



Civic Neighborhood Vision and Design District Update

Public Engagement Summary

April 2017

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1. Purpose

In 1995, the City of Gresham adopted the Gresham Civic Neighborhood Plan that outlined a vision of a transit-supported and walkable neighborhood, with convenient places to live, work, and shop. After nearly 20 years of change, the City is working with residents, businesses, property owners, and other interested parties to update the envisioned future of Civic Neighborhood.

This Public Engagement Summary provides an overview of the engagement process for project outreach and summarizes key findings and neighborhood values that describe the envisioned future of Civic Neighborhood. The planning team will use this information to develop the Framework Plan that will guide further planning and policy refinements for the neighborhood.

This project has generated a substantial number of ideas, comments, and opinions from across the community. As a summary of outreach, this document attempts to generalize key findings and vision elements for the future of Civic. More detailed results can be found in individual summaries of the outreach activities generated during this project (see Appendix).

2. Outreach Overview

The following summarizes public outreach opportunities that occurred from September 2016 through the date of this report. In addition, the City conducted earlier outreach to gauge interest and opinion on the Vision Update Project, including a discussion at the January 25, 2016 Northwest Neighborhood Association meeting, a Community Forum on February 16, 2016 and an online survey.

- **Civic Neighborhood Vision Survey:** Between September 13, 2016 and October 14, 2016, the planning team administered a public survey to collect feedback about the vision for Civic Neighborhood. A total of 167 individuals responded to the online survey, including 134 fully completed and 33 partially completed surveys. The City also handed out abbreviated versions of the survey at public events to interact with visitors of Civic and increase awareness of the project.
- **Stakeholder Focus Groups:** On September 15, 2016, the planning team held four informational focus group interviews with a total of 11 organizations. Attendees at the different sessions included stakeholders from government agencies, neighborhood associations, businesses interests, and educational entities.

Outreach Goals

There are six goals that guided direction of the public outreach process, further defined in the project's Public Engagement Plan.

- Build and strengthen trust;
- Create opportunities for inclusive participation;
- Collaborate and inform decision-making;
- Build long-term capacity for civic engagement;
- Facilitate early and ongoing participation; and
- Communicate the vision and related benefits.



Above: September 2016 Community Visioning Workshop.

- **Community Visioning Workshop:** On Thursday, September 29, 2016, the planning team held a workshop to discuss opportunities and challenges facing the neighborhood. After a presentation on existing conditions, participants were engaged in an interactive, small group activity to identify their envisioned future for Civic Neighborhood, including preferred locations for different land uses and development intensities (photo at left).
- **Student Workshop:** In October 2016, City staff met with Gresham High School students using the format and materials from the Community Visioning Workshop.
- **Design Preferences Workshop:** Using findings from earlier outreach activities, the planning team developed potential vision and design elements for Civic Neighborhood. On November 15, 2016, the planning team held a public meeting to discuss these emerging vision and design elements. Following an overview presentation, meeting participants used electronic polling to vote for their preferred design examples across a variety of topics including transportation, building design and more.
- **Visual Preference Survey:** Using the materials and concepts from the Design Preferences Workshop, the planning team administered a second online public survey to test draft vision ideas and design preferences for Civic Neighborhood. Between November 21, 2016 and January 4, 2016, a total of 993 individuals responded to the online survey, including 696 fully completed and 297 partially completed surveys.
- **Project Website:** Using the City of Gresham's website, the City hosted the project webpage to post and share project news, updates and documents throughout the course of the project, at greshamoregon.gov/Civic/.
- **Social Media and Emails:** The City also relied on Facebook, NextDoor and emails to broaden outreach and participation. On one Facebook post, the City received over 4,200 post clicks.

3. Key Findings Summary

The feedback collected across the different engagement activities highlighted a wide range of ideas and opportunities for Civic Neighborhood. The following key findings are organized around five general categories: connectivity, land uses, building design, neighborhood image, and public spaces and parking.

Connectivity

Safe, connected and walkable streets and trails were identified as important or very important by 88.4 percent of respondents to the Visual Preference Survey, more than any other vision element.

- **Efficient connections within Civic:** Outreach participants noted that several good pedestrian connections exist within Civic and specifically identified the MAX and Wy'East Way Path as major assets. However, several participants had concerns that some uses were too far apart and there was an inability to quickly get from one place to another across the neighborhood. In particular, the northeastern portion of Civic was identified as being difficult to access as a pedestrian from the southern portion of the neighborhood, including Gresham Station.

Greater emphasis on pedestrian-oriented design, with improvements to safety, circulation, and comfort was identified as a priority for increasing connectivity. There was also interest in improving or adding a pedestrian MAX crossing and providing a new east-west connection through the neighborhood.

- **Safe street design:** Many respondents stressed the importance of safety in the design of streets and trails. Visual Preference Survey participants expressed a preference for street designs with separated lanes for different travel modes (walking, biking and driving). A majority of respondents also preferred pedestrian crossings with wide landscaped medians and off-street bike parking (as compared to on-street). There was also support expressed for updating street layout requirements to allow for greater design flexibility.



Above: Nearly 53 percent of Visual Preference Survey participants indicated they really like this photo showing separated lanes for different travel modes for Civic Neighborhood.

- **A better connection with Downtown Gresham:** Participants indicated that Civic should have a better connection to Downtown. Connectivity ideas included visual cues or signage between these neighborhoods, as well as improved street crossings and access to transit and off-street trails. The corner of NW Eastman Pkwy. and NW Division St. was noted as an important intersection connecting the Downtown and Civic Neighborhoods.
- **Traffic:** Traffic was also noted as a concern by some participants. However, when asked about future streets and trails in the Visual Preference Survey, slowing traffic was identified as the lowest priority.

Land Uses

- **Mix of uses:** Supporting a variety of housing opportunities and providing more places for people to work, shop, and seek entertainment were important values that emerged in several public outreach activities. Many participants expressed interest in having a mix of everything in a convenient setting, with others pointing to a need to balance how land is used neighborhood-wide to avoid over-reliance on commercial or housing uses.
- **Building on medical and educational uses:** Participants noted that medical and education-based uses in Civic are doing well and should continue to be part of the future.
- **Food, entertainment and nightlife:** Participants expressed interest in bringing a grocery store, entertainment destinations and additional dining options into Civic. In particular, participants indicated a desire to create a draw in Civic after working hours for entertainment and fun. Examples included music and nightlife venues and expanded options for dining, including food carts and additional restaurants and cafes. Respondents to the first survey identified increased dining opportunities as the most popular option for extending the amount of time they spend in the neighborhood.
- **Quality retail and shopping:** High quality commercial and retail uses in Civic were consistently rated a high priority for the majority of outreach participants. Participants noted that some existing establishments already provide neighborhood gathering places and that Civic has convenient shopping options, but that there is a need for more choices. Some expressed a desire for a destination store or theater to 'anchor' other businesses.

Defining Quality

Participants frequently used the term "quality" to describe desired businesses, housing, building designs, streets and public spaces. Though a subjective term, open-ended responses to the surveys provide some examples to better define quality.

- High-end or upscale
- Unique or one-of-a-kind in Gresham
- Higher wage jobs
- Family friendly
- Businesses that support healthy living and eating
- Accessible
- Diversity
- Sustainability and use of green materials
- Durable and well maintained
- Well-lit and clean
- Avoiding strip development and "dead zones"
- Security/safety
- Consistency

- **Housing options:** The topic of housing generated a mixture of ideas, concerns, and interests. In general, participants noted that new housing should continue to be part of the future of Civic Neighborhood. Most participants indicated the neighborhood should include a wide range of housing sizes and options. This included housing choices that are oriented towards urban living for multiple ages (live/work units, condominiums and attached housing), with convenient access to amenities and services. Areas near transit stops were frequently identified as the most appropriate sites for new housing.

