

City of Milwaukie



# SOUTH DOWNTOWN CONCEPT PLAN

August 2011  
WALKER•MACY



## City of Milwaukie

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# 1 INTRODUCTION & PROCESS



# PLANNING PROCESS

This project is part of an ongoing planning effort for South Downtown, dating to 2008 and represents a refinement of the ideas explored thus far. This portion of the work, Phase 4 (see graphic on opposite page) saw the expansion of the project Steering Committee from 9 people to 22. Everyone who volunteered was appointed to the new Steering Committee, including seven of the Group of Nine who were previously deeply engaged with the planning process. Also of significance was the addition of the South Downtown property owners – all of whom became active participants during this phase.

The Steering Committee met three times in full, with one extra meeting held in June for a dozen or so Committee members who were interested in delving more deeply into critical design decisions.

The consultant team interviewed project stakeholders, summarized their input, reviewed and commented on prior South Downtown studies, conducted a conference call and meeting with the Development Advisors, met with TriMet and Ankrom Moisan architects (who are working on the Triangle Site and light rail station building), studied the fabric of downtown Milwaukie and shared images from similar downtowns, and then drew up three concept plans for the Steering Committee to review and respond to.



Joe Loomis



Neil Hankerson and Eric Shawn

## Planning Timeline

| Milwaukie South Downtown Refinement        | 2010  |         |             |      |        |  |
|--|-------|---------|-------------|------|--------|--|
| Schedule                                   | April | May     | June        | July | August |  |
| 1.0 Orientation and Kickoff Meeting        | ■ ● ● |         |             |      |        |  |
| 2.0 Plan Evaluation and Initial Assessment |       | ● ● ● ● |             |      |        |  |
| 3.0 Alternative Concepts & Open House      |       |         | ● ● ● ● ● ● |      |        |  |
| 4.0 Preferred Concept and Implementation   |       |         |             |      | ● ●    |  |

*Monthly Project Management Team Meetings*

- Steering Committee
- Development Advisors
- Public Open House
- Trimet Coordination
- Triangle Site Coordination

|                |                |   |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| <b>PHASE 1</b> | <b>2008</b>    | South Downtown Concept Plan Review, Validation, Exploration and Development   |
| <b>PHASE 2</b> | <b>2008-09</b> | Diagnosis<br>Pattern Language for a New South Downtown Concept  |
| <b>PHASE 3</b> | <b>2009</b>    | Guidelines and strategies for Implementation  |
| <b>PHASE 4</b> | <b>2010</b>    | Pattern Language and Concept Plan Testing and Refinement  |
| <b>PHASE 5</b> | <b>2011-12</b> | 'Small Moves' Project Implementation<br>Zoning and Comp Plan Updates<br>Land Disposition and Development Agreements |
| <b>PHASE 6</b> | <b>2012-13</b> | Light Rail Construction Begins<br>First Construction Projects   |
| <b>PHASE 7</b> | <b>2014-15</b> | Light Rail Station Construction<br>Light Rail Opens   |

## Farmers Market Open House

With the consensus of the Steering Committee and a set of clear and compelling drawings, an Open House was held at the Milwaukie Farmers Market on the morning of September 12. This setting created an opportunity for the public to view the material and comment on the plan. City staff were interested in soliciting opinions about the scheme, and educating more people about the exciting vision that was emerging for the South Downtown. Feedback from the event was overwhelmingly positive for the vision of South Downtown presented.





## 2 CONTEXT





# PATTERNS

A Pattern Language developed through a previous planning process is the guiding document for the South Downtown project and supports the community's goal to create a welcoming place for citizens and visitors.

The patterns are listed below. There are several refinements to these Patterns that can reflect the Preferred Concept while continuing to support and strengthen the community's goals. The Patterns will be updated in a subsequent process.

1. Relationship of the South Downtown to its surrounding areas.
2. A Major Plaza forms the core and focus of the South Downtown.
3. The Plaza lies at the head of Main Street.
4. From the Plaza there are views of the Willamette River and the western setting sun.
5. The Transit Station leads directly into the Plaza.
6. The Plaza is given its shape and character by a inner frontage ring of two-story buildings faced all along its length with a generous colonnade. The ring creates beautiful and comprehensible outdoor space.
7. There is a second, wider and deeper outer ring of land, containing more loosely placed one, two & three story buildings and open land. In the outer ring, especially, there is a tangled network of narrow lanes, residences, businesses, and open space.
8. As an additional support for the Plaza, 25% of the boundary land that surrounds the plaza will be restored to its natural state, preserved as an ecological area for Parkland, Fish and Wildlife.
9. The prevailing form of buildings in the SDT are ShopHouses--small mixed-use buildings, which contain both dwellings and workplaces on the same lot and are owner occupied. In many cases adjacent buildings share party walls or floors. Each lot will include some commercial workspace, some domestic living space, and some outdoor work area or garden.
10. The overall building density in the South Downtown will be limited to a floor area ratio of 1.51 for the 119,000sf of buildable land within the SDT perimeter. Thus the buildings in the SDT, in their aggregate, will be limited to 140,000sf of built space.
11. All buildings (and exterior works) in the SDT will be built by individual craftspeople working in a masonry tradition that emphasizes brickwork and cast stone, with lesser amounts of stone, concrete, ceramic tile, plaster, and metalwork. Smaller buildings may be built in wood frame with exterior woodwork.
12. From very the start, owners and owner-occupiers will be strongly encouraged to ornament their own buildings, perhaps give them an individual touch. This also means that the construction management will be organized to allow individual and personal qualities to appear in each building that is built. Furthermore, a subsidized maintenance program will assist and encourage owners to look after their properties, and keep them in sparkling order.
13. Throughout the South Downtown, there is a web of connected paths, roads, cars, electric cars, incentives for electric cars which need small parking areas, small buses, mini-parking, bicycles, sidewalks, paved areas, and parkland. They work unobtrusively and smoothly together.

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

The Walker Macy consultant team determined the following essential elements of the concept plan:

- Include a plaza as central anchor for South Downtown
- Plaza should be a vibrant, beautiful, public place
- There should be activity in evenings
- Attract small, local businesses and artist studios
- Respect history, reuse buildings
- Use timeless, locally-appropriate materials
- Preserve views and connections to River
- Provide access to preserved natural elements
- Promote pedestrian and bike-friendliness
- Integrate the light rail station
- Hide parking in structures
- Buildings should be of appropriate scale, with active ground floors



# CONTEXT

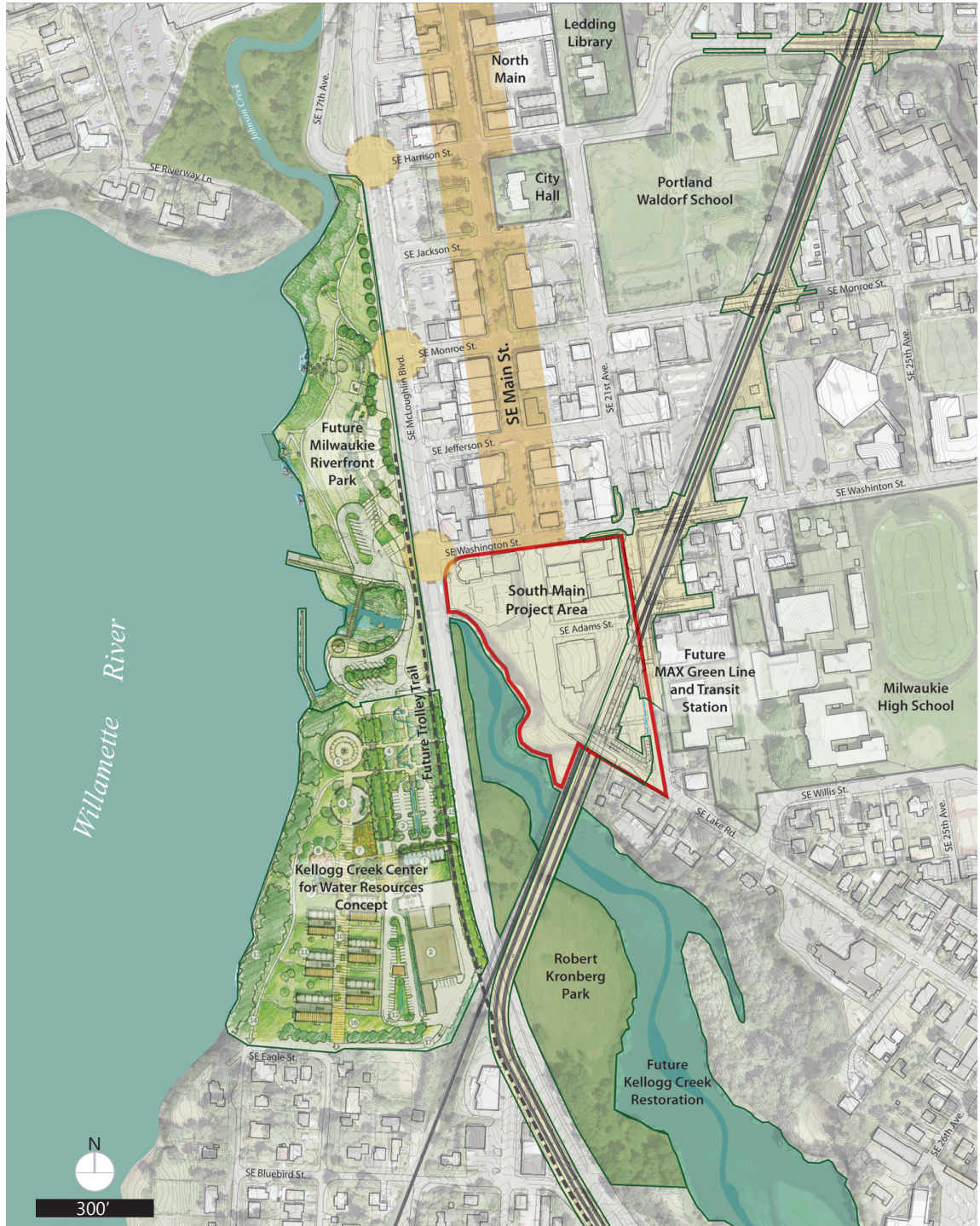
The Walker Macy team undertook several exercises on the way to a refined concept plan. The team did a detailed review of the South Downtown area, noting conditions such as floodplain elevations and railroad setback requirements.

The diagrams on the following pages were developed during a detailed analysis of the study area. The study area is situated within an incredible confluence of urban amenities and proposed improvements. These include:

- The site terminates Main Street, the central spine of downtown Milwaukie. Some key civic activities can be found along Main Street--the weekly Farmers Market, City Hall and nearby Ledding Library and schools.
- A new light rail station will open in Fall 2015 and will bring associated streetscape and bus transit improvements.
- Kellogg Lake, currently impounded underneath McLoughlin Boulevard, will be drained and restored as a functional salmon stream and natural area, with public trails to the stream's edge. Together with the estuary of Johnson Creek, this restoration will bring local citizens into close contact with downtown Milwaukie's natural features.
- The site features views of the Willamette River and the setting sun. The Milwaukie Riverfront Park will significantly enhance the Willamette River shoreline in the coming years.
- The Trolley Trail, which begins at this park, will provide bicycle and pedestrian connections south to Oregon City.
- A possible reconfiguration of the wastewater treatment plant west of the site across McLoughlin Boulevard could significantly reduce odor and aesthetic impacts, replacing much of the site with a proposed Water Resources Center.



