

Wood Village Stakeholder Summary

Town Center Master Plan and Transportation System Plan Update

TGM 1D-14

September 30, 2015

Final (Version 2)

Prepared by:



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Introduction..... 1

2 General Interviews..... 1

2.1 Perception of the Town Center, What Could be Improved and Its Role in the Community (Questions 1-4)..... 1

2.2 Types of Uses that Should Go in the Town Center, Including Big Box Development (Question 5 and 9) 2

2.3 Transportation Access and Needs (Questions 6 and 7) 2

2.4 Town Center Design (Question 8)..... 3

2.5 Who/How Else Should we Engage? (Question 10) 3

3 Developer Interviews 4

3.1 Vision for Town Center, Including Uses and Building Standards (Questions 1, 2 and 4)..... 4

3.2 Market Opportunities for (Re)Development (Questions 3 and 7)..... 4

3.3 Barriers to Development and Suggested Solutions (Questions 5 and 6)..... 5

3.4 Business Climate in Wood Village (Questions 8 and 9) 5

3.5 Others We Should Talk To (Question10) 5

4 Overall Summary Observations 5

Appendix A List of Stakeholders Interviewed..... 7

Appendix B Interview Questions..... 8

1 INTRODUCTION

The Wood Village Town Center Master Plan (TCMP) and Transportation System Plan (TSP) Update project team held interviews to better understand the issues, needs, opportunities and concerns that stakeholders have with respect to the Wood Village Town Center. The City of Wood Village, ODOT and the consultant team worked together to identify the list of stakeholders. The project team sought to obtain various perspectives including those of City residents, businesses, nearby jurisdictions and members of the real estate and development industries.

As part of this process, team members conducted 18 separate meetings. Some of the meetings were with small groups, so a total of 38 individuals participated in interviews. A key goal of the TCMP project is to recommend land uses that have market feasibility so that development may occur in the near term. Therefore, eight of the interviews (with a total of 11 individuals) were held with members of the real estate and development communities. In addition, a particular effort was made to meet with representatives from neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the Town Center and from the large ethnic and low income communities living in Wood Village. Appendix A contains a list of all stakeholders interviewed.

Most interviews were held in person, but a few were held by phone. In order to leverage the particular knowledge and interests of stakeholders interviewed, different questions were developed for members of the real estate development industry and for other community stakeholders. The two sets of questions are attached in Appendix B.

Below is a brief description of the results from each set of questions. That is followed by an overall summary and discussion of major themes.

2 GENERAL INTERVIEWS

Ten interviews with a total of 27 individuals were held with Wood Village residents, owners of local businesses and staff from nearby jurisdictions. Below is a summary of the responses by topic.

2.1 PERCEPTION OF THE TOWN CENTER, WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED AND ITS ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY (QUESTIONS 1-4)

There was a wide range of stakeholder views as to the role of the site and this affected perceptions. Most of those interviewed thought the current retail mix was okay but wanted more activity at the Town Center. Businesses owners generally expressed satisfaction with the appearance and focus of the current Town Center. On the other hand, residents and advocacy groups generally view the property as an opportunity to establish the City's civic or community center and wanted to see a higher level of design and infrastructure improvements that would help create a positive identity for Wood Village. As a result, those stakeholders would like to see the Town Center enhanced to include more sidewalks, landscaping and a playground, park or a community gathering place. Almost all interviewees agreed that the Town Center needed to be family friendly and provide jobs, services and/or taxes to the community.

2.2 TYPES OF USES THAT SHOULD GO IN THE TOWN CENTER, INCLUDING BIG BOX DEVELOPMENT (QUESTION 5 AND 9)

Interviewees expressed a desire for a variety of additional uses at the site. Retail and family style restaurants and entertainment uses were cited most often. Several stakeholders also hope to see the site become a regional draw again as it was when the racetrack was operational. Suggestions included tourism, family entertainment and sports complexes. Additional grocery stores, such as New Seasons, were also mentioned as needed along with an athletic club. Gresham Station and Fairview were mentioned as having some desirable features.

Stakeholders expressed a mix of views on housing. In general, business owners were more open to higher density, multi-family housing. Other community members preferred home ownership options, including single family detached home, townhomes and condominiums. Several interviewees expressed concern about the amount of low income housing already in the area and a few noted that they believed criminal and gang activity in the City was on the rise as a result. These stakeholders appeared to associate multi-family housing with low income housing.

