

Civic Neighborhood Vision and Design District Update

Issues and Opportunities Summary

Project goal

This project, which covers the area bounded by Burnside, Eastman, Division and Wallula (212th), will:

- Revisit the vision and goals for Civic Neighborhood.
- Update development rules to remove obstacles to development and create design guidelines and standards specific to Civic Neighborhood consistent with the vision/goals.
- Develop new rules and processes that are clear to applicants, staff and the general public.
- Create rules that balance the need for clarity, flexibility, quality design and financial feasibility.

The project will be complete by fall 2017.

Why are we doing this?

The current vision and development rules for Civic Neighborhood are more than 20 years old. This project provides an opportunity to update the vision and ensure land-use and design rules and processes match the vision and encourage desired and well-designed development.

Process

This project will be conducted in four major phases.

1. Research and Analysis

- Evaluate current rules
- Identify issues and opportunities
- Research history and new ideas

2. Vision and Goals Update

- Discuss community aspirations, development feasibility and existing conditions
- Work with community to establish vision and goals

3. Code strategy alternatives

- Consider alternative strategies for development and design rule changes to implement vision/goals
- Select preferred approach(es)

4. Development Code drafting, review and approval process

- Draft rule changes
- Review with public/hold hearings
- Seek Council approval



Current Vision and Development Rules

1995 Civic Neighborhood Plan

The City of Gresham in 1995 approved the Gresham Civic Neighborhood Plan and a Plan District for the 130-acre area that was intended to “demonstrate that development of mixed uses at relatively high densities is not only feasible in Gresham, but can offer advantages not found in conventional suburban development.”

Benefits would include development near transit, good connections with adjacent neighborhoods and development that generates fewer automobile trips.

Goals for the site (edited for brevity) included:

- Reduce automobile trips (quality transit and an environment that encourages walking).
- Promote safe and efficient access by and between all travel modes (car, transit, walking, biking, etc.).
- Allow a wide range of uses and activities developed to urban densities. Uses should complement those already established nearby.
- Investigate and implement cost-effective measures to reduce automobile travel.



Image from 1995 Civic Neighborhood Plan

- Provide effective connections to adjacent neighborhoods with bike routes and footpaths.
- Maximize potential transit ridership through an appropriate mix and density of uses developed in the Civic Neighborhood, and by providing easy access to transit.
- Set a precedent for sustainable development in regional centers.

Current land-use districts

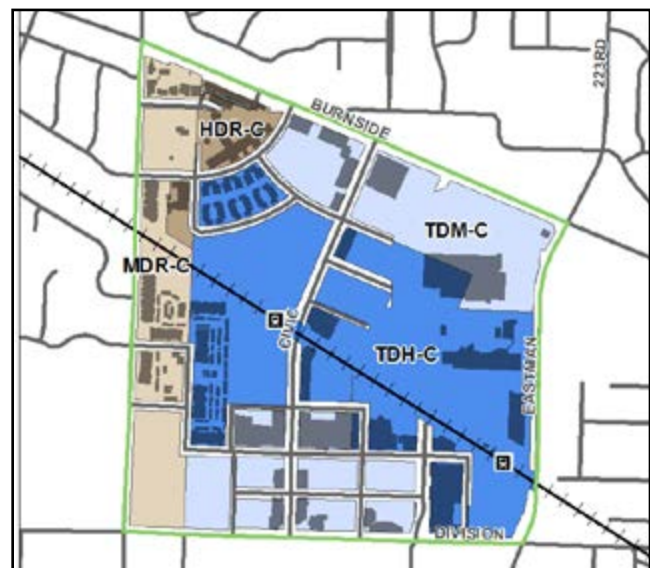
The Civic Neighborhood Plan District includes four sub-districts, as described in the current Development Code.

Transit Development District - Medium Density - Civic (TDM-C)

Primary uses permitted include commercial, retail, and service uses occupying the ground floor area and all or a portion of the second story. Also permitted are mixed-use and multi-family developments with a minimum density of 24 units per net acre. Larger buildings are encouraged in these areas, with parking under, behind or to the sides of buildings.

Transit Development District - High Density - Civic (TDH-C)

Primary uses permitted include office buildings, retail, and service uses. Also permitted are mixed-use developments and multi-family residential at a minimum density of 30 units per net acre. Larger buildings are encouraged in these areas, with parking



Land-use districts (in current Development Code)

under, behind or to the sides of buildings. Free-standing retail uses are allowed up to 10,000 square feet of floor area.

Current Vision and Development Rules

Current land-use districts, continued

High-Density Residential - Civic (HDR-C)

Areas designated HDR-C are high-density residential neighborhoods with a minimum of 24 units per net acre. Secondary uses include neighborhood commercial uses, smaller-scale offices and neighborhood parks. Small free-standing Office-Commercial uses are allowed within mixed-use developments, provided they do not occupy more than 50 percent of the residential floor area, and that minimum residential densities are met. Retail uses in free-standing buildings are not permitted, but are allowed within mixed-use buildings, provided they do

not occupy more than 10,000 square feet of floor area, and that minimum residential densities are met.

Moderate-Density Residential - Civic (MDR-C)

Areas designated MDR-C are moderate-density residential uses with a minimum density of 17 units per net acre. Typical forms of housing include row houses, apartments and condominiums. Mixed-use and neighborhood-scale commercial uses are allowed to locate within residential buildings occupying up to 100 percent of the ground floor area provided that minimum residential densities are met.

Current allowed uses

Civic Neighborhood land-use districts allow a variety of uses consistent with the goal of promoting a thriving, active, mixed-use district.

To that end, townhomes and apartments are allowed, as well as commercial uses such as retail, office and service uses (“Business and Retail Service and Trade”).

Institutional and medical uses also are allowed.

The Code prohibits single-family detached homes and duplexes because the district is designated for more intense land uses in this central Gresham location with proximity to transit, including two light-rail stations.

Industrial uses are not allowed.

P = Permitted
 NP = Not Permitted
 L = Limited (See Code for limits)
 SUR = Special Use Review

USES	TDM-C	TDH-C	HDR-C	MDR-C
RESIDENTIAL				
Single-Family Detached Dwelling	NP	NP	NP	NP
Duplex	NP	NP	NP	NP
Single-Family Attached Dwellings	P	P	P	P
Attached Dwellings on a Single Lot	P	P	P	P
Elderly Housing	SUR	SUR	SUR	SUR
Manufactured Dwelling Park	NP	NP	NP	NP
Residential Facility	P	P	P	P
Residential Home	NP	NP	NP	NP
COMMERCIAL				
Auto-Dependent Use	L	L	L	L
Business and Retail Service and Trade	L	L	L	L
Clinics	P	L	L	L
Commercial Parking	SUR	SUR	SUR	SUR
Daycare Facilities	L	L	L	L
Live-Work	P	P	P	P
Major Event Entertainment	SUR	SUR	SUR	SUR
Mini-Storage Facilities	NP	NP	NP	NP
Outdoor Commercial	NP	NP	NP	NP
INSTITUTIONAL USES				
Civic Uses	SUR	SUR	SUR	SUR
Community Services	SUR	SUR	SUR	SUR
Medical	SUR	SUR	SUR	SUR
Parks, Open Spaces and Trails	L/SUR	L/SUR	L/SUR	L/SUR
Religious Institutions	L	L	L	L
Schools	P/SUR	P/SUR	L	P/SUR

Current Vision and Development Rules

Current intensity requirements

The Development Code sets minimum and maximum standards for how much development is required or allowed on a site. Because Civic Neighborhood is centrally located in Gresham, has two light-rail stations and is served by bus lines on its south and east sides, anticipated development intensity is higher here than in many other parts of Gresham.

The map below shows the current development intensity rules for the four sub-districts in Civic Neighborhood.

Some definition of terms:

Floor area ratio (FAR): The amount of floor area in relation to the amount of site area, expressed in square feet. A floor area ratio of 0.6 to 1 means a minimum of 0.6 square feet of floor area is required for every one square foot of site area. For example, on a 30,000-square-foot site, 18,000 square feet of building floor area would be required. That could be accomplished, for example, with an 18,000-square-

foot one-story building or a building with two stories that each are 9,000 square feet.

