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St. Johns/Lombard Plan: Neighborhood Walks

Zimmer Gunsul Frasca (ZGF) Partnership

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St. Johns / Lombard Plan
Neighborhood Walks

June 20, 2002

Submitted to:
City of Portland,
Bureau of Planning
By
Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership
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Acknowledgements

Portland Bureau of Planning
Vera Katz, Mayor, Commissioner-in-charge
Gil Kelley, Planning Director
Deborah Stein, Principal Planner
Linda Peterson, AICP, Area and Neighborhood Planning Manager

Project Staff
Barry Manning, Senior Planner, Project Leader
Marguerite Feuersanger, City Planner II
Anne-Elizabeth Riis, City Planner
Rich Newlands, Transportation Planner
Mauricio Leclerc, Transportation Intern

In Cooperation With
Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership
Charles Kelley and Trent Thelen

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Zimmer Gunsul Frasca Partnership:
Patricia Parola, Stefee Knudsen, Sarah Nurmela,
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St. Johns/Lombard Citizen Working Group
Stephen Duh, Gerry Howard, Elizabeth Humphrey,
Tom Kloster, Peter Laughingwolf, Paul Maresh,
Rick Merck, Patt Opdyke, Trevor Nelson,
Barbara Quinn, Penny Rose, Steve Weir,
Laura Woodruff
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Introduction

As part of the St. Johns/Lombard Plan process, residents, business people, and other interested parties participated in a series of four neighborhood walks. The walks were sponsored by the Portland Bureau of Planning, and conducted with Zimmer Gunsul Frasca (ZGF) Partnership, a local architecture/planning/design firm, during the spring of 2002. The neighborhood walks were designed to:

- Allow people to explore parts of the St. Johns/Lombard Plan study area at the street level in detail;
- Provide people with an opportunity to share their views and ideas about the St. Johns/Lombard Plan area and its future with each other and City staff; and
- Provide planning staff with valuable input to help in the creation of an urban design concept and vision statement for the St. Johns/Lombard Plan.

The walk areas are identified on the map shown.
Introduction, continued

Nearly 100 community members participated in the walks. Participants were asked to form groups for the walk, and respond to a number of questions related to issues and specific locations along the walk route. General comments from participants were also welcomed. Staff from the City and ZGF Partnership accompanied walk participants to facilitate discussions, document participants’ impressions of the neighborhood, and record and sketch ideas for future change. At the conclusion of each walk, participants reconvened and discussed the ideas that were generated. Participants also filled out brief questionnaires about each walk area.

This document is a summary of the walk results that illustrates many of the ideas and comments heard from walks participants. This information is organized by walk area; it includes photographs and many of the sketches generated during the walks.

A companion summary of the walk results includes a compilation of the notes recorded by the note takers during each walk, as well as citizen comments from the questionnaires. That document is available from the Bureau of Planning by request and on the Bureau’s web site:
http://www.planning.ci.portland.or.us

What’s Next?

The information gathered during the walks and follow up workshop will be used by planning staff and the project consultant team in crafting an urban design concept and refining a vision statement for the St. Johns/Lombard Plan. An urban design concept and vision summary report is anticipated in fall/winter 2002.

For more information on the St. Johns/Lombard Plan, please contact:

Barry Manning, Senior Planner, Project Leader
Portland Bureau of Planning
1900 SW 4th Avenue, Suite 4100
Portland, Oregon 97201
Phone: 503/823-7700
Fax: 503/823-7800
TDD: 503/823-6868
E-Mail: stjohnslombard@ci.portland.or.us
Neighborhood Walk Areas

Lombard East  Lombard Central  Downtown St. Johns  Cathedral Park/Riverfront
Neighborhood Walk Areas

Lombard East  Lombard Central  Downtown St. Johns  Cathedral Park/Riverfront
Neighborhood Walk Areas

- Lombard East
- Lombard Central
- Downtown St. Johns
- Cathedral Park/Riverfront
Neighborhood Walk Areas

Lombard East  Lombard Central  Downtown St. Johns  Cathedral Park/Riverfront
Commonalities

A number of themes and issues emerged on the walks that have applications throughout the St. Johns/Lombard plan area. This section discusses some of these commonalities.

**Common Themes**

- Enhance the Public Realm
- Improve the Transportation System
- Improve Existing Development
- Foster Compatible Development
Enhance the Public Realm

These sidewalks were identified as good examples:

Residential sidewalk including trees, a planted parking strip, and well maintained front yards.

Commercial area with generous sidewalks, trees, and active use ground floor retail.