Business owners were generally open to big box retail. Many other community members also saw big box retail as increasing the shopping options and attracting higher level retail activity to the area. Several interviewees specifically mentioned Costco. Macy's was another larger department store that was cited by a couple of interviewees.

Several community members preferred smaller and/or locally owned, retail, family entertainment, tourism or civic uses and requested that no additional big box retail be developed at the site. Concerns that stakeholders expressed about big box retail included impacts such as traffic in the parking lot, lack of economic benefits to the community and the 2004 agreement that established a limit of three big box retailers for the site. Opponents of big boxes generally indicated that these uses detracted from other community uses and the desire to attract a higher level of retailer to the area.

Overall, most stakeholders interviewed agreed that family-friendly uses, such as full service restaurants, restaurants that cater to children and can host celebrations, athletic clubs, sport complexes, or movie theaters, would benefit the community. Civic, park and community gathering spaces were repeatedly mentioned as desirable. Residential uses that received the most support were ownership or mixed-use options. Multi-family residential was favored by a few, however, only higher-end high density housing appears to have broad support at present. Orenco Station was an example of desirable higher density residential or mixed use option that received specific mention.

2.3 TRANSPORTATION ACCESS AND NEEDS (QUESTIONS 6 AND 7)

Most interviewees drive to the Town Center and walk within it. In general, the roadway access is considered good. Interviewees noted that the location between two highway interchanges and with several larger arterials made it relatively easy to access the center by car. Congestion was largely not considered a problem, although the intersection of Arata Road and 223rd Street was cited as not functioning well and being congested.

Pedestrian access to, and within, the Town Center was a common concern cited by interviewees. Stakeholders noted the need for sidewalks on nearby streets and specifically mentioned Arata Road and

Halsey Streets in this regard. The lack of safe crosswalks on Halsey Street and Wood Village Boulevard and the speed of traffic on Halsey Street, Arata Road and 238th Avenue were cited as safety problems, as well.

There is considerable interest in improved pedestrian facilities within the Town Center site. A number of those interviewed noted the difficulties of walking across the parking lot and requested more internal sidewalks or paths. A couple of stakeholders suggested that covered sidewalks be provided.

Several interviewees mentioned the need for better transit service. While the site has transit access on Halsey (route 77) and Sandy Boulevard and 238th Avenue (route 21), interviewees cited the lack of express or frequent service as a gap. Several indicated that additional service would need to be provided in order for the site to become a regional draw. A couple of stakeholders suggested improved connections between the residences and employment opportunities north of Sandy Boulevard.

While few stakeholders use bikes to access the Town Center, most support the need for multimodal access. There are several bike lanes in the area already and a few of those interviewed specifically noted the need to provide bicycle access as part of any development.

2.4 TOWN CENTER DESIGN (QUESTION 8)

Business stakeholders generally thought the design and landscaping requirements supported a good aesthetic at the Town Center. One business complained that the strict standards detracted from the ability to advertise the location.

In contrast, other community members frequently seek a higher level of design and enforcement of standards. Improved walkability was a common refrain. Bridgeport Village was cited as an example of an appealing aesthetic. Several stakeholders would like to see a park, playground or community plaza that could become a community focal point.

2.5 WHO/HOW ELSE SHOULD WE ENGAGE? (QUESTION 10)

Stakeholders suggested that the project engage the following groups and individuals:

- Ukrainian and Hispanic populations, specifically through the churches and residential communities. The Ukrainian church, the Wood Village Baptist Church, Home Forward and Multnomah County Health Program (STRIVE) offered to host meetings. Stakeholders suggested kid and family friendly and food focused activities to draw people out.
- Schools including, Reynolds School District, Alternative High School (AIM?) and Mt. Hood Community College
- Neighboring jurisdictions such as the Gresham Mayor, Metro, Multnomah County, City of Gresham, Community Development Directors of Fairview, Troutdale and Gresham
- Business associations including the Fairview Business Association, the Gresham Chamber, the West Gorge Chamber, East Metro Economic Alliance, Columbia Corridor Association and Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Community organizations such as the Urban league, IRCO (Somali network), Community Alliance of Tenants, Multnomah County Office of Equity and Inclusion

- Individuals including Kevin (a NY Life Insurance agent), Tom Guisto (commercial real estate agent), Lori Stegman (running for Multnomah County Board), Dean Herford (owner of Bumpers) and Dan Robertson (developer)

3 DEVELOPER INTERVIEWS

Eight interviews with a total of 11 individuals were held with members of the real estate and development communities. The questions focused on market feasibility. Responses are summarized below. The full list of questions and interviewees are in appendices.

3.1 VISION FOR TOWN CENTER, INCLUDING USES AND BUILDING STANDARDS (QUESTIONS 1, 2 AND 4)

The real estate developers generally described the Town Center in terms of its development potential. Most of those in the real estate industry who were interviewed favored multifamily residential development with some open space. Local business owners generally supported development that would bring them more customers. Suggestions included entertainment or other commercial uses. As one local business owner put it “something that would put Wood Village on the map”. Additional retail was acknowledged to require more of a regional draw due to the lack of disposable income among area residents. Neither the Kohl’s nor Fred Meyer’s representatives were very supportive of additional big box retail, however, and favor smaller retail or service uses.

Most developers interviewed did not comment on building standards. Those who did generally suggested a high quality aesthetic be maintained. One suggested design review to ensure that nothing “junky” be allowed. Civic, public gathering and open space uses were also suggested as supporting an overall development. The wetland was cited as a good location for the open space.

3.2 MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR (RE)DEVELOPMENT (QUESTIONS 3 AND 7)

The strong market for residential was frequently noted. A variety of residential types were considered to be viable, with particular mention of multifamily, low income and senior housing. One developer pointed out that Gresham rents were a concern as they could pull down the potential rents in this area.

The development community also indicated that office uses are a possibility, although stakeholders noted that the market in East County is not as strong in this respect. Some stakeholders suggested a large medical or other anchor would help establish the location for other offices uses. There has been recent interest in the area from medical clinics.

The retail market was acknowledged to be weak and few developers focused on retail. Local businesses would like more dining options including full service restaurants, food carts, and coffee shops.

Both developers and local businesses agreed that civic, open space or park uses would help create a more significant development. The wetland was again mentioned as a potential focal point for these uses.

3.3 BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT AND SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS (QUESTIONS 5 AND 6)

Stakeholders mentioned the lack of disposable income locally, crime, gang activity, the wetland and the adjacent communities who oppose multifamily residential as barriers to development. One stakeholder suggested that the City (with the County and other appropriate agencies) explore enforcement of landlords who do not properly maintain or manage their property.

3.4 BUSINESS CLIMATE IN WOOD VILLAGE (QUESTIONS 8 AND 9)

In general, the City staff was considered easy to work with. However, a couple of stakeholders mentioned the lack of flexibility with respect to design standards and lack of experience with development as a barrier.

3.5 OTHERS WE SHOULD TALK TO (QUESTION 10)

Interviewees suggested that the project reach out to the following groups or individuals:

- Gresham Economic Development
- Julie Louvre Oregon Pacific Investment
- Aaron James of Urban IDM Companies
- CRA downtown Portland (brokers of shopping center)
- Adjacent residents and jurisdictions

4 OVERALL SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

Stakeholders expressed a great deal of interest in seeing the Town Center developed. Stakeholders generally consider the site a significant asset and would like to see it developed in a way that supports the community both as a gathering place and from an economic development perspective. There is broad support for walkable, mixed-use community development.

At this point, however, there is disagreement among stakeholders with respect to residential development that will need to be addressed during the master planning process. Some local residents fear that multifamily housing development will bring in additional low income residents to the area which is already struggling with some poorly managed low income housing complexes. A few local residents indicated that existing low income complexes are responsible for increased crime and gang activity. The development community, on the other hand, considers multifamily to be one of the most viable uses for the site. Further, developers indicate that higher density residential is needed to strengthen the market for additional retail.

It will be necessary to address perceptions that some residents have about multifamily housing being associated with low income housing and/or perceptions about low income housing before agreement on multifamily housing can be achieved. It might be possible to distinguish the type of housing from low income housing by clearly articulating the housing type and the market value Homeownership options might be one way to achieve support for residential uses.

However, some stakeholder comments suggest that rents might be lower in this area and that low income housing is a key market. If that is the case, it will be necessary to address concerns among some

community members regarding the current low income complexes in order to obtain support for additional residential developments. One stakeholder suggested that the City pursue enforcement of landlords in terms of any infractions that arise in relation to their management of current low income complexes. This stakeholder also indicated that Housing Authority management of low income housing might mitigate some of the concerns that were expressed by a few local residents. Engagement of the police to work with residents to address concerns about crime, crime prevention and education about the actual crime rate, which is, generally, relatively low¹, might be a part of a solution.

There is general agreement that development at the Town Center should be family friendly, aesthetically designed, create a sense of civic pride and serve as a community gathering space. Public amenities such as pedestrian walkways, public open space and other civic infrastructure clearly have broad support among stