area (URA). These funds are used to implement improvements wanted by residents. A plan is needed to identify the desired improvements. Urban renewal projects can offer economic development and quality of life benefits if the community is engaged and the local governmental authority is responsive. Example urban renewal projects can include storefront façade and street improvements, sidewalks, lighting and plaza construction.

**Individual Project Resources**

Depending on type of project, additional resources may be available:

- **Metro’s Nature in Neighborhoods program** - The Park Avenue MAX station recently received a capital grant to green the new station area. While this funding is regionally distributed, future grant opportunities for “re-greening” neighborhoods are a possibility. In addition, restoration and enhancement grants seek to benefit habitat, while also providing environmental education.

- **Metro’s Regional Travel Options Grants program** – Utilizing federal funds from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, Metro works with non-profits and public agencies on programs and projects that change the way people travel.

- **Clackamas County Main Street program** – Reestablished in 2008, this program offers technical resources, training and proven strategies to help communities revitalize or preserve downtown commercial main streets. Oak Grove is eligible for participation.

- **Foundation support and grants at all levels of government** can be effective funding sources for one-time projects.
List of Appendices, References and Glossary
Appendices are available electronically on www.foothillplanning.com.

1. Existing Plans Review
   a. Existing Plans Review Memo
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2. Neighborhood Audit
   a. Neighborhood Audit Memo
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3. Public Meetings attended by Foothill Planning Associates
4. Interviews and Surveys
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5. Technical Advisory Committee - Members and Agendas
6. Community Walking Tour
   a. Summary of Walking Tour
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7. Communications and Press
   a. One Page Project Description (February 2010)
   b. Oregonian Article April 16 2010
   c. Oregonian Article May 22 2010
8. Presentation to Oak Lodge Community Council – May 26, 2010
   a. Powerpoint Presentation
   b. Poster Boards
   c. Open House and Presentation Feedback Memo
   d. Comment cards
9. Presentation to Portland State University – June 2, 2010
   a. Powerpoint Presentation
   b. One Page Project Description (June 2010)


Clackamas County and Oregon Department of Transportation; Department of Transportation and Development and Corridors Program. (1999) McLoughlin Corridor Land Use & Transportation Study. Salem: State of Oregon.


REFERENCES


All GIS data are from RLIS unless otherwise noted.
All photos taken by Foothill Planning unless otherwise noted.
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