Lombard East    Lombard Central    Downtown St. Johns    Cathedral Park/Riverfront
Trees were considered an asset - they improve the appearance of the street. The regular pruning and maintenance of street trees are necessary in some areas. Appropriate species selection and ongoing maintenance would enhance the streetscape and improve visibility of business signage.
More trees are desired along Lombard. Ideally, trees should be placed to minimize conflicts with business signage and utility lines. The trees cut to accommodate utility wires (shown above) were not visually appealing to walk participants.
Enhance the Public Realm

Pocket Parks

The desire for additional green public space was mentioned on each of the four walks. Some of the existing vacant parcels were identified as an opportunity for pocket parks.
Enhance the Public Realm

Alleys

Alleys were viewed as a mixed blessing. Those that were well maintained and visible from nearby properties were seen as assets; others were considered unsafe.
Enhance the Public Realm

Keeping Streets Clean

Participants felt that better litter control and screening of commercial trash/utility areas would improve the streetscape.
Improve the Transportation System

Bus Stop

Some bus stops do not include waiting area amenities. New shelters and benches would make the stops more appealing for transit riders and pedestrians.
Improve the Transportation System

Street Crossings

Street crossings were frequently mentioned as a concern on the walks. Key locations identified include those that assist school children and serve other important pedestrian routes and community functions.
Improve Existing Development

**Screening**

Participants noted that some existing development in the plan area would benefit from landscaped screening measures.

People would prefer that chain link be used less and other security and visual barriers be used.
Improve Existing Development

Screening

Parking for retail business should be screened in ways to fit in with residential areas. In some cases parking requirements may be excessive. Perhaps opportunities for shared parking should be explored.

Lombard East     Lombard Central     Downtown St. Johns     Cathedral Park/Riverfront
Signage clutter was identified as an issue. More uniform signage would be preferable.
Foster Compatible Development

There are many examples in North Portland where different housing types coexist. Design compatibility is key to achieving successful infill projects.
Foster Compatible Development

Buildings to Face Street

Tall retail windows are thought to be valuable, where people inside are visible.

Buildings with windows offer more opportunities for people to watch the street.

Walk attendees recognized the value of transparent street frontages. Big windows add life to the street making a safe place for pedestrians.

Lombard East    Lombard Central    Downtown St. Johns    Cathedral Park/Riverfront
Unique Attributes

Lombard East

The Lombard East area contains some of the best retail and housing development along North Lombard Street. Accessible by pedestrians and automobiles, it has many components of a great main street.

The existing commercial area along North Lombard between Fiske and Portsmouth provides valuable services to the surrounding neighborhoods. Community members would like to extend and enhance the pedestrian character and mix of uses along this section of Lombard.

Areas east of Fiske have great potential to capitalize on the mature trees, small-scale commercial buildings, and housing near Columbia Park. Multi-family housing, compatible with existing commercial and residential buildings, was envisioned here.

The area west of Portsmouth has developed primarily with auto-oriented uses and services. The scale of this development and the street traffic are not always friendly to pedestrians. Opportunities for new housing and commercial development were identified that could improve the pedestrian environment over time.
Unique Attributes

Themes:

- Foster a More Pedestrian-Friendly Main Street
- Reduce Pedestrian/Vehicle Conflicts
- Integrate New Housing and Mixed Use Development
- Think Creatively about Opportunity Sites
Foster a More Pedestrian-Friendly Main Street

There was general support for a pedestrian-friendly main street from Fiske to Portsmouth. This building was seen as an example of good design, incorporating commercial and residential uses.
Foster a More Pedestrian-Friendly Main Street

Buildings could be made to front and provide entries onto Lombard. This would enhance the pedestrian environment.
Integrate New Housing and Mixed-Use Development

This section near North Newman Street has a mix of residential and commercial uses. Many felt that more housing in this area would be appropriate.
Integrate New Housing and Mixed-Use Development

Build Housing That Fits

Many felt that housing should be set back along Lombard to allow generous, well planted, sidewalk areas. Design measures could also allow taller housing structures to fit in with smaller homes nearby. Vacant sites provide the opportunity to build more housing, or mixed-use projects that may include housing with retail at ground level.
Integrate New Housing and Mixed-Use Development

Build Housing That Fits

Row houses were seen as an option that could fit with the older auto oriented retail businesses along Lombard.
Integrate New Housing and Mixed-Use Development

Transit-Oriented Development

Before

After

New housing and mixed use development would be well-served by transit. Some envision a trolley line on Lombard or improvements to transit that would increase the amount of services and amenities along North Lombard.
Integrate New Housing and Mixed Use Development