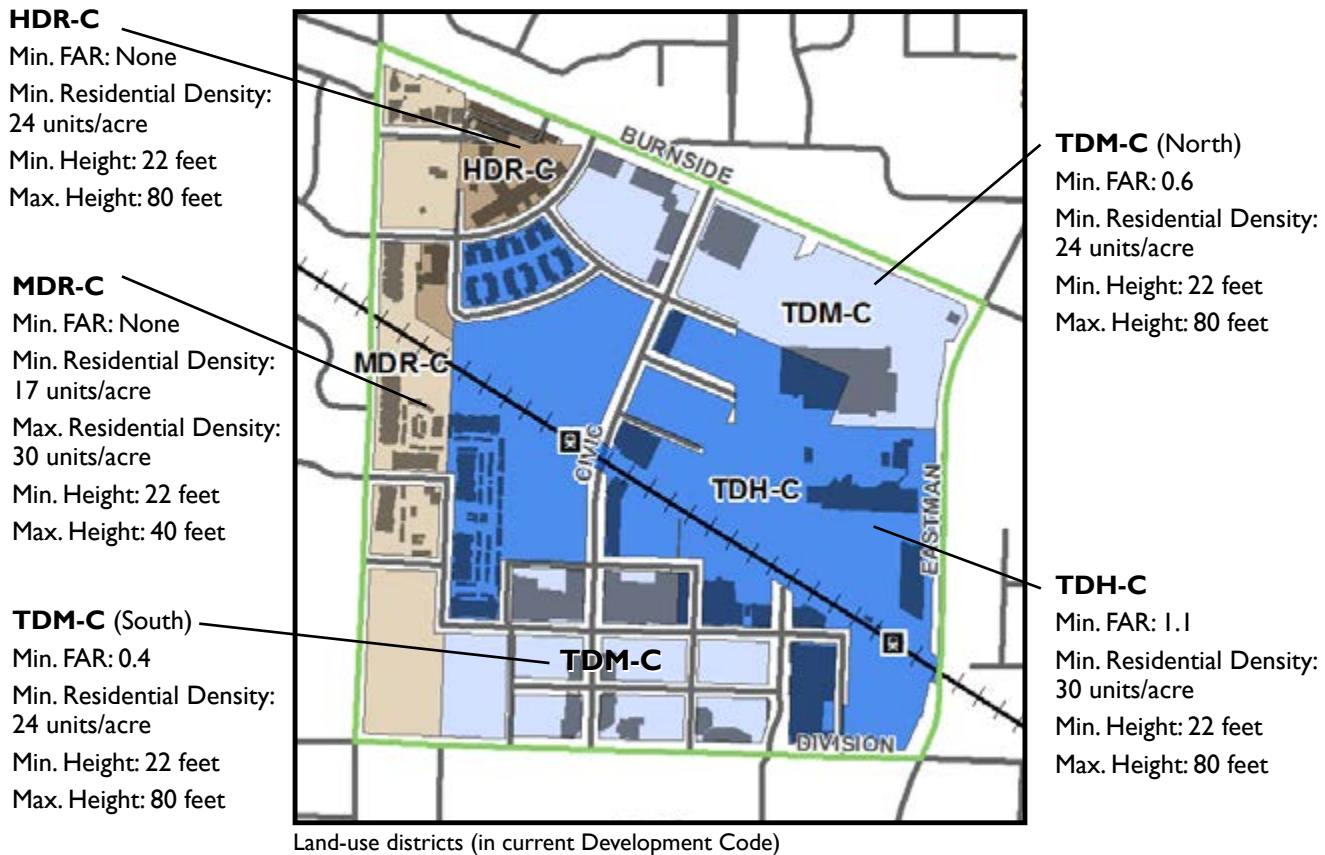
Minimum residential density: The minimum number of units per acre required on the site.

Maximum residential density: The maximum number of units per acre allowed on the site.

Minimum and maximum height: The minimum height a building must be or the maximum amount of height that is allowed.

As shown below, the TDH-C sub-district, which stretches from the City Hall MAX station to the Civic Drive MAX station, calls for the most intense development in Civic Neighborhood. It has a minimum floor-area ratio of 1.1 to 1.

In general, the required development intensity drops along the arterials (Burnside, Eastman Parkway and Division). It is lowest in MDR-C along Wallula, where the maximum height is 40 feet.



Project Issues and Opportunities

Issues

So far, the following issues and opportunities have been identified. These will be discussed with residents, property owners, business owners, developers, City Council advisory committees and the City Council and revised based on input during the process.

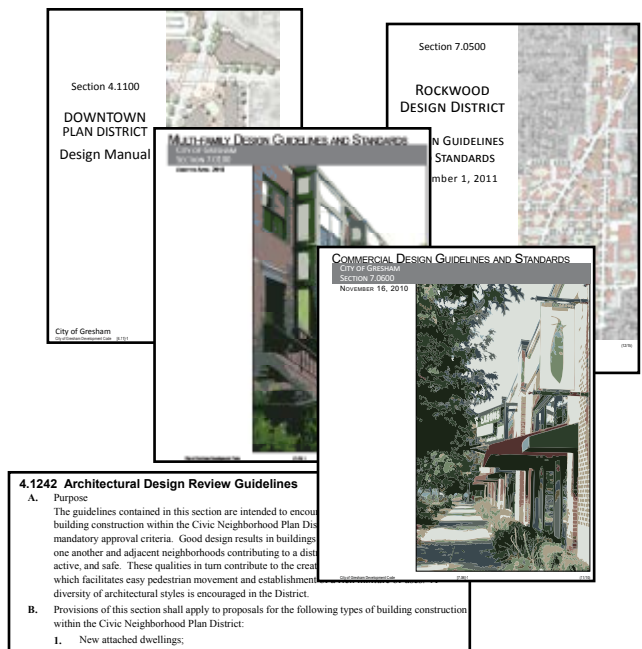
1. **Vision update:** The Civic Neighborhood Plan and current development rules were built on information and a process from the mid-1990s. This project provides an opportunity to revise the vision to reflect new information and current priorities.



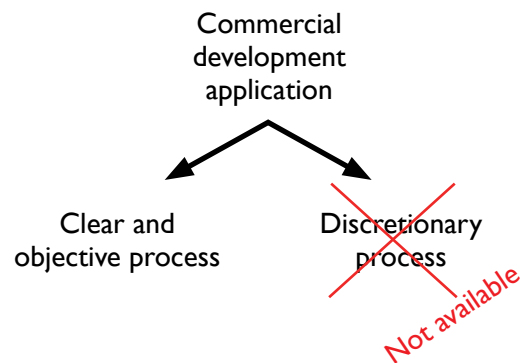
2. **Civic lacks its own guidelines and standards:** Civic Neighborhood does not have its own mandatory, context-specific design guidelines and standards. The City has an emphasis on quality design and has already established design standards and guidelines for Downtown, Rockwood, commercial corridors and multi-family development.

The citywide multi-family standards apply to Civic Neighborhood, but the district does not have design district standards for commercial and other non-residential uses. Civic does have advisory architectural design guidelines.

This means different projects or uses within one project could face different or multiple sets of rules and processes, which can cause confusion and may result in developments that do not meet community goals for design quality.



3. **No discretionary process available for commercial:** Non-residential projects (shops, offices, institutions) use the Civic Neighborhood Development Code, which does not have a discretionary guidelines process. This limits applicants to following the clear and objective standards rather than providing a design guidelines route that allows more flexibility while still ensuring projects meet City design goals.



Project Issues and Opportunities

Issues (continued)

4. Inflexible street grid: The Development Code requires a street grid that promotes access and walkability goals but is difficult to modify or adjust to different development ideas. This could prevent quality development proposals that do not strictly comply with the street grid. Most changes to the street grid require a Comprehensive Plan change that would take six months or more, which is a delay that can discourage development.



Code-required future streets are in red.