Some housing concerns included affordability and impacts to existing housing. Most participants expressing affordability concerns asked for more affordable options or a range housing choices for different income levels. However, a few expressed concerns that affordability could result in too much density or undesirable outcomes if not done well. Concern was also expressed by some participants that future uses should limit impacts to existing residential uses (such as those by service and delivery vehicles, etc.).

- **A new future for the Kmart site:** Participants were enthusiastic about the possibilities for redevelopment and new uses on the existing Kmart site. Though ideas varied across engagement activities, many agreed that the site's visibility from busy streets is an asset and that there is a need for improved connections through the site.
- **A place for emerging and small businesses and jobs:** Participants indicated that the neighborhood should do more to attract and retain young adults (generally between the ages of 20-39) that comprise a large and growing segment of the population. This includes providing alternative flex-space offices, as well as smaller leasable spaces to start or grow a business. Participants from the student workshop also highlighted the need for job opportunities for young people.

Design Preferences

Throughout the engagement process there were certain terms or examples that received a negative or conflicting reaction, yet had an alternate description that evoked a positive response.

- Creating a neighborhood that is convenient: Though many had a negative response to *density*, the majority of respondents reacted positively to a *convenient neighborhood*.
- Availability of parking: Though respondents emphasized the importance of parking and concerns about its *availability* in certain locations, many also identified the need to *redesign* or *redevelop* large surface parking areas for increased efficiency and safety.
- Human-scaled development that creates an urban environment: *Building heights* were noted as a concern by some respondents. However, many participants favored *taller, mixed-use building* designs with shopping on the *ground floor*.
- Neighborhood identity and character: Participants indicated that the neighborhood *lacks a distinct identity* and noted potential natural features such as the trees along Wallula. At the same time, identity was regarded as a *lower priority* overall, in part because it can *evolve* on its own as the neighborhood develops.

Building Design

- **Authentic places and designs:** Participants noted that several existing buildings, street designs, and public spaces seem uninspiring or have a design that is common anywhere. Many participants emphasized that the size and location of buildings and uses should be designed around the many opportunities that exist in Civic, including great visibility from passing motorists, proximity to Downtown, the walkable interior, access to transit and views. Other ideas indicated a need to design around challenges such as protection from the east winds and avoidance of wind tunnels.



Above: Multi-story retail with wide sidewalks and more extensive outdoor seating and landscaping was preferred by 66 percent of Visual Preference Survey participants, rather than single-story retail with wide sidewalks and some outdoor seating (preferred by 28 percent).

- **Active ground-floors at a pedestrian scale:** Participants prioritized active ground floor uses designed at a pedestrian scale. This includes outdoor dining, small-scale spaces, large windows and a sense of enclosure from surrounding traffic and buildings.



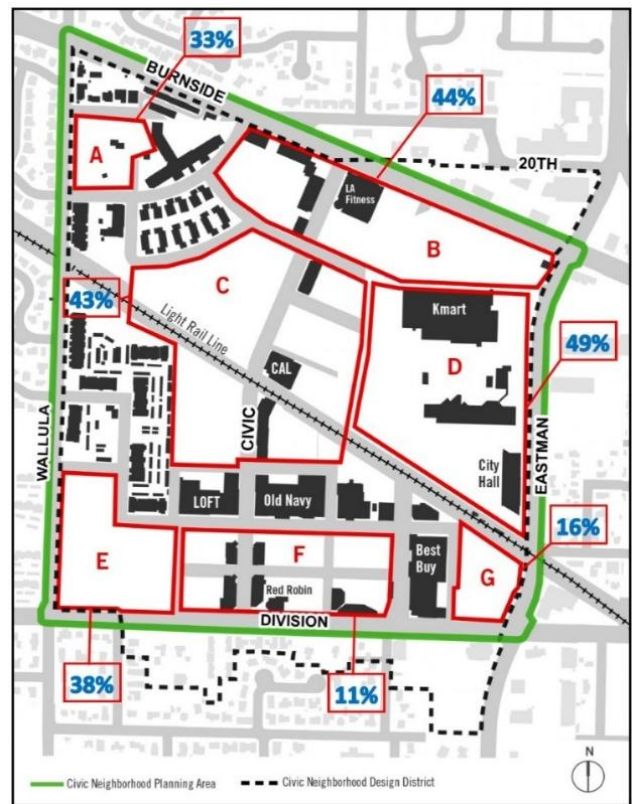
Left: A single story retail/commercial building with active street front was preferred by 62 percent of Visual Preference Survey participants, rather than a multi-story residential building with a passive street-front (27 percent).

