



# Background Report: Urban Design & Land Use

## Milwaukie Comprehensive Plan Update

### Block 3 Topic Area

Prepared for the  
Comprehensive  
Plan Advisory  
Committee

March 2019



### Introduction

Urban design is a concept that deals with the various components of the built environment, including buildings, parks/open spaces, amenities, and transportation systems. It is an essential practice that, if done properly, can help to maintain the identity and character of Milwaukie as a small, innovative, and progressive town as it experiences growth and development over the next several decades. As clearly expressed in the Community Vision, Milwaukians have great pride and excitement for their city. Identifying clear goals and policies related to urban design and land use will help advance the City's vision by enhancing the aesthetic and vibrancy of its distinct neighborhoods and helping to foster a strong sense of place.

Milwaukie has integrated urban design practices into past planning efforts as well as land use decisions on development applications. Examples of urban design principles that have helped to express community values and priorities include a focus on improved bike and pedestrian connections throughout the city, quality design of the built environment, conservation and protection of the city's natural environment, and protection and reuse of the city's historical sites.

The addition of an Urban Design and Land Use chapter within the Comprehensive Plan will build upon Milwaukie's current design code standards, more clearly institutionalize the City's past actions and planning efforts related to design, and help implement multiple goals and action items from the Community Vision.

---

### Planning for Urban Design and Land Use

#### *Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals*

Oregon has a set of 19 Statewide Planning Goals, which serve as the foundation of the state's land use planning program that is implemented at the local level through the Comprehensive Plan. Urban design standards and land use considerations are not addressed in one specific goal, but are instead covered by a variety of goals. These include Goal 5 (Open Spaces, Scenic and Historic Areas and Natural Resources), Goal 8 (Recreation Needs), Goal 10 (Housing), Goal 12 (Transportation) and Goal 14 (Urbanization). Goal 12 is implemented by the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR), which requires Milwaukie to develop and maintain a transportation system plan that takes into consideration multimodal transportation, street connectivity, and land use and serves to improve safety, livability, and accessibility within the city and larger region. Goal 14 emphasizes land use efficiency and best use and address housing, employment, and livability needs as well as sustainability-related goals.