## Existing & Future Civic Improvements





# Study Area



# Parcel Framework





## Existing Conditions



View looking north on Main Street, showing excess paved area and angled parking. Large trees at left should be protected if possible. Overhead power lines should be relocated underground.



Looking east over Kellogg Lake to Dogwood Park, from McLoughlin Boulevard. This lake will be drained and the creek restored.



The existing freight rail trestle over Lake Road limits the height of vehicles using the road. A future TriMet light rail bridge will be placed alongside it. The passages underneath these bridges should be designed for pedestrian comfort.



The Triangle site will be the location of a future MAX station, with double tracks to the left of the existing rails in this photo. Comfortable, clear pedestrian access to and from the station will help support the future South Downtown.



The existing Dogwood Park has an important view of the Willamette River and future Riverfront Park. This physical and visual connection to an iconic part of Milwaukie's identity should be maintained as the South Downtown develops.



The existing Adams Street will be closed to through-traffic when light rail is built. The area will provide opportunities for improved pedestrian access and amenities.

## Existing Built Character

Analysis of the existing buildings and property patterns in downtown Milwaukie led the team to conclude that a finer-grained approach to development will establish this district's character in a way that respects the character of downtown. Such an approach might feature individual buildings on tighter lots, developed incrementally over time. Special attention should be paid to ground-level design, fenestration and pedestrian amenities, regardless of building style or function.



Existing building footprints and lot patterns in downtown.



Numerous historic structures help define the character of downtown Milwaukie.



This modest commercial building features generous pedestrian-scaled storefront windows.



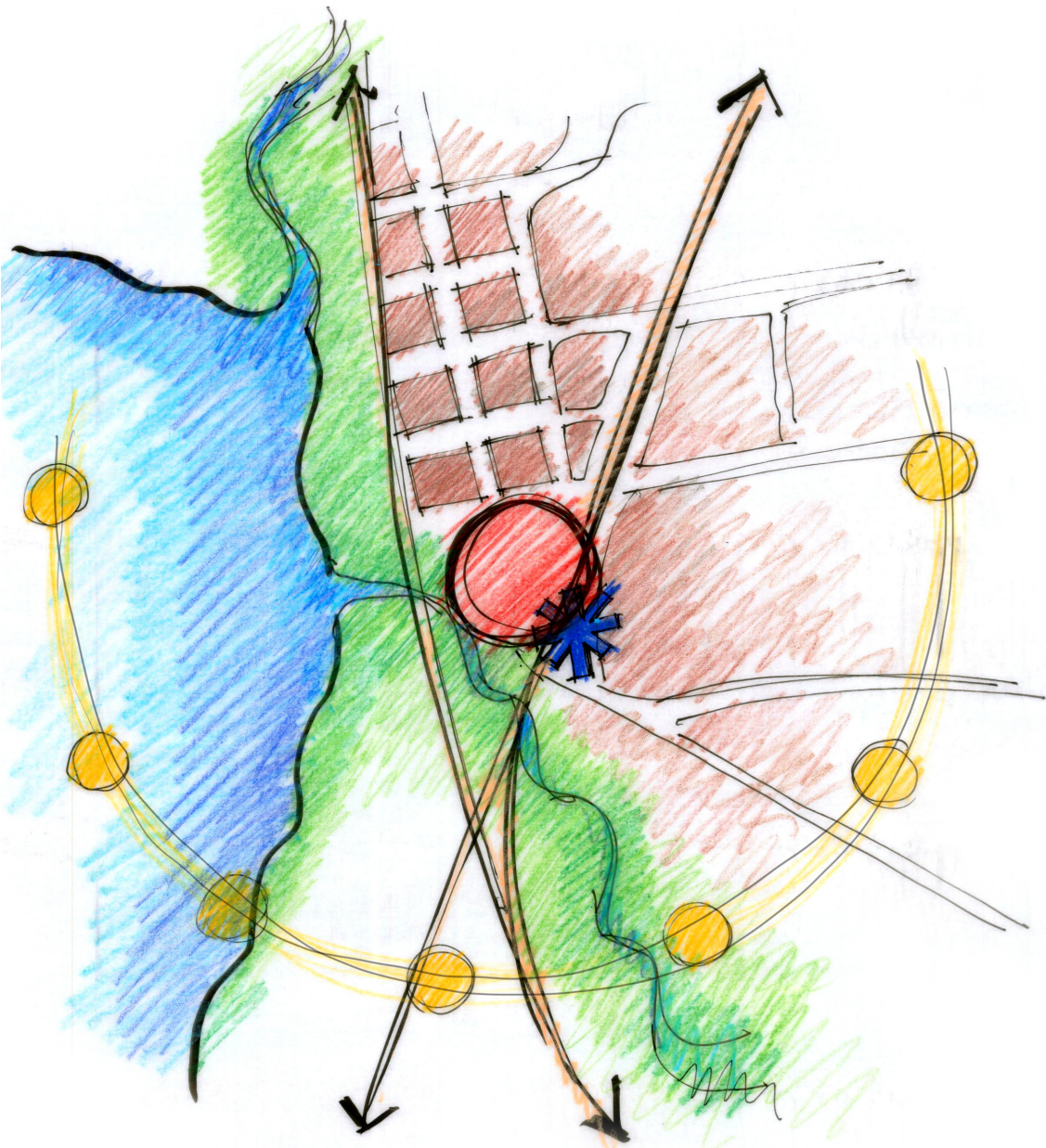
Main Street features several buildings with good street-level storefronts, wide sidewalks and outdoor seating.