5. Street design: The Civic Neighborhood development rules include street and sidewalk design standards. Since this Code has been developed, other City street standards have changed, including those in the Transportation System Plan. The Civic standards can be evaluated to see if updates are needed to include new information and up-to-date designs.



6. Minimum building heights: Civic Neighborhood development rules require minimum building heights of 22 feet and/or two stories in the entire district. Past development under this Code has included faux second stories, and the real estate market is unlikely to produce the number of blocks of multi-story development required in the Code. The 22-foot façade requirement applies to every street. The two-story requirement applies along Civic Drive and Norman Avenue.

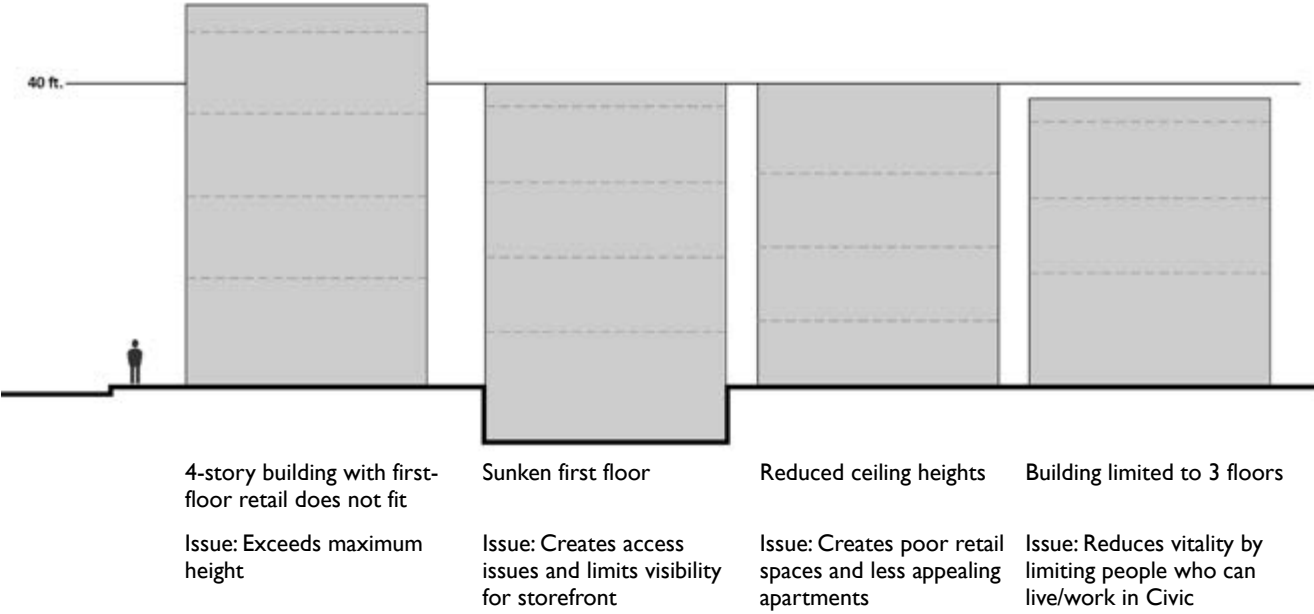


Two buildings in Gresham Station with faux second stories.

Project Issues and Opportunities

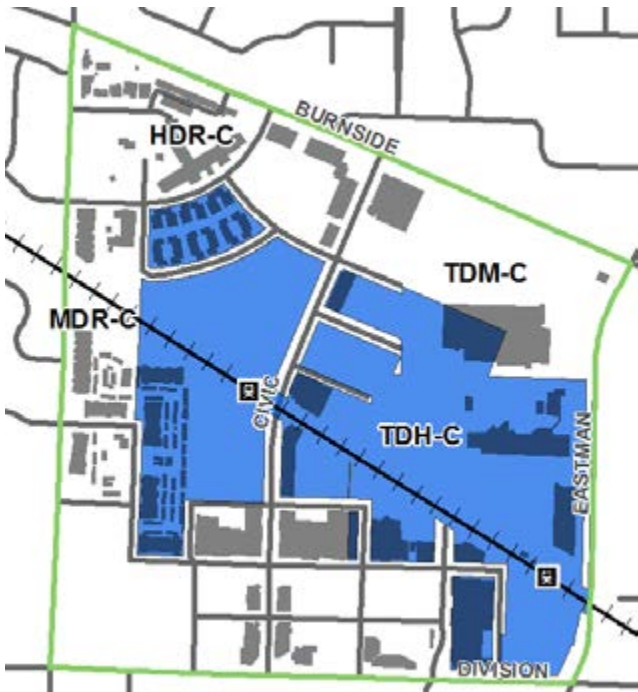
Issues (continued)

7. Maximum height: The maximum height rules in the Code are either 40 feet or 80 feet. The specific numbers used do not necessarily line up with a certain number of floors, and buildings cannot include a half floor. This could result in undesirable construction techniques so the applicant can get the top floor in under the height limit (such as sinking the first floor or flat roofs where other rooflines might be desirable.).



8. Density standards: About half of Civic Neighborhood is in a sub-district with a minimum 1.1 floor-area ratio. This means each site in that area must have 1.1 square feet of building area for each square foot of site area. For example, a 10,000-square-foot site would need to have 11,000 square feet of building floor area (on all floors combined). This could be a building with two stories of 5,500 square feet each, for example.

This means at least part of the site must have a two-story building. This is a large area with a high FAR. Only one location in the sub-district that requires a 1.1 FAR has been built to that standard (The Crossings development on Civic drive just south of the MAX tracks). It is unclear whether the real estate market will produce this density on all these sites in the short term. This could mean that these sites sit vacant until that occurs. This also may discourage quality one-story buildings in places where they are desirable.



Floor-area ratio in TDH-C is 1.1 square feet of building area for every foot of site area.

Project Issues and Opportunities

Issues (continued)

9. Setbacks: Setback rules, which determine the minimum and maximum distance buildings must be from the property line, may present an obstacle to quality development. Some require 100 percent of the building to be on the setback line, which does not allow for building insets, recessed entries or plazas.

The requirement also does not distinguish between commercial and residential. Residential often is more successful and has a better transition between public realm and private property when an additional setback is available for porches, gardens, lawns, low fences, courtyards and similar design treatments.

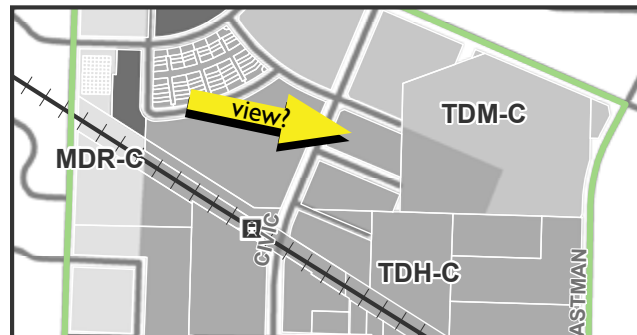


Porches, stairs and garden.



Landscaped courtyard.

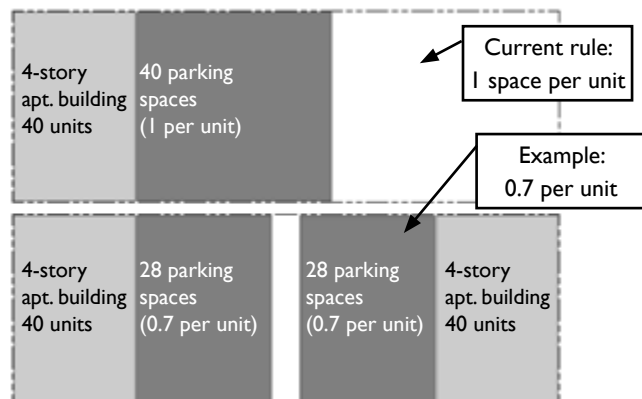
10. View protection: The Code has a view protection guideline in Section 4.1243. This guideline is vague and difficult to enforce because it does not provide clear and objective standards for the applicant to meet. In addition, the Code calls for the highest minimum development intensity (1.1 floor area ratio and minimum 30 units per acre residential density) in this area, which normally would be reflected in taller buildings.