- **Mixed uses:** Many respondents to the Visual Preference Survey prioritized a building design with a mixture of uses in a single building (as compared to a single use, stand-alone building).

Right: Small-scale store-front shopping on the ground floor of a mixed-use building was preferred by 60 percent of Visual Preference Survey participants, rather than shopping in a single use/stand-alone building (31 percent).



- **Taller buildings in strategic locations:** The Vision Survey and Visioning Workshop posed a question about preferred locations for taller buildings. Results from the workshop suggested a desire to locate taller buildings (four to six stories) in clusters and towards the center of Civic or at the intersections of edge streets, particularly at the corner of Burnside and Eastman. The figure below shows results of the Vision Survey for the same question. The preferred locations for taller buildings included the area near City Hall (49 percent), within the northeast corner and including the Kmart site (44 percent), around the Civic Max Station at the center of Civic (43 percent) and at the undeveloped southwest corner (38 percent). The least preferred locations for taller buildings included the Gresham Station shopping center area and the southeast corner of Civic.



Above: Vision Preference Survey results for preferred locations of taller buildings.

Although height was expressed as a concern in the written responses of several participants, regulating building size and scale was only listed by 5 percent of Visual Preference Survey participants as the most important factor for future buildings. The items most often listed as most important include: designing around streets and public spaces (26 percent), mixed-use buildings (25 percent) and active ground-floors (20 percent).

- **Articulated and active designs:** The Visual Preference Survey responses consistently selected the building designs with a more articulated or detailed building façade and the more active ground-level spaces.



Left: These two examples of articulated mixed-use buildings were the closest rated pair in the Visual Preference Survey (48 percent preferred A and 39 percent B).



Left: A mixed-use building with street level commercial and detailed design was preferred by 83 percent of Visual Preference Survey participants, rather than a simple building design with surface parking (9 percent).

Neighborhood Image

- **A unique neighborhood identity:** Participants indicated that the neighborhood lacks a common identity or character that distinguishes it from other places in Gresham. This included a need for streets, buildings, and neighborhood entryways that are inviting, have visual interest and encourage visitors to stay, shop and explore. The trees along Wallula were identified as assets that create a distinct identity for the western edge of the neighborhood. At the same time, some responses to the Visual Preference Survey indicated that identity should have a lower priority, with some of the open-ended comments to a different question cautioning against competing with Downtown. Some participants indicated neighborhood identity was of low importance as it would evolve on its own as the neighborhood develops.
- **Creating a neighborhood “anchor”:** A grocery store, theater, small coffee shop, plaza or park are all ideas shared for generation of a neighborhood focal point or anchor.
- **Natural features:** Mature trees, natural slopes, drainages and views to the surrounding buttes and volcanoes were all noted as being part of what makes Civic unique. Many participants emphasized the need to protect these features and integrate them with future development and to enhance the view of Mt. Hood from public gathering spaces within the neighborhood. Existing residents that currently have good views to the east cautioned that the designs of taller buildings could block or limit these views. At the same time, some respondents identified the need to showcase these views for new development.
- **A place for families:** Making a place for families was one of the most popular topics throughout the planning process. Many respondents feel that the future of Civic should include family-friendly businesses and parks and public spaces that are fun and welcoming for kids.

Right: 61 percent of Visual Preference Survey respondents indicated they really liked areas for play and exploration that are integrated with the natural environment for the neighborhood, 23 percent indicated they would consider it, and only 6 percent did not like it.



- **Celebrating arts and culture:** There were many comments supporting cultural amenities and the arts. According to the Visual Preference Survey, participants preferred interactive art features to static ones, with some support for temporary art installations.

Public Spaces and Parking

- **Safe and welcoming streets and public spaces:** Participants commonly noted improved streets and street fronts (the public and private space between the street edge and building façade). Many participants indicated that existing streets should be improved to create a more pleasant walking experience, including integrating nature and green space, expansion of the tree canopy and integrated storm water infrastructure. Homelessness also surfaced as a concern and many respondents emphasized the need to create designs with a high degree of visibility and surveillance into public spaces and underused or hidden spaces.
- **Integrated public spaces:** As Gresham's Civic Neighborhood, many participants voiced a need for more public facilities, such as community gathering areas and performance spaces. According to the second survey, the majority of respondents preferred designs that focus around streets and public spaces, especially open spaces surrounded by shopping and covered plazas or seating areas. This included desires to provide multi-generational spaces accessible to people of all ages and abilities, places for families and children, dog areas, areas for large and small gatherings and formal and informal events, and expansion of neighborhood green spaces. In addition to the spaces themselves, public events and other activities in the neighborhood were identified as opportunities for activation.



Left: Steps with landscaping and gathering spaces were preferred by 90 percent of Visual Preference Survey participants, rather than stairs with gathering spaces and no greenery (5 percent).

- **Bringing nature into the neighborhood:** Nearly all respondents to the Visual Preference Survey supported public spaces with trees and landscaping as opposed to non-vegetated public spaces. Stormwater planters and infrastructure built into the design of streets and sidewalks was also highly preferred.

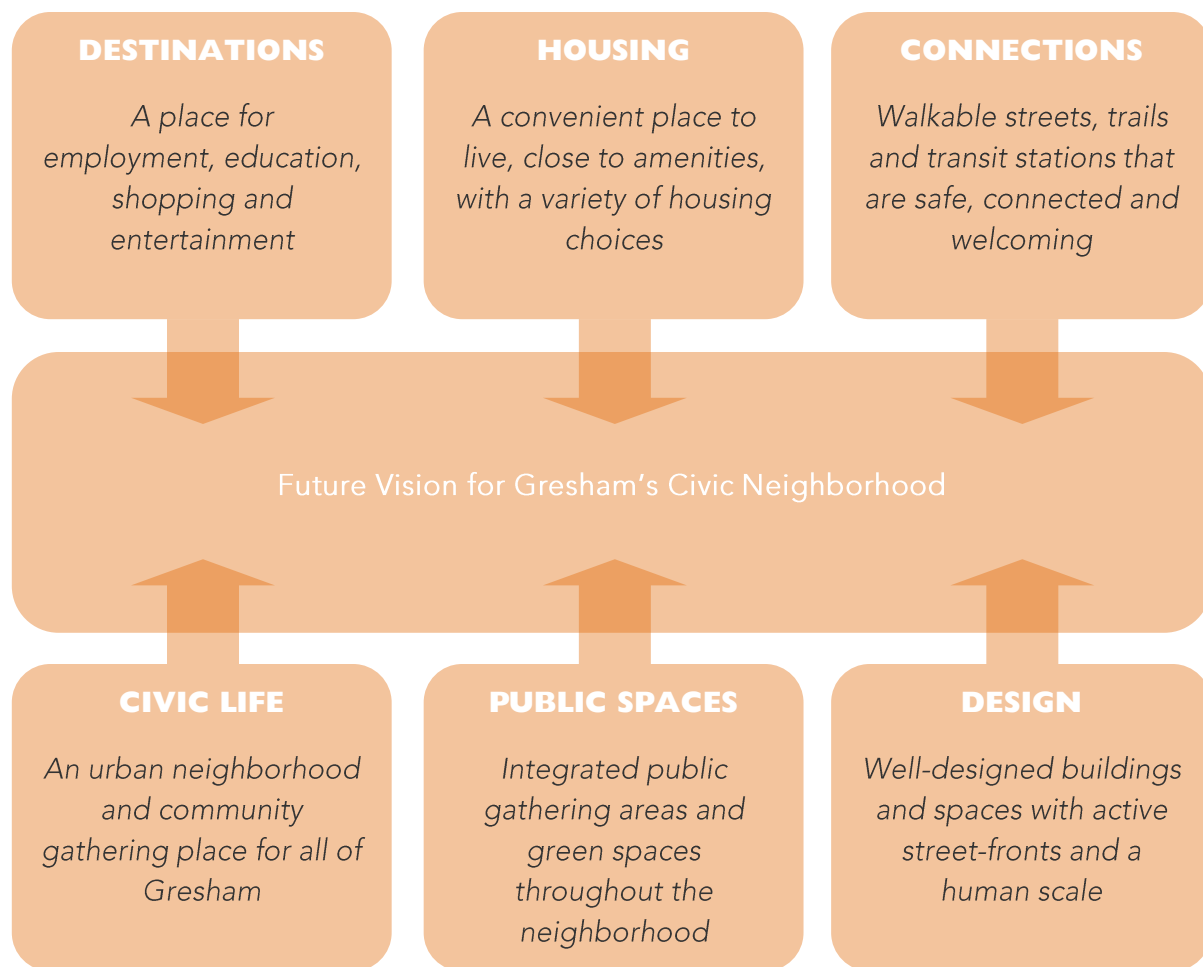
Right: 91 percent of Design Preference Survey respondents really liked or would consider wide sidewalks with integrated stormwater management for the neighborhood.



- **Parking management:** Participants discussed the importance of parking and many voiced their concern about parking availability. At the same time, there was also an identified need to redesign or redevelop large surface parking areas that are or appear underused or that limit direct and safe connections through Civic. Ideas included strategically placed pockets of smaller-scale parking areas behind or beside buildings and parking areas designed with landscaping that manages stormwater runoff. When asked about bicycle parking, the majority of respondents to the Visual Preference Survey preferred off-street parking as compared to on-street parking.

Neighborhood Values and Emerging Vision

Based on the key findings and building on the opportunities and advantages that exist today, the following statements describe the many aspirations of the community, conveying how the neighborhood will look and feel like in the future. Using these values, the emerging vision for Gresham’s Civic Neighborhood will be articulated in the forthcoming Policy Framework document.



Destinations: A place for employment, education, shopping and entertainment

Civic Neighborhood offers a range of options for employment, health care and higher education. It has a great variety of shops to explore, large and small, with dining, entertainment and night life.

Housing: A convenient place to live, close to amenities

Civic Neighborhood is a great place to call home. Nearby transit connections support a walkable, active community. Civic is family friendly, with proximity to a range of convenient amenities that are accessible to all ages. A range of housing options are located throughout the neighborhood.

Connections: Streets, trails and transit stations that are connected and welcoming

Civic Neighborhood provides safe environments and connections for people who bike, walk, take transit and drive, with streets and trails that are direct and easy to navigate within and around the neighborhood.

Civic Life: An urban neighborhood and community gathering place for all of Gresham

Civic Neighborhood is a place to celebrate Gresham's most valuable asset: its people. As a true urban center the neighborhood has a range of public spaces and amenities, activities and events and is a place to experience art and culture.

Public Spaces: Integrated public areas and green spaces

Civic Neighborhood features accessible, fun and welcoming places to gather, play and relax. Nature weaves through the neighborhood and can be seen along streets and sidewalks and in public parks, small plazas and natural areas.

Design: Well-designed buildings and places at a human scale

Civic Neighborhood is characterized by a range of high quality businesses and buildings, with development that is timeless, durable and appealing, at a pedestrian scale approachable by people on foot and bike. Best practices in sustainable design are integrated in buildings, sites and public spaces.