# Context Summary

This diagram summarizes the important position that this site occupies in downtown Milwaukie, at the southern end of downtown next to a future generator of significant pedestrian activity surrounded by a dramatic

set of natural and recreational improvements. The site provides good opportunities to take advantage of solar access to the south and west to encourage sustainable site planning and architectural improvements.





# 3 CONCEPT

Concept

Plaza

Farmers Market

Streets

McLoughlin Bridge

Natural Connections

Light Rail



# CONCEPT PLAN

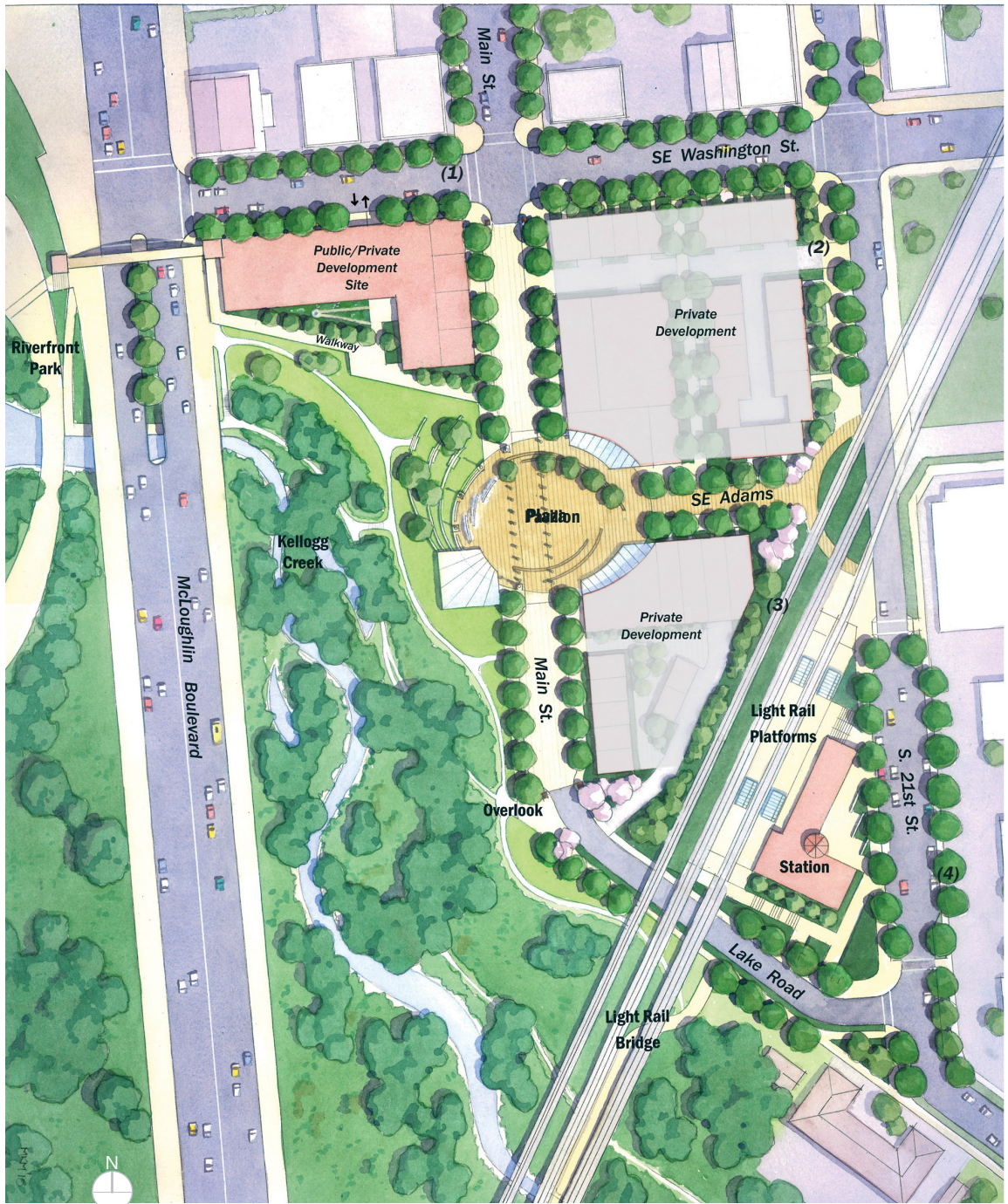
Using input from the Steering Committee and City staff, the Walker Macy team compiled key elements from three concepts into a single refined concept plan. Some important features of the plan are:

- The entire area is designed to be safe and comfortable for visitors, workers and residents, with special focus paid to the relationship between the area and Milwaukie High School and its students.
- Main Street remains open through the district, but traffic is calmed, narrowing the street with a slight grade change and pavement treatment. During events, and potentially at other scheduled times, the plaza and a portion of Main Street are closed to vehicular traffic.
- Four development sites are established, commonly known as the Cash Spot Site (1), the Bernard Block (2), the Shipley Block (3), and the Triangle or station Site (4) (see drawing at right). “L” shaped buildings are anticipated on the Cash Spot and Triangle sites, given their physical constraints. The City of Milwaukie has ownership interests on both of these sites, and is actively working with another design team on the Triangle Site project, which is intended to support light rail related activities.



