Planning Commission Meeting
Springwater Trail Room
Gresham City Hall
October 13, 2014 6:30 p.m.

I. Opening/Citizen Comments

A regular session of the Gresham Planning Commission was called to order by Chair Richard Anderson on the 13th of October, 2014, at 6:30 PM in the Springwater Trail Conference Room at Gresham City Hall, located at 1333 NW Eastman Parkway, Gresham Oregon. Minutes were prepared by Tammy Richardson.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Richard Anderson Bill Bailey, Chair Hermann Colas, Jr. Darren Hippenstiel Clint Holly Jef Kaiser
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	Paul Drechsler
STAFF PRESENT:	David Berniker, Urban Design & Planning Brian Martin, Urban Design & Planning
COUNCIL LIAISONS PRESENT:	Councilor French
OTHERS PRESENT:	Metro Councilor Shirley Craddick

II. General Comment Period

No general public comments were presented.

III. Discussion/Presentation Items

Project Update: Powell-Division Transit & Development Project

Brian Martin, Senior Comprehensive Planner presented an update on the Powell-Division Transit & Development project. This project is a joint partnership with Metro, TriMet, City of Portland, Oregon Department of Transportation and Multnomah County. The project will study whether high-capacity transit could be added between Gresham and Portland via the Powell-Division corridor, including destinations to downtown Gresham and Mt. Hood Community College that would enhance transit to get people to jobs and education opportunities more efficiently.

Mr. Martin described the station opportunity areas selected for in-depth study. There are eight opportunity areas, three of which are in Gresham and which are the focus of the presentation. The three Gresham station opportunity areas are Division/182nd, Division/Eastman Parkway & Division/Main Avenue, and Stark and 242nd (Hogan). The purpose of the upcoming opportunity area planning is to develop community visions and action plans that will identify land uses, development types and investments that are desired by those who live and work in and around these areas. Also, it will provide opportunities to develop strategies to create thriving mixed-income communities and would support economic development.

Discussion comments included:

- Enhance current services versus replacement – benefit of the project is faster travel times with limited stops.

- Park and rides – not a lot of opportunity for parking; appears to be more opportunity for , parking areas on Powell than on Division.

- Provide parking for north-south access points. Locate park and rides where they would best benefit north/south connections – need key north-south connection points.

- Look at some type of "Express" ticketing where bus driver does not have to check a large number of tickets at each stop. For example, electronic scanning.

- The project should in some way anticipate long-term opportunities of gravel pit area. Would benefit City to know long-term and future plans for the gravel pit outside of the project.

- There are distinct different characteristics at the 3 opportunity areas with three different alternatives. Good pedestrian connections are missing and these will make it better.

- Need to find ways of making transit faster – most efficient way to improve performance of system is dedicated traffic lanes or routes. However, like train tracks, can be dividers between north/south connections; access and safety are important details.

- Strategy for Division seems to be better location than Powell -- hits more of the residential areas. Powell has a lot of natural areas on both sides with high density residential in pockets.

- Unsure how station areas themselves become an opportunity. Look at character of them and where is best place to do it – pull outs vs. "kiss and rides" etc.

- Downtown to Hogan Road options have the opportunity to be an employment focus.

- Good to have reverse commuting options – travel east to job versus west to Downtown Portland. Like that goal as well as educational piece.

- Challenges for north-south neighborhood connectors particularly Hogan.

- Like the next study to look at the difference between campus nodes (Port of Portland property; hospital) and how campuses can connect together; where would the sweet spot be for a station area.

- Downtown informed by past design district discussions and plans.

- Look at ways to close gaps and provide new sidewalk/pedestrian connections.

- Determine most important connectors; apply Federal funding in the right place.

- Look for relationships and opportunities to extend Blue line to Hogan.

- The 3 areas identified for study are good ones.

- People will use transit if it is easy to access; essential whatever final product is should be self-contained and able to work.

- Funding is a necessary component of the project outcome. Keep decision-makers diligent and focused.

2015 Council Work Plan Discussion and Centers Strategy Presentation

David Berniker gave an overview of where we are now with the work program. Past projects identified as desired work plan items include the Central Rockwood Plan, Sign Code, Tree Code update, Civic Neighborhood Design Standards, Non-conforming Uses, Lighting, and the Gresham Butte Scenic View project. He said that is the list for this year, but not all of the projects made it to the adopted Council Work Plan. Some of those that did are not yet completed and will be carried over into 2015. He said not all the projects deserve the same level of attention in moving forward.

Mr. Berniker said he feels the Central Rockwood Plan is important and thinks it should be carried forward. With limited resources it is important to prioritize the projects and some will

need to be put on the back burner. Although the Civic Neighborhood Design Standards is important, it may not be the best time for that project, and the proposed Centers Strategy project would focus on promoting desired development and removing obstacles for development in the three Centers – Downtown, Civic Neighborhood, and Rockwood Town Center.