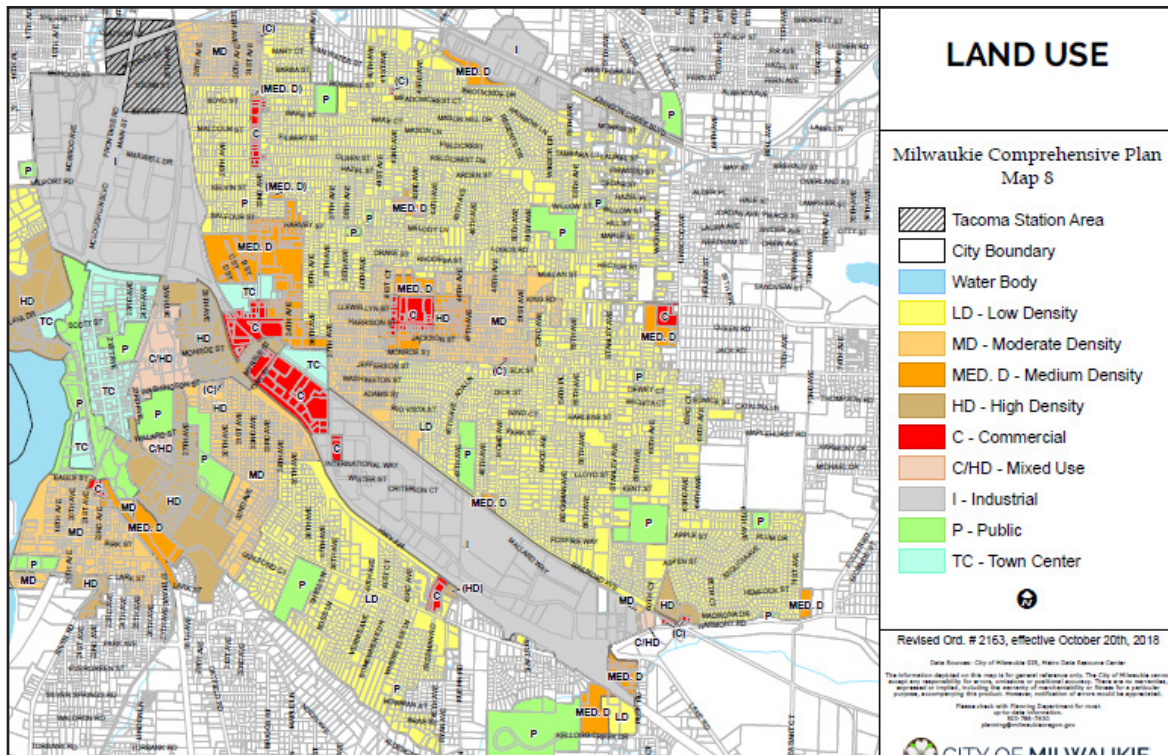


Figure 1: Land Use Map of City of Milwaukee

### Metro 2040 Growth Concept Guidelines

In addition to statewide goals, Milwaukee must also comply with Metro’s Urban Growth Management Functional Plan (UGMFP), which details how cities in the Portland metropolitan area (including Milwaukee) can meet the goals of Metro’s 2040 Growth Concept. Title 6 of the UGMFP Growth Concept highlights the need to plan for compact and accessible urban forms when considering how to accommodate future growth in the region, and calls for the prioritization of centers, corridors, station communities, and main streets. Mixed-use, density-focused, transit-oriented development in Milwaukee is envisioned in the Downtown Milwaukee and Central Milwaukee areas, with additional opportunities in several neighborhood mixed use areas and the northern portion of the North Milwaukee Innovation Area adjacent to the Tacoma Ave light rail station. Quality urban design will help the City to meet Metro’s Six Desired Outcomes of growth management, most notably the first outcome: People live, work and play in vibrant communities where their everyday needs are easily accessible.

### Local Context

Over the last two decades, the City has focused on two major components related to urban design. The first has been to create opportunities for new mixed use, pedestrian-oriented development in areas such as Downtown Milwaukee and Central Milwaukee. The second has been to improve the quality of design for infill development in Milwaukee’s existing single family and multifamily neighborhoods. To achieve this, the City has been active in developing plans and adopting design standards that aim to improve the livability of Milwaukee. These include:

- Adoption of the Milwaukee Downtown and Riverfront Land Use Framework Plan (2000) as an ancillary document to the Comprehensive Plan and implementation of Downtown Design Guidelines (2003);
- Development code amendments (2012) that created residential design standards for new and expanded single family and multifamily development;
- Completion of the Moving Forward Milwaukee project (2015), which included the identification of several opportunity sites, the adoption of the Central Milwaukee Land Use and Transportation Plan, and the creation of a new mixed-use zone (General Mixed Use) in Central Milwaukee; and
- Adoption of the North Milwaukee Innovation Area Plan for the area along State Route 99 (McLoughlin Blvd).



Figures 2 & 3: Potential design concepts for the NMIA Zone

### City of Milwaukie Current Comprehensive Plan

Milwaukie’s existing Comprehensive Plan does not include urban design as a standalone topic. Instead, the Plan mentions urban design sporadically throughout Chapter 4: Land Use, which is made up of five (5) elements – Residential Land Use Design, Economic Base and Industrial/ Commercial Land Use, Recreational Needs, Willamette Greenway, and Neighborhood. Urban design concepts appear in all but the Recreational Needs and Willamette Greenway elements.

### Urban Design and Milwaukie’s Community Vision

In 2016-2017, the City of Milwaukie underwent an extensive public process to craft a vision and action plan. The process resulted in a new vision statement, with action items to achieve state goals over the next 20 years. The vision, goals, and actions received input from a variety of people and groups. The City received input from the Vision Advisory Committee, staff, a technical advisory group, town halls, surveys, City Council, Planning Commission, and many more. The following priority actions from the Milwaukie 2040 Vision and Action Plan capture the community’s priorities that are associated with urban design and land use planning:

*Planet 1.1: Implement city programs, incentives and development code amendments that promote sustainable development and help to better integrate the built environment and natural environment*

*Place 1.1: Improve walkability and bikeability within the network by creating dedicated bike paths and walking trails that connect transit, neighborhood business hubs and public spaces, including Milwaukie Bay Park*

*Place 1.9: Research and examine funding strategies for innovative local transit options that complement the regional transit network and help connect residents and employees to local amenities, employment areas and neighborhoods throughout the city*

*Place 2.5: Create neighborhood plans that define neighborhood character, identify community needs and priorities, and develop strategies for better integrating in housing in to neighborhoods*

*Place 3.2: Complete Phase 3 of Milwaukie Bay Park to create spaces for community gathering and the arts and promote the park as a community destination with year-round programming*

*Prosperity 2.1: Identify and support the development of neighborhood economic hubs that are walkable and provide amenities and commercial services for neighborhood residents*

*Prosperity 3.4: Develop a new public plaza in the south downtown area that can be used for year-round events and enhance the Milwaukie Farmer’s Market*

## Opportunities & Challenges Influencing Urban Design & Land Use

### *Introduction of Neighborhood Hubs Project*

The Neighborhood Hubs concept emerged through community feedback during the development of Milwaukie’s Community Vision and Action Plan. The overall goal of this concept is to provide amenities closer to the city’s predominantly residential zones. Design of the hubs will vary and will reflect the characteristics of the adjacent neighborhoods. They will also provide a range of services to neighborhoods based on consumer demand and market-supported development. Uses could range from temporary or transitional uses such as pop-up farm stands or food trucks, to community gathering spaces or dog parks, to more permanent structures that may be developed. Milwaukie has worked with Neighborhood District Associations (NDAs) and private developers in an attempt to create innovative site plans that are supported by both the community and private sector. Defined urban design standards and guidance will be integral as the City formalizes policies regarding Neighborhood Hubs into Milwaukie’s Comprehensive Plan Update.