- The other two sites are entirely privately owned, and will redevelop according to designs that have not yet been defined. City staff is working with the property owners to see if redevelopment can be guided along the lines suggested in the South Downtown planning project. Of particular importance are the ground floor-facing frontages on Main Street and especially on the plaza.
- A plaza at Main Street and Adams has views to the Willamette, a water feature and terraced seating on the west, retail spaces to the east, and Main Street running through the center.
- A pavilion sits in the southwest corner of plaza, looking out over Kellogg Creek. This is a small, architecturally distinctive building with an important use – such as a Nature Center that introduces the public to the Kellogg Creek Restoration Area or an active use such as a restaurant.
- The plaza’s edges are occupied by retail uses or cafes, which help activate the space and reinforce the form of the plaza with overhead canopies and awnings.







## Plaza



*Director Park in Portland features a curbsless, low-speed street next to a plaza.*

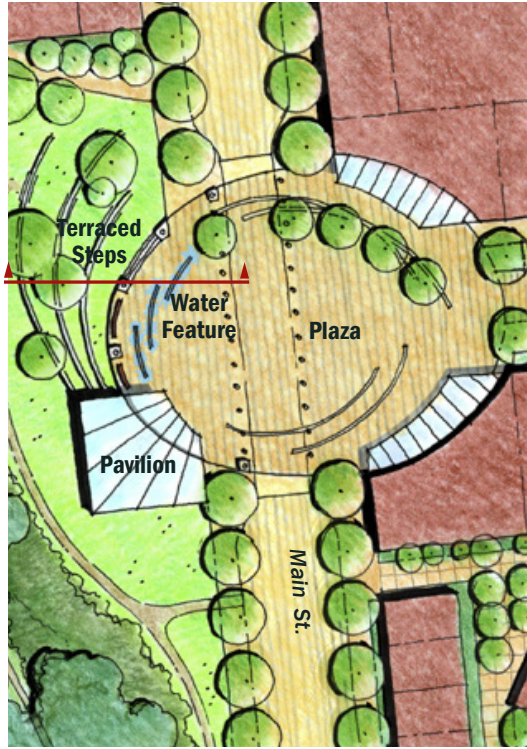


*Active fountains can be attractive places for families to gather and help populate the Plaza at a variety of times during the week.*



*The townhouse developments shown here are of a scale that reflects the preferences of local citizens, with buildings up to 4 stories in height designed to respect surrounding single-family neighborhoods.*

# Plaza



Pavilion example



Cafe seating on a plaza



Cross-section through terraced seating adjacent to Plaza

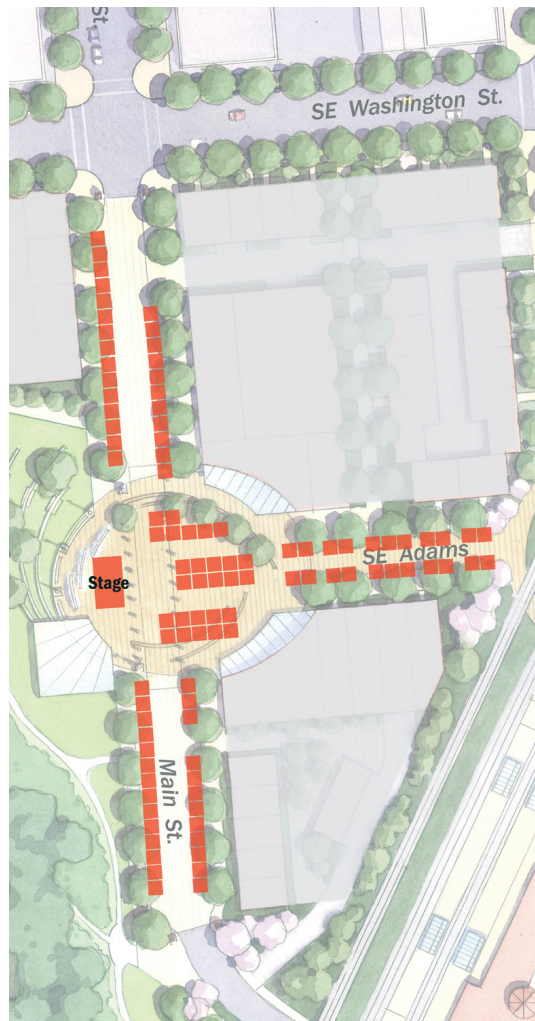


## Farmers Market

The plaza and adjacent streetscapes are designed to accommodate at least 100 Farmers Market stalls. Main Street would be closed to through traffic on Market days, using decorative gateways. The precise location of these gateways will be dependent on the redevelopment of surrounding properties. Interim closure of the street can be achieved with simple traffic cones.



Street used as farmers market



Market Stalls (100 total)

## Main Street

Main Street through South Downtown will be an important contributor to the character of the district, connecting the area to the rest of downtown Milwaukee while establishing a distinct identity for South Downtown. The street currently occupies sufficient right-of-way for the re-allocation of space--from wide drive lanes and angled parking to 11' driving lanes, wide sidewalks and parallel parking.