11. Allowed uses: Uses that may be desirable are not allowed or limited in size, including manufacturing and information services. Also, service stations are allowed along arterials, which may not be desirable at prominent intersections because of their visual prominence and added turning movements near traffic signals, which can cause safety concerns.



12. Parking: No parking is required for commercial developments in Civic Neighborhood, and the minimum number of off-street spaces required for residential is one space per unit. This is low compared to other areas in the city. Still, two recent consultant studies and development community input has conveyed that the City's minimum requirements still might present an obstacle to development, particularly residential development. Additional study is needed to determine whether this is an obstacle and how it can be addressed.



Minimum parking rules can influence development intensity

Project Issues and Opportunities

Issues (continued)

13. Landscaping, open space and trail/path requirements: The code calls for landscaping, open space and trails/paths to enhance quality of life in the district. The project could analyze the current rules to ensure they allow more intense development while ensuring adequate landscaped and natural features in the district. The project also can analyze the number and location of pedestrian connections required on private property to ensure adequate but not excessive or impractical connections.



14. Code cleanup: Some provisions in Civic Neighborhood and other design districts require clarity or correction:

- Code mentions “future light rail stations” but all have been built.
- Maximum height rules reference the Fire Code. The Fire Code always applies so this is not necessary.
- Civic Neighborhood rules lack lighting rules that have been included in other design districts.
- If a complete set of design guidelines and standards are created for Civic Neighborhood, the current Architectural Design Review Guidelines in Section 4.1242 can be deleted.
- A “master plan” process is mentioned, but the process is not described.
- How minimum building frontage

requirements are met and whether, once they are met, other buildings on the site can be located away from the street could be clarified.

- Rules to prevent blank walls could be updated to reflect updated practices in other design districts.
- Cross references to other development rules can be added so applicants know where to find applicable rules.
- Sign rules could be updated in coordination with the Sign Code Update project.
- Development Code rules in Civic refer to maps that are not in the Development Code, which makes the Code hard to use.
- The corridor commercial standards in Section 7.0600 do not have standards for recessed windows. All the other design districts have that standard.

Opportunities

The project provides opportunities to:

- Revisit and refresh the vision and goals for Civic Neighborhood in the context of Gresham, including Downtown Gresham to the southeast and Rockwood to the northwest along the light-rail line.
- Promote desired development by having an up-to-date description of where Civic is heading and development rules that match that vision.
- Create design district guidelines and standards that build on other Gresham design districts but are custom for Civic’s context. This will promote quality design.
- Address Code issues and provide more clarity on the development rules and processes.
- Invite Gresham residents, business owners and property owners to revisit the district and help shape its future.

Civic Neighborhood Vision and Design District Update

Next steps

The draft issues and opportunities in this document will be reviewed with City staff; Council advisory committees (such as Planning Commission, Design Commission, Transportation Subcommittee, Citizen Involvement Committee); Gresham residents, business owners and property owners; potential developers; and others to ensure the project will address the correct problems and take advantage of available opportunities.

Once the project definition is complete, the project will go through further research and analysis; conduct public engagement regarding the vision/goals for the district; develop alternative solutions; narrow in on a preferred solution; and develop changes to development rules (including new design guidelines and standards) for Civic Neighborhood.

Public engagement will be included at each phase of the project.

Contact

Brian Martin, AICP, LEED AP
Senior Comprehensive Planner
Urban Design & Planning
brian.martin@greshamoregon.gov
503-618-2266
www.greshamoregon.gov/civic

Mary Phillips
Senior Development Planner
Urban Design & Planning
mary.phillips@greshamoregon.gov
503-618-2610



Scheduled meetings

2016

- Citizen Involvement Committee, Feb. 4
- Transportation Subcommittee, Feb. 4
- Community Forum, Feb. 16
- Design Commission, March 16
- Planning Commission, March 28

All meetings are at:
Gresham City Hall
1333 N.W. Eastman Parkway
Gresham OR 97030

Meetings are subject to change. Please check GreshamOregon.gov/calendar or call for the latest meeting information.