



Memorandum

To: Kenny Asher, Community Development and Public Works Director
Katie Mangle, City of Milwaukie Planning Director

From: Li Alligood, City of Milwaukie Planning Staff

Date: May 24, 2010¹

Subject: Downtown Plan Refresh Background Memo #2:
History of Downtown Milwaukie Programs, Studies, and Plans

The purpose of this memo is to provide an overview of historical and current plans for Downtown Milwaukie. This memo includes a brief history of the development of these plans and highlights key dates and policy decisions.

BACKGROUND

Downtown Milwaukie has been a topic of community conversation and concern since the late 1960s. Milwaukie was founded in 1848 and was the center of activity for the region for several decades. In the 1950s, Milwaukie saw a great deal of development activity in the industrial suburban housing markets. By the mid-1970s, Milwaukie had effectively become a suburb of Portland, and its downtown faced growing pressure from commercial development in the Portland area, such as the Clackamas Town Center and the Lloyd Center Mall. By the late 1970s, downtown Milwaukie had entered a period of economic and physical decline from which it is just beginning to emerge.

Three downtown plans have been formally adopted by the Milwaukie City Council since 1970. A number of studies have been conducted, committees formed, and programs established to address the problem of Milwaukie's struggling downtown, but implementation has been incremental and slow. This is due in part to political fragmentation, lack of a funding mechanism for needed public improvements, and loss of momentum. A 1983 report noted:

"Numerous proposals, plans, technical studies, committee reports, etc., have been entertained for the Milwaukie waterfront, but none of them have been implemented. Too little (or too much) money, regulation, leadership, time and effort has [sic] slowed the momentum of each new initiative."²

¹ Revised March 15, 2013, to reflect planning activities completed since 2010.

² Clackamas County Department of Environmental Services Policy and Project Development Division. 1983. *Proposal for Downtown Milwaukie*, p. 9.

TIMELINE OF DOWNTOWN PROGRAMS, STUDIES, AND PLANS

- **1968:** Merchants, residents, and leaders became concerned about decline of downtown and emerging competition from nearby shopping areas. City Council authorized a study of downtown Milwaukie as an initial step in a downtown improvement program. The result was the “Downtown Milwaukie: Beginning a Program for the Improvement of the Central Business District” report prepared by Cornell, Howland, Hayes, & Merryfield in 1968.
- **1970:** The 1968 “Downtown Milwaukie Development Plan and Program” prepared by Cornell, Howland, Hayes, & Merryfield was adopted by City Council as Milwaukie’s first Comprehensive Plan.³
- **1977:** “Community Development in Milwaukie: Problems, Prospects, Policies” study prepared by Lord and LeBlanc at City Council direction. City Council adopted the study as a guide for future policy decisions and periodic review underway for the 1979 Comprehensive Plan update.⁴
- **1983:** Milwaukie Storefront Program established by the Community Development Department with the support of City Council.⁵
- **1987:** Milwaukie Redevelopment Plan adopted by City Council⁶ but rejected by voters twice, in 1988 and 1989. The plan is no longer in effect and is not discussed in this memo.
- **1989:** Milwaukie Downtown Development Association (MDDA) established by City staff in partnership with the Oregon Downtown Development Association (ODDA) for the purpose of revitalizing downtown and adopted an Economic Improvement District (EID).
- **1990:** City Council adopted a Downtown EID to support the hiring of a Downtown Manager for the MDDA.⁷
- **1989:** Current Comprehensive Plan adopted.⁸ The Land Use Element of the plan identified the “Downtown Core” area as an investment and development area.
- **1997:** Adoption of Regional Center Master Plan as an ancillary document of the Comprehensive Plan.⁹
- **1999:** City of Milwaukie redesignated a Town Center by Metro Growth Management Committee approval on October 5, 1999. The title and contents of the Regional Center Master Plan remain unchanged.
- **2000:** Adoption of Downtown and Riverfront Plan Land Use Framework Plan (“Framework Plan”), Public Area Requirements (PARs), and Downtown Zones (DC, DO, DOS, DR and DS).¹⁰
- **2003:** Adoption of Milwaukie Downtown Design Guidelines¹¹ and MMC Subsection 19.312.7 Design Review, requiring design review for all new development in downtown Milwaukie.¹²
- **2003:** City Council ended the Downtown EID at the request of the MDDA, as a result of the

³ Resolution 2-1970, adopted January 12, 1970.

⁴ Resolution 31-1978, adopted August 21, 1978.

⁵ Opened for business on September 9, 1984.