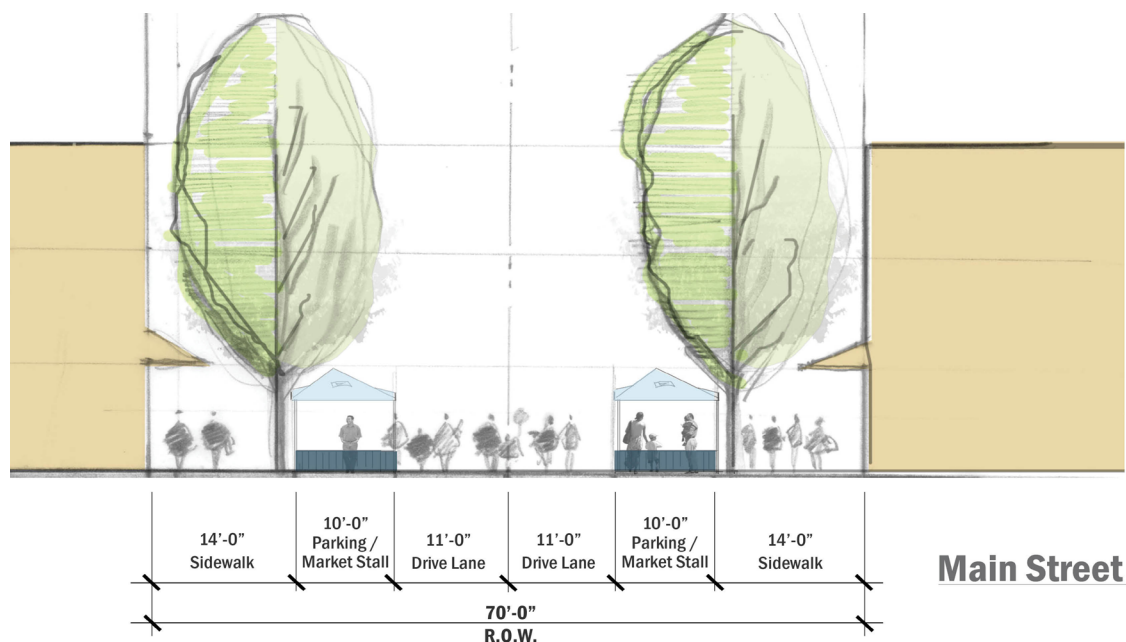
The portion of Main Street traversing the proposed plaza should be curbless, surfaced with special pavers to fully integrate the street within the plaza. Bollards could define the space for autos. As described on the facing page, Main Street would be closed for special events such as the Farmers Market or Sunday Parkways-type bicycle festivals but would remain open to through-traffic at very low speeds at most times of the day.



*Curbless street*



*Sunday Parkways*



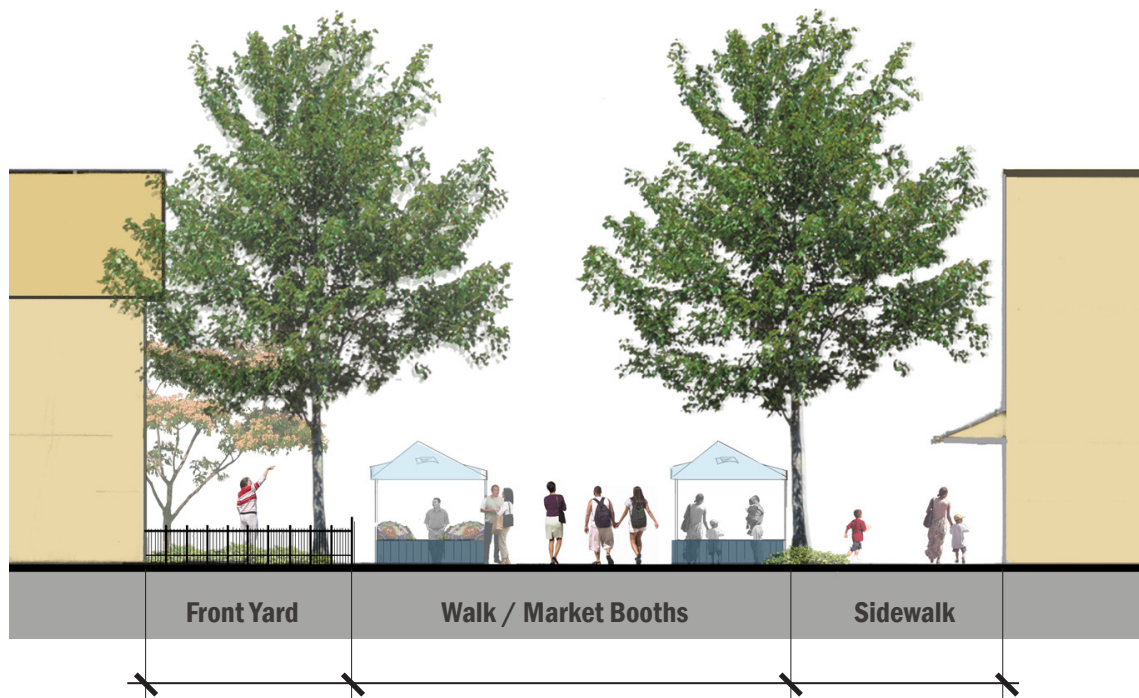
## Adams Street

Adams will be an important part of the South Downtown urban structure. The existing street will be narrowed and be developed as a pedestrian green street. While this street will not be accessible to private vehicles, it will still be designed in a way that fire trucks and service vehicles can access buildings facing the street (this typically requires at least 20' of unobstructed travel lane).

The street is envisioned as a pedestrian-friendly lane that can be configured for use by the Farmers Market on weekends. Private development parcels on its north and south edges should frame the street with active retail spaces or residences with front yards and stoops directly adjacent to Adams, to permit informal supervision and activation of the street.