### *Local Barriers to Innovative Design*

The City has a two-track design review process for development. The first provides clear and objective building design standards that, if met, allow for a straightforward administrative process. The second track occurs through a discretionary review of design “guidelines” that require a more complex analysis of how the development provides quality design. The two-track system for development and design standards has led to tension between ensuring quality design and allowing for design flexibility. For example, the design standards for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) largely drive the development of traditional, Craftsman-style units, and limit the potential of more modern designs. This lack of flexibility in the code can lead to a built environment with little variety among buildings. Milwaukie is currently updating its downtown design guidelines and review process and is examining potential code amendments for its ADU and cottage cluster development types.

### *Accommodating Infill Residential Density*

The City Council has expressed an interest in allowing for a greater variety of housing types in existing neighborhoods, which coincides with recent proposals at the state level. In recent years, jurisdictions such as Portland and Tigard have explored allowing up to four units on a single lot, so long as they are consistent with the bulk and scale of permitted single family residences. Some jurisdictions have also lessened design standards to reduce expenses to the building process. However, this may conflict with equitable access to housing if more affordable units are built with lesser quality materials or to lesser design standards.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) also provide an opportunity to accommodate residential growth in existing neighborhoods. In accordance with Senate Bill 1051, Milwaukie must allow one ADU to be developed per detached single-family unit. However, current building design and land use fees can be prohibitively expensive. For example, the system development charges associated with the development of ADUs are similar in cost to that of a larger single-family unit, which can disincentivize ADU development. Other jurisdictions have waived SDCs altogether for ADUs to encourage their development.

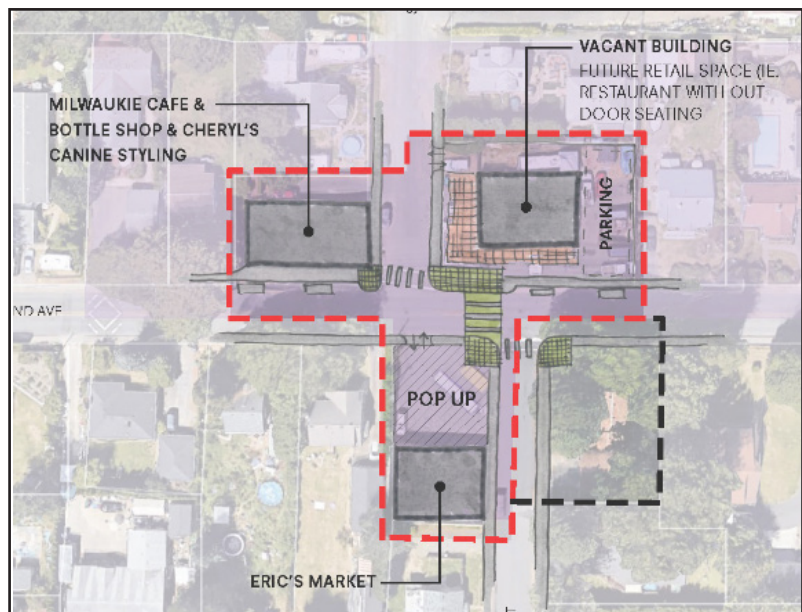


Figure 4: Proposed Concept for a Neighborhood Hub



Figures 5 & 6: Potential design concepts for the Murphy site from the Central Milwaukie Land Use & Transportation Plan (2015)

### Policy Questions, Observations, and Implications

In determining how the Comprehensive Plan Update can support Milwaukie’s Community Vision goals and action items, as well as assets, trends, and challenges, we can consider the following questions and observations:

- How do we ensure that urban design is reflective of community needs and values?
- How do we utilize equity considerations to shape urban design and land use decisions, given that design standards and guidelines can be subjective in nature and vary culturally?
- Where are there additional opportunities to implement Metro’s 2040 Urban Growth Concept?
- How do we ensure quality design while also being flexible and considerate of the financial implications of design review processes and design requirements?
- The Vision calls for more community spaces and public plazas. How can we achieve these objectives, when most of our development is infill and limited in scope?
- The majority of the City is currently zoned for detached single family residences. As part of the work on the Housing Chapter and in line with proposed state legislation in 2019, the City will be exploring opportunities for allowing additional development types in single family neighborhoods. What types of design principles and need to be considered in this process?
- The Milwaukie Marketplace is Milwaukie’s main commercial area, and is currently limited to commercial uses. However, it is has had difficulty attracting and keeping tenants, even as the regional economy has improved. It also presents challenges as far as multimodal access and walkability. How can we increase the activity and vitality in this area as well as other commercial areas?
- Should housing be allowed in all commercial zones? Should it only be allowed as part of mixed-use projects?
- How can urban design address climate change adaption/mitigation and provide a more sustainable built environment?