⁶ Ordinance 1640, adopted November 24, 1987.

⁷ Ordinance 1690, adopted October 16, 1990.

⁸ Ordinance 1666, adopted November 7, 1989.

⁹ Ordinance 1826, adopted December 2, 1997.

¹⁰ Ordinance 1880, adopted September 19, 2000. In 2004, the Village Concept Area and provisions specific to the North Main project were adopted by Ord. 1938. In 2005, amendments to the Public Area Requirements were adopted by Resolution 31-2005. This resolution revised the street design of Main Street in front of the North Main Village site.

¹¹ Resolution 11-2003, adopted April 1, 2003.

¹² Ordinance 1916, adopted April 1, 2003.

group's waning interest in leading promotional activities in downtown.¹³

- **2003:** Downtown Milwaukie Parking and Traffic Management Plan prepared.¹⁴ The plan was not adopted as a stand-alone document.
- **2003:** "Milwaukie's Next Steps Project: An Implementation Plan for Downtown Revitalization" report and Addendum completed by SERA Architects, Inc. and ODDA at the request of City staff.¹⁵ The report was not presented to or adopted by City Council.
- **2007:** Transportation System Plan (TSP) adopted.¹⁶ Much of the 2003 Downtown Milwaukie and Parking Management Plan was integrated into the TSP as Chapter 12.
- **2009:** Main Street Milwaukie program convened by the City's Community Development Department through Clackamas County Main Street and Oregon Main Street programs.¹⁷
- **2011:** South Downtown Concept Plan adopted.¹⁸ The Concept Plan refined the vision for the area of downtown Milwaukie south of Washington, including the light rail station area.

DOWNTOWN PROGRAMS

Milwaukie Storefront

The Milwaukie Storefront was created in 1983 and funded by Clackamas County CDBG funds with assistance from the City, Portland State University, and MUBA. The program was based on the National Main Street Program "four-point approach," and was staffed by four graduate students from Portland State University. The four-point approach addresses the multi-faceted areas of downtown vitality: economic revitalization, design, organization, and promotion. The Milwaukie Storefront conducted a number of information sessions for downtown business owners, and provided evaluations of downtown design guidelines, parking, economic development, and suggestions for future Main Street programs.

Milwaukie Downtown Development Association

The MDDA was established in 1989 at the direction of City Council. It was convened by City staff and followed the guidelines of the Oregon Downtown Development Association (ODDA), which followed the National Main Street Program four-point approach. The MDDA was effectively dissolved with the termination of the EID program in 2003 (see below). Vestiges of the MDDA continue today as an informal downtown business association.

Downtown Economic Improvement District (EID)

City Council established an Economic Improvement District (EID) in 1990 to fund the MDDA's activities and to hire a Downtown Manager. In 2003, the MDDA expressed a desire to move away from promotional activities and requested that the EID be discontinued.

Main Street Milwaukie Program

The Main Street Milwaukie program was convened in late 2009 by the City's Community Development Department with support from the Clackamas County Main Street Program. Milwaukie signed up as an "Exploring Main Street" community and adopted bylaws in April 2010. The Main Street Milwaukie program follows the National Main Street Center four-point

¹³ Resolution 15-2003, adopted April 15, 2003.

¹⁴ June 2003. Prepared by Kittelson & Associates, Inc.

¹⁵ Completed October 2003, led by the ODDA, and funded by OHCS.

¹⁶ Ordinance 1975, adopted December 4, 2007.

¹⁷ City Manager directed by City Council to sign an IGA with the Clackamas County Main Street Program at the February 17, 2009 regular session. No resolution has been adopted to date.

¹⁸ Resolution 82-2011, adopted September 6, 2011.

approach.

DOWNTOWN STUDIES

Downtown Milwaukie: Beginning a Program for the Improvement of the Central Business District

The 1968 report was prepared at the request of the Milwaukie City Council, and proposed several improvements including rezoning of downtown and the widening of McLoughlin Blvd. It was completed before the Kellogg Treatment Plant was constructed, and notes:

“Initial studies indicate that the riverfront west of the mouth of Kellogg Creek is the location most suitable for a sewage treatment plant serving the Clackamas-Milwaukie drainage basin. A treatment plant can be designed in a manner compatible with park development.”¹⁹

This proved to be an optimistic view; today, the City continues planning to reclaim that piece of the City’s valuable waterfront.

Lord and LeBlanc Study

A 1977 study, titled “Community Development in Milwaukie: Problems, Prospects, Policies” (Lord and LeBlanc) was conducted to inform the City’s 1979 Comprehensive Plan update. While the study focuses primarily on industrial growth and retention, it also addresses issues of commercial land use in downtown Milwaukie. The Lord and LeBlanc report suggested encouraging other types of land use in the central area to reflect the shifting economic reality, such as convenience retailing and office use; and the creation of a buffer between the service stations and row of buildings along the western edge of Main Street.

City Council adopted this study as a guide for future policy decisions, specifically the 1979 Comprehensive Plan update.

SERA/ODDA Study

The Downtown Framework Plan was adopted in 2000. As staff worked to implement the plan, they identified a need for a “road map” that would serve as a framework for project implementation and give them clear strategies for moving forward with the wide array of identified downtown and redevelopment plans.

In 2003, the City approached Oregon Housing & Community Services (OHCS) about this need. OHCS contracted with ODDA to provide on-site technical assistance; ODDA teamed with SERA Architects to draft the “Milwaukie’s Next Steps Project: An Implementation Plan for Downtown Revitalization.”

The study identified outdated assumptions contained in the Framework Plan, and suggested an annual update of the plan to reflect current realities while keeping true to its overall vision. The team suggested the City revisit the plaza, underpass, and parking garage proposed by the Downtown Plan for two reasons: the proposed plaza location would eliminate one of the strongest blocks along Main Street; and these components of the plan seemed unlikely to be implemented because of the extremely high cost and lack of public support.

The report recommended the City undertake three additional studies: Feasibility Study for Urban

¹⁹ Cornell Howland Hayes & Merryfield. 1968. *Downtown Milwaukie: Beginning a Program for the Improvement of the Central Business District*, p. 9.

Renewal; Feasibility Study for Performing Arts Center; and Comprehensive Study for Restoring Downtown Creeks, Streams, and Springs. An Urban Renewal Feasibility Study was completed in 2009.

DOWNTOWN PLANS

Currently, the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, 1997 Regional (Town) Center Master Plan, 2000 Downtown Plan, 2003 Design Guidelines, downtown zones, and the 2007 Transportation System Plan guide development in downtown Milwaukie.

Comprehensive Plan

The City's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1970; an updated Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1979. The current Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1989 after Periodic Review was conducted in 1988 and 1989. The Comprehensive Plan directs development in the City, primarily through the policy statements contained in the Land Use Element. Over the past two decades, a number of plans and policies have been adopted as ancillary documents to the Comprehensive Plan:

- *Milwaukie Vision Statement*: Adopted in 1995.²⁰ The vision was the outcome of an extensive public involvement process, including a Regional Visual Preference Survey,²¹ a Community Values Survey, and Urban Design Workshop, a Milwaukie Visual Preference Survey,²² and the creation of the Vision Policy Committee.
- *Transportation System Plan (TSP)*: Adopted in 1997.²³ The TSP identified downtown as a priority area for transportation funding and improvement.
- *Regional (Town) Center Master Plan (RCMP)*: Adopted in 1997. See below.

Town Center Master Plan

The City adopted the Regional Center Master Plan (RCMP) in 1997 to comply with Metro's adoption of the Urban Growth Management Functional Plan ("Functional Plan") in 1996. Milwaukie was designated a Regional Center during this process, and was required to prepare a plan to show how the city would meet the employment and household targets established by the Functional Plan.

The RCMP continued the course set by the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, the 1995 Milwaukie Vision Statement, and the City's commitment to the Metro 2040 Concept Plan to plan for compact, mixed use development in the Regional Center area. The plan identified five major implementation items: Urban Design; Land Use; Infill and Redevelopment Opportunities; Economic Development Strategies; and Transportation.

The RCMP established six Subareas; Subarea 1 contains downtown and the Central Business District, the "Civic Center" (the plan suggests focusing civic activities in the area surrounding City Hall), and the riverfront. In order to meet Functional Plan density goals, the RCMP recommended several policies, including:

²⁰ Ordinance 1789, adopted November 7, 1995.

²¹ "Picture This...The Results of a Visual Preference Survey," published June 1993. Prepared by A. Nelessen Associates, Inc. and sponsored by Metro and TriMet.

²² "Pattern Language: Helping to Define Good Design," published September 1994. Prepared by Paul Morris and Jeff Mitchum of McKeever/Morris Associates.

²³ Ordinance 1820, adopted July 15, 1997.

- A design review process to assure compatibility of new development and public acceptance of higher density development;
- Mixed use zoning throughout the downtown core; and
- New zoning to require higher density residential and commercial development in the Regional Center.

In January 1999, in response to concerns about density requirements of the City's Regional Center designation, City Council requested an amendment to the Region 2040 Growth Concept Map to redesignate the City of Milwaukie a "Special Town Center," which would have established a new designation. The Metro Growth Management Committee approved redesignation to the established Town Center designation on October 5, 1999. The Comprehensive Plan references to the "Regional Center" were replaced with "Town Center." The contents of the Regional Center Master Plan itself remained unchanged, as did the City's density requirements as established in the zoning code.

"Downtown Plan"

The Milwaukie Downtown and Riverfront Plan Land Use Framework Plan ("Framework Plan") was adopted in 2000. The Framework Plan guides the development of private and public land in downtown Milwaukie.

As a result of the downtown planning process, the City amended its Comprehensive Plan and zoning code to include five elements that together establish and implement Milwaukie's local vision for its small downtown. The community commonly uses the term "Downtown Plan" to refer to any of the documents listed below. These five documents each play a different role in defining the City's vision and establishing City policy.

- *Milwaukie Downtown and Riverfront Land Use Framework Plan ("Framework Plan")*: Describes the vision for downtown as a vibrant place redeveloped with mixed use buildings served by multimodal transportation system with easy access to great open spaces. This plan was adopted as an ancillary document to the Comprehensive Plan in 2000. The Framework Plan suggested changes to the Town Center Subarea 1 identified in the RCMP. The fundamental concepts of the Framework Plan include:
 - Anchors and attractors: building upon existing resources and adding anchors and attractors, including a grocery store anchor at the north end of downtown and an Arts/Entertainment anchor district with plaza and pedestrian pathways at the south end of downtown.
 - Main Street "retail armature": intended to reactivate Main Street by requiring retail uses on the ground floor and pedestrian amenities, among other things.
 - Connecting to the river: designs for the new Riverfront Park and a riverside hotel, public marina, and rowing facility.
- *Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element*: Includes broad objectives and policies that direct the City to focus redevelopment efforts on the downtown and riverfront.
- *Milwaukie Municipal Code Section 19.304 Downtown Zones*: Specifies how the City requires development projects to implement various aspects of the vision (land use, public improvements, and building design).
- *Public Area Requirements (PARs)*: Provides transportation circulation plans for all modes of transportation, and detailed design of downtown streetscape improvements.

- *Downtown Design Guidelines (“Design Guidelines”)*: Establishes a checklist of what it means for a new or renovated building to fit with Milwaukie’s character. With the adoption of the Design Guidelines in 2003, the Design and Landmarks Committee (DLC) was charged with reviewing all new development downtown and the alteration of historic resources throughout the city. The Design Guidelines focus on coordinating and enhancing the diverse activities taking place in downtown Milwaukie.

Downtown Milwaukie Parking and Traffic Management Plan

This plan was completed to implement the 2000 Framework Plan and to provide the City with tools to address and mitigate parking and traffic impacts related to development in the greater downtown area. The study area roughly contained the downtown zones and the report was based on a 2002 parking inventory conducted by City staff.

The plan suggested several policies: the adoption of an overlay zone for downtown Milwaukie that allowed implementing a traffic calming program within downtown Milwaukie for those streets that don’t otherwise meet the requirement of the City’s Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP); adoption of the Guiding Principles for Parking Management; and establishment and adoption of the recommended Parking Management Zones. None of these principles or zones were proposed or adopted.

Transportation System Plan

The Transportation System Plan is required to comply with the State of Oregon Transportation Planning Rule (TPR). The TSP is used as a guiding policy document for long-term transportation planning and outlines and prioritizing proposed improvements to the transportation system. Downtown Milwaukie was identified as the highest priority area for transportation improvements.

The TSP identified some issues with the parking policy in the downtown zones, specifically the DS zone. The policies and concepts developed during the Downtown Parking Management Plan effort were the basis for Chapter 12: Downtown Parking, which includes the City’s principles for managing downtown parking and developing a neighborhood parking management program.

South Downtown Concept/Planning

From 2008 to 2011, the City engaged in detailed study of the potential for a public plaza and supportive adjacent development in the South Downtown blocks, around the planned light rail station, known as the “triangle site.” This study is known as the South Downtown Concept, and the South Downtown Concept Plan was adopted by Council in 2011.

The South Downtown Concept Plan envisions a plaza at the intersection of Adams and Main streets, relocation of the Milwaukie Farmers Market to the plaza and Adams Street bicycle and pedestrian facility, above- and below-grade pedestrian crossings from South Downtown to Riverfront Park, and connections to surrounding natural areas.