*Pedestrian-oriented street with stormwater planters*

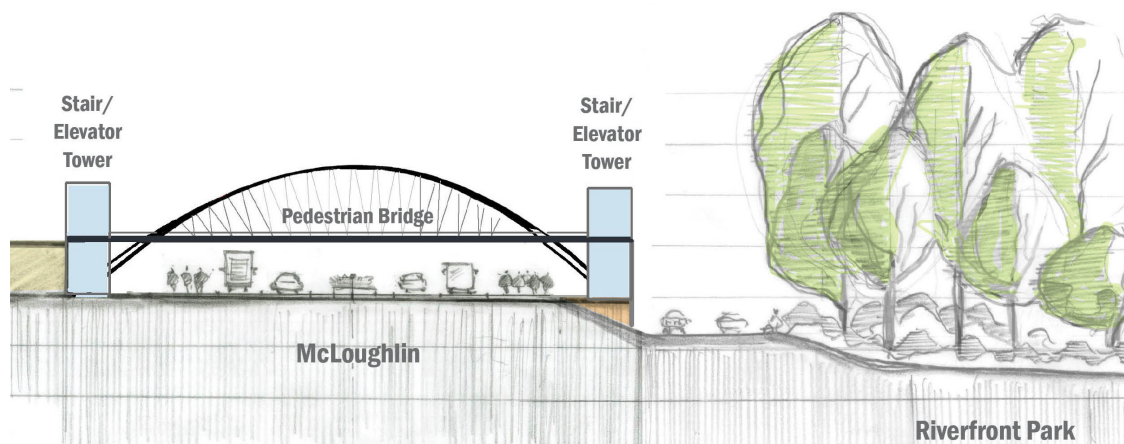
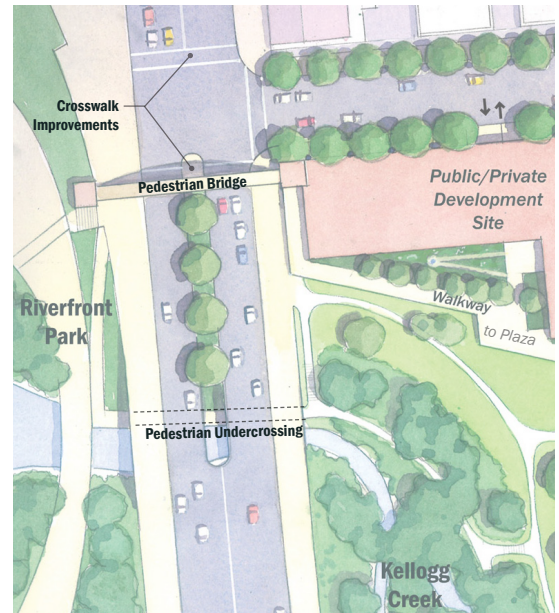


*Adams Street cross-section (on a market day)*



## Crossing McLoughlin

It is important to connect all of downtown including the South Downtown District with the Willamette waterfront in as many safe and clear ways as possible. The planned undercrossing of McLoughlin at Kellogg Creek is supplemented by an overcrossing of the highway at Washington. This bridge is at approximately the same elevation as the plaza, allowing people to move from the plaza directly to the riverfront area without climbing stairs. The at-grade intersection of Washington and McLoughlin is also envisioned to receive additional pedestrian-friendly improvements.



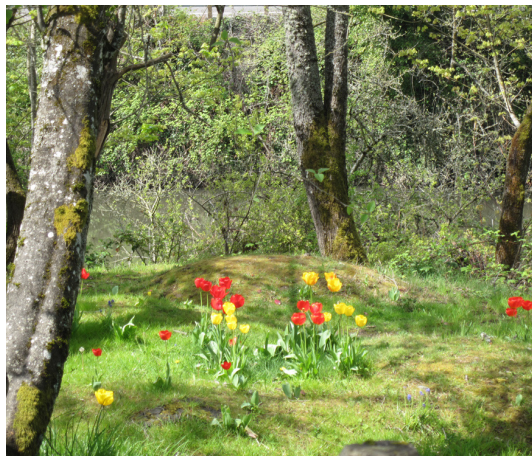


## Natural Connections

The concept for South Downtown is predicated on strengthening the City of Milwaukie's close relationship to nature, in particular its connections to the Willamette River at the new Riverfront Park. The proposed restoration of Kellogg Creek will provide South Downtown with nearby nature trails through native riparian banks and along the restored stream.

The existing Dogwood Park is expanded and integrated to the north and east with the plaza improvements and Main Street streetscape features, and to the south and west with the newly established Kellogg Creek Nature Area.

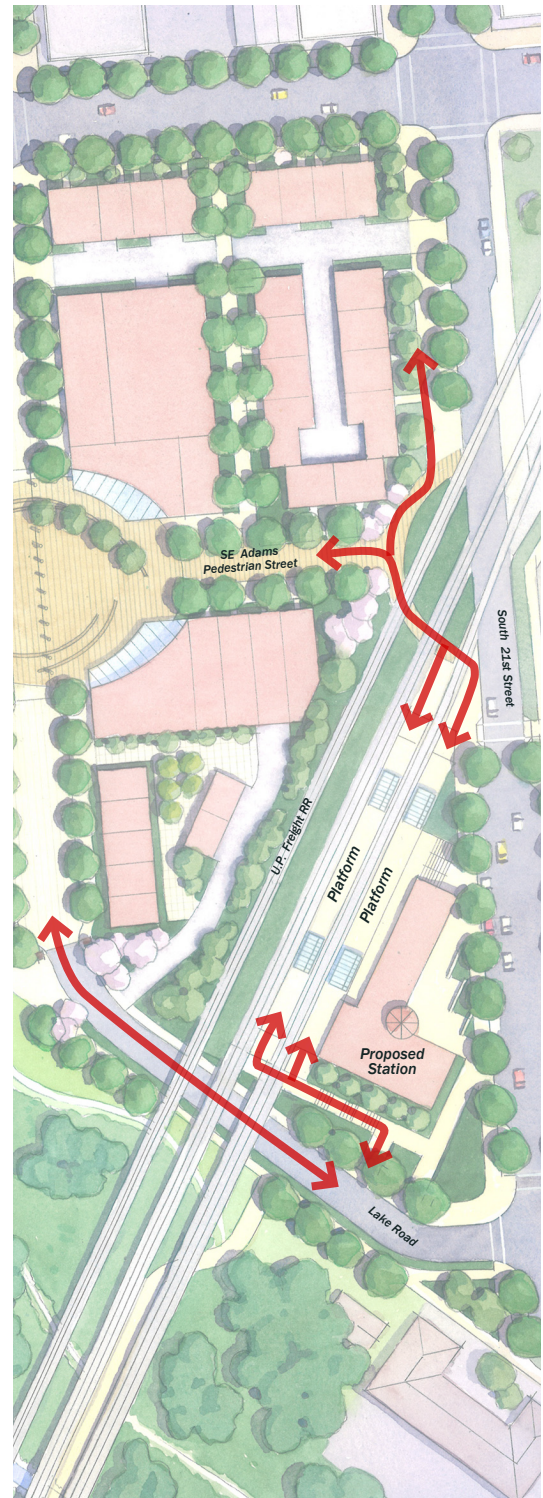
A passageway under McLoughlin Boulevard is proposed, where the existing dam now stands, to connect this Nature Area with the mouth of Kellogg Creek and Riverfront Park.



## Connecting to Transit

The proposed new Downtown Milwaukie light rail station will bring increased activity to the area. The plan considers several important elements for the successful integration of light rail with South Downtown:

- There should be a visual connection between the light rail trains and platforms and the proposed Plaza (and vice versa). This will require careful design of the buildings between the two elements.
- The rear facades of buildings adjacent to the new light rail facility should be designed where possible to present a positive relationship to the trains, minimizing blank walls or service entries and parking.
- The safety of station users should be considered in the design of pedestrian pathways to and from the platforms.
- The principal connection between the plaza and the light rail station is along Adams Street, newly designed as a pedestrian way. (This portion of Adams will be closed due to light rail construction). Near 21st, a crescent shaped sidewalk creates an easier crossing of three rail tracks on foot or bike.
- The section of Lake Road between Main Street and 21st is opened to two-way traffic and reconfigured at the east end to allow safer and more convenient turns for cars and bikes.



# 4 IMPLEMENTATION



# IMPLEMENTATION

What should the City of Milwaukie do next, to implement the South Downtown Concept Plan?

The Community Development and Planning Departments lead the shaping and realizing of long-range plans for Milwaukie. The Directors of these Departments have been collaborating and seeking the advice of industry professionals on a strategy for incrementally realizing the South Downtown vision. The City has tools like the zoning code which it can seek to amend, and can create tools that other cities use to help guide development.

What follows is a proposed work program to increase the likelihood that the City will, over time, realize the South Downtown vision that the community participants have endorsed.

## Community Development Department–led Activities

- Work closely with the three private property owners in South Downtown on redevelopment plans for their properties. Support individual owners in development efforts, and coordinate these efforts so they can collectively achieve the South Downtown vision.
- Continue predevelopment planning for the Triangle Site, in anticipation of that site’s availability and redevelopment with the opening of light rail service.
- Utilize an urban renewal planning process to study site development potential in South Downtown. Advocate for adoption of urban renewal as a means for funding portions of the South Downtown Plan.
- Either with the formation of an urban renewal district or without, establish a redevelopment agency that will assume ongoing responsibility for coordinating development efforts in the South Downtown, raising capital for projects, interfacing between private parties, citizens, city staff and city council, and bringing new resources to all who are working to implement the South Downtown plan.
- Provide TriMet with all South Downtown-related drawings and direct TriMet to incorporate, wherever possible, into the light rail project design.
- Seek to leverage existing regional flexible transportation funds on a streetscape enhancement project in the South Downtown.
- Continue to work on the Kellogg-for-Coho-Initiative as a catalyst and amenity for South Downtown redevelopment.
- Advance the design work on the Refined Concept Plan, to study the plaza and other public spaces in more detail, and/or to study the manner in which new buildings will fit into and support, the Concept Plan.
- Recruit potential tenants, builders, designers and new champions to the effort.
- Launch a “Small Moves” program to implement inexpensive improvements in the South Downtown area to begin the enlivening of public spaces.



## Planning Department-led Activities

- Review the zoning code to identify areas of inconsistency with the new South Downtown refined concept plan, and coordinate with the Community Development Department, property owners, Planning Commission and City Council on code updates to facilitate the realization of the new vision.
- Study related transportation requirements and plans that must be reconciled to achieve the new vision, including streetscape plans, transportation plans (e.g. connectivity) and traffic studies.
- Utilize the Downtown Code Refresh project in 2011 to update and improve development standards that would apply to all of downtown, including the South Downtown.
- Work to update Milwaukie's Downtown Design Guidelines to better motivate realization of the design character identified in the South Downtown planning process.
- Recommend amendments of the Downtown Plan and Comprehensive Plan to the Planning Commission and City Council if and when necessary.
- Support property owners with regulatory requirements on development proposals or ideas.
- Ensure that planning and permitting for the light rail project takes into account, and is bolstered by, the community consensus that has emerged around the South Downtown concept.

All of the items listed represent a commitment on the part of the City to achieve the South Downtown Plan. The light rail project is expected to begin construction next year. The choices that Milwaukie makes over the next 2-3 years will determine whether the South Downtown vision will be built.