North Portsmouth Commercial Center

Some hoped that the intersection of North Portsmouth and Lombard could develop with more pedestrian oriented businesses and street improvements. Suggestions included incorporating new offices, stores, and a theater.
Think Creatively about Opportunity Sites

In the future, the Eagles Lodge could be redeveloped to improve its pedestrian orientation, by adding a mix of uses and design enhancements.
Think Creatively about Opportunity Sites

In the short term, the parking lot at the Eagles Lodge could be enhanced with landscaping and used for a weekly open-air market or other on-going temporary uses.
Between Portsmouth and St. Johns, businesses have provided the surrounding neighborhoods with a variety of retail uses and services. Much of the development is oriented to provide convenient auto access. Some offer pedestrian improvements along the street, while others do not; the lack of pedestrian facilities is a concern to many.

The railroad cut and the Peninsula Crossing Trail have the potential to connect North Lombard to other trails and neighborhoods - an exciting opportunity recognized by the community.

Near the railroad cut, North Ida Street is at the crossroads of many trips in the area. This important pedestrian and vehicle crossing is the source of much congestion.

North Lombard between North Ida and North Buchanan is narrower than other sections of Lombard. Many hope that the scale of the street and development along it will be maintained over time.
Unique Attributes

Themes:

- Improve the Pedestrian Environment
- Integrate Housing and Mixed-Use Development
- Improve the Railroad Cut
- Reduce Pedestrian/Vehicle Conflicts
- Accommodate Autos at Key Locations
Improve the Pedestrian Environment

Storefront areas could offer pedestrian amenities while screening the parking. Aesthetic improvements such as street furniture, decorative paving, and landscaping could create a more pleasant place for customers and pedestrians.

Before

After
Improve the Pedestrian Environment

Some businesses have covered their windows, compromising the aesthetics of both the street and building frontage. Windows allow “eyes on the street” and create a safer environment; they can enhance public safety and have visual benefits as well.
Integrate Housing and Mixed-Use Development

The area between North Ida and North Polk Avenues was recognized for its unique qualities: narrow street and compatibility between commercial and residential uses. New development in this area should be designed to respect these qualities.
Integrate Housing and Mixed-Use Development

There are vacant or undeveloped sites around North Ida Avenue and the railroad cut. This area offers opportunities for infill development serving both pedestrian and people arriving by car.
Improve the Railroad Cut

Participants wanted to investigate ways to improve the crossing.
Improve the Railroad Cut

Participants had many suggestions for improving the bridge over the railroad cut.

- Abutment pilasters with a marked crossing of Peninsula Trail.
- Arches built with residential and retail redevelopment.
- Build pedestrian signals into new pilasters of the bridge.
Improve the Railroad Cut

Peninsula Crossing Trail

Developing housing and other uses along and above the Peninsula Crossing Trail could improve public safety. One idea was to develop housing or live/work areas nearby, to provide “eyes on the green space” and take advantage of the visual benefits of the Peninsula Crossing Trail.
Improve the Railroad Cut

Peninsula Crossing Trail

There were a number of ideas for how to enhance the entrance to the Peninsula Crossing Trail. Adding street furniture and signage could enhance the connection to Lombard and better mark the trail.
Improve the Railroad Cut

Adjacent Development

Development adjacent to the railroad cut should recognize its amenity as a green space. Future buildings could face onto this green space and take advantage of the views and access.

Before

After
Reduce Pedestrian/Vehicle Conflicts

Participants considered ways to reduce vehicle and pedestrian conflicts along North Lombard intersections. This roundabout idea may work in selected locations.
Accommodate Autos at Key Locations

Participants generally acknowledged the need for some auto-oriented businesses in the area. It was hoped that their design could better complement nearby residential and pedestrian-oriented retail uses along North Lombard.
Unique Attributes

Downtown St. Johns

Downtown St. Johns has a wonderful scale and visual character, but its vitality could be improved. Many believe that additional residential development around the downtown could help foster a more active commercial district. Connections between the downtown, surrounding neighborhoods, and the riverfront area call for careful consideration.

St. Johns has many civic institutions - some consider it the heart of the peninsula. Public plazas, parks, the library, James John Elementary School, and views of the west hills and the St. Johns Bridge are tremendous assets that provide a strong foundation for revitalization of the area. How to make the most of these assets, and ensure convenient connections and access, will be an important consideration in the development of the St. Johns/Lombard Plan.
Unique Attributes

Themes:

- Foster a Vital Downtown
- Improve Gateways and Connections
- Reduce Pedestrian/Vehicle Conflicts
- Enhance Public Gathering Places and Amenities
- Look for Development Opportunities
Foster a Vital Downtown

Lombard Street

The street frontage is wonderfully diverse and unique, but could be more vital as a commercial area. New housing was seen as a way to enliven the area without compromising the existing frontage. Housing could be built behind the storefronts to increase the resident population living and shopping downtown. The street could be enhanced with curb extensions and lighting to improve the pedestrian experience.
Foster a Vital Downtown

North Ivanhoe East of Philadelphia.

The north side of North Ivanhoe has a pedestrian oriented retail frontage.

Many wanted the south side of North Ivanhoe to develop in a more pedestrian oriented way.
Several ideas emerged for the redesign of this intersection. One idea was to configure the intersection to make safer pedestrian crossings at curb extensions and to control vehicle turning movements. Another was to use “Ivy Island” as pedestrian refuge, extending the crossing opportunities and adding landscaping.
Participants discussed how to better mark North Burlington as a direct access route to the Willamette River from Downtown St. Johns. Planting a different species of tree, or limbing-up existing trees, would allow filtered views of the St. Johns Bridge, the North Precinct, and North Burlington Street, and improve visibility of the access route.
Reduce Pedestrian and Vehicle Conflicts

North Ivanhoe and Richmond

Pedestrian safety is a concern at this and other similar intersections with free right turns. It was suggested that it be modified to eliminate free right turns, provide crosswalks, curb extensions, and possibly include a traffic signal.
Reduce Vehicle and Pedestrian Conflicts

Ivanhoe East of Philadelphia

Before

This street has limited crossing opportunities and was identified as a safety concern, particularly for children. The organization of street lights and trees, and new pavement materials, patterns, or markings could be used to identify pedestrian crossings.

After
Enhance Public Gathering Places and Amenities

**Civic Center**

Participants mentioned the need for visual connections between James John Elementary, the library, downtown, and other community related services in St. Johns.

There were a number of suggestions for how the playground could become a more pleasing visual connection between North Lombard and the school.
Enhance Public Gathering Places and Amenities

The Plaza

Participants shared several ideas for improving the aesthetics and safety of the plaza. Ideas included: opening views to North Lombard, reworking Philadelphia Street to make it two way, and enhancing the vista from the St. Johns Bridge to downtown St. Johns.
Enhance Public Gathering Places and Amenities

The Plaza

The walks generated a number of exciting new ideas for the plaza’s use and design; as well as how to transform this key entryway into downtown St. Johns.
Possibilities for reconfiguring North Philadelphia and North Lombard, and relocating the plaza were discussed.
Look for Development Opportunities

Ivanhoe West of Philadelphia

Many parking lots fronting North Ivanhoe serve businesses on North Lombard. Some felt that the parking was a good use, considering truck traffic, and needed to remain. People generally supported the option to build over or around parking areas over time. The street crossings of North Ivanhoe could be improved with curb extensions to slow vehicle traffic.
Look for Development Opportunities

Racquet Center

Redevelopment of large sites presents the opportunity for significant change to support downtown businesses and improve pedestrian circulation. It was mentioned that the path along the south side of the Racquet Center facility feels unsafe. A paved and landscaped pedestrian promenade extending to the elementary school was suggested as a possible improvement. Some mentioned the idea of converting the Racquet Center to an aquatic center. Others felt this and other large sites offered an opportunity for new housing or mixed-use development.
Look for Development Opportunities

North Kellogg Street was identified for its redevelopment potential. Participants mentioned the need for new housing and retail, development that could help revitalize downtown St. Johns. Maintaining parking in this area was a concern to many.
Unique Attributes

Cathedral Park

Cathedral Park is blessed with a slope between downtown St. Johns and the Willamette River. As a result, many of the properties have tremendous views of the west hills, the St. Johns Bridge, Cathedral Park, and the Willamette River. At the same time, some of the streets leading to the river are very steep, and some are not paved and lack sidewalks.

The residential areas are generally well maintained, and feature a mix of housing types. Employment and housing are seen as desirable in the area close to the river; integrating these land uses will require careful consideration. Participants voiced support for maintaining industrial/employment opportunities. However, good design and screening is a key concern.