David Berniker noted that both the Tree Code update and the Gresham Butte Scenic View projects are in process and will be carried over into the 2015 work plan.

David Berniker presented an overview of the proposed Centers Strategy project, which he is working on in partnership with Eric Schmidt, Community Development Director. He said now is the time to begin looking at the opportunities to enhance development in Gresham's Station Centers. This strategy was shared with the service area managers and was well received. It is still underway and is continuing to be fine-tuned and will then hopefully be presented to Council.

David said we are coming out of the recession and development activity is on the rise. There has been a significant upswing in development in all the metro area cities. East County is on the tail end of the wave and we need to find a way to get on board and be more proactive. Gresham's goal is to create a great place for the people of Gresham. Even though this project focuses on the Station Centers, it is about the entire city of Gresham. Gresham is still lagging behind other cities.

Commissioner Anderson noted that in Gresham land values are low, educational attainment is low, and there is a longer commute to higher wage jobs.

David said one of the challenges is how to maximize development on a site, and showed some examples.

Commissioner Holly asked what is being done to incentivize people building to that maximum.

David said that information is part of the presentation. Design plays an important role. He noted that some really great projects have come in for review by the Design Commission.

Issues that have been identified by stakeholders are that development is expensive as well as complicated. What we've heard from the development community is the need for an emphasis on design, for both large and small projects. In addition to the traded sector businesses, Gresham needs to focus on recruitment of office, retail, and housing. David said the development process tends to impede development and there is a need to re-energize and reorganize the public-private partnerships. He noted that Gresham has been working on these issues over the past few years and there have been some good efforts to make the city a better place to live and develop in. Some of those accomplishments have been the Downtown Storefront Improvement Program, Center for the Arts fountain, and Vertical Housing Tax Credits. The Design Standards that have been adopted for Downtown, Rockwood and Corridor Commercial development, and for Multi-Family Residential housing have led to good designs and better projects.

David Berniker said what this project is basically trying to do is look at the three centers in a more comprehensive way. Projects get put on the work program for many different reasons. With limited resources, that being staff time and funding, the question is how to best focus our efforts.

He believes the Centers Strategy attempts to catalyze economic opportunities, urban form, and social and cultural opportunities. One of the great things about Gresham is the cultural diversity. David said the process is intended to identify how Gresham looks within the context of the larger region.

David spoke about the two main categories of the strategy -- "Low Hanging Fruit" and "Bigger Ticket" items -- and described their components. He said the low hanging fruit category will include process improvements, Code updates and identification of incentives. He noted that the bigger ticket items are things that are part of the strategy that the City hopes can be looked at in a broader scope and likely a longer time frame, including the potential move of City Hall to downtown Gresham. David said Community Development and Urban Design & Planning, through this strategy, is proposing to get proactive, and that means going out and reaching out to local/regional contacts and invite them out to Gresham to look at what we have. There will be an aggressive marketing plan.

Brian Martin said the City has spent some time planning these areas and the idea is to pick out key outcomes we need to achieve in the next year to three years and figure out how to get there.

David Berniker said the hope is to get this project on the Council Work Plan for 2015, in addition to some of the work plan items that are being carried over from this year. It would be a multi-year project and he feels it is the right time to present this strategy.

Commission comments included:

- An important goal is to cut process timelines and be able to predict SDCs.
- There should be concentrated efforts on the Downtown in Powell and Division.
- Rockwood needs to be a key focus point. Make Rockwood something people want to come to; will remove the stigma that people have about Gresham.
- Acknowledge that there are already a huge amount of resources going into Rockwood right now with Urban Renewal. Priorities are in the right place there. Augment other areas.
- The Station Centers "necklace" makes a lot of sense.
- Shorter, more-focused Council Work Plan makes more sense.
- Focus on incentives to get developers interested.
- Pursue public/private partnerships – they are key to development.
- Look at corridors next to the centers.
- Look into public/private co-op for the Arts Plaza.

- Agree there is a need to tell Gresham's story. Those that are here are here for the community; figure out how to get the message out.

- Emphasis on getting people out to Gresham to see what we are all about. It's a great community with lots of cultural diversity.

- Many opportunities in Gresham to capitalize on.

The Commission agreed that the Centers Strategy project would be a great one to propose for the 2015 Council Work Plan.

David Berniker said he will come back to the Commission with follow up information on this project after presenting to Council.

IV. Other Business / Adjournment

September 8, 2014 Planning Commission minutes: Commissioner Bailey moved to approve the September 8, 2014 minutes as written. Second by Commission Hippenstiel. Motion passed 4:0 with Commissioners Holly and Kaiser abstaining due to their absence from that meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Chair

Tammy J. Richardson
Recording Secretary

FEB 23, 2015
Date

3/10/2015
Date