There are a number of opportunities for improved river access. Cathedral Park, the Water Pollution Control Lab, sandy beaches, restored riverbanks, a boat ramp, and docks, benefit from being near the St. Johns Bridge. Connecting the riverfront to downtown St. Johns is a key opportunity recognized by community members.
Unique Attributes

Themes:

- Provide Clear and Direct Connections
- Foster Diverse Housing Opportunities
- Develop Underutilized Properties
- Maintain and Attract Employment Opportunities
- Celebrate the River
- Celebrate the St. Johns Bridge
Provide Clear and Direct Connections

Burlington and Railroad Tracks

Participants discussed how to integrate the track crossing of North Burlington with sidewalk and street furnishings to mark this street as an important connection to downtown St. Johns.
Steep, unimproved streets restrict pedestrian and vehicular access. Some favored paving or other improvements to create better connections; others felt they could be best used as green space. The white oak tree on this street was seen as an asset that should be preserved.
The railroad track could be improved to provide newer pedestrian/bicycle connections; linking Cathedral park to regional trails, such as the Peninsula Crossing Trail and 40 Mile Loop. Some thought that the existing tracks could also be used for a trolley to downtown Portland.
Foster Diverse Housing Opportunities

Housing that conforms to the area’s unique topography was seen as desirable. New housing should take advantage of views of the St. Johns Bridge and west hills through a step-down design.
Foster Diverse Housing Opportunities

There was a concern about the scale and fit of housing northwest of the St. Johns Bridge. The existing base of this building was thought to conflict with nearby residential uses. Addition of landscaping and modification to the lower floor could improve compatibility with surrounding residential uses.
Foster Diverse Housing Opportunities

Participants liked much of the new multi-family housing in the area. They were supportive of additional row houses and moderately sized apartment buildings with compatible design.
Participants discussed the possibility of including the Mar Com property, an industrial area located west of Cathedral Park, in the plan. Residential, retail, and employment were possible future uses discussed for the site.
Maintain and Attract Employment Opportunities

Participants mentioned the need for family-wage jobs in the area. It was suggested that major employers could locate here along with other uses. Residential, commercial, mixed-use, and industrial development can function harmoniously with compatible design.

Clean up the street frontages and develop businesses that complement those that are existing.

One idea was to build a Portland Community College Work Force Training Center to serve industrial businesses.
Celebrate the River

Water Activities

Walk attendees recognized the potential of a cleaner Willamette River at Cathedral Park, and supported new beach access and opportunities for swimming and other recreational activities.
Celebrate the River

Continuous Greenway

Walk participants liked the greenway path next to the Water Pollution Control Lab. It provides river views that could be augmented with structured overlooks. Participants suggested expanding public access and greenway along the riverfront.
Celebrate the River

Riverfront

There were many ideas for the riverfront. Participants mentioned creating new river access pathways and developing restaurants and river related businesses at select locations.
Pedestrian amenities, landscaping, and parking were mentioned as possible ways to improve the area under the St. Johns Bridge.
Celebrate the St. Johns Bridge

Under the Bridge

Walk attendees identified possible improvements to the area under the bridge in Cathedral Park. Ideas included building additional amphitheaters and addressing landscape furnishings such as seating, lighting, and picnic facilities.
Summary Maps

Preliminary Ideas From the Neighborhood Walks map:
The Preliminary Ideas From the Neighborhood Walks map summarizes some of the key transportation and land use ideas and characteristics identified and discussed on the St. Johns/Lombard Plan neighborhood walks. It will serve as a basis for more detailed land use and transportation plans for the area in the concept development stage of the planning process.
Summary Maps

Lombard East  Lombard Central  Downtown St. Johns  Cathedral Park/Riverfront
WALK #1, Lombard East: This walk focused on N. Lombard Street between N. Woolesey and N. Wall Street.  
Meeting Place: Columbia Cottage, 4339 N. Lombard  
When: May 4, 2002  
10:00 AM to 1:00 PM

WALK #2, Lombard Central: This walk focused on N. Lombard Street between N. Wall Street and N. Polk Avenue.  
Meeting Place: St. Johns Family Center, 6443 N. Lombard  
When: May 8, 2002  
6:00 PM to 9:00 PM
Summary Maps

WALK #3, Downtown St. Johns: This walk focused on downtown St. Johns between N. Richmond and N St. Louis, including N. Lombard Street and the immediate surrounding area.
Meeting Place: Pioneer United Methodist Church; 7528 N. Charleston
When: May 18, 2002
10:00 AM to 1:30 PM

WALK #4, Cathedral Park/Riverfront: This walk covered the areas between downtown St. Johns and the Willamette River.
Meeting Place: Water Pollution Control Lab, 6543 N. Burlington
When: May 22, 2002
6:00 PM to 9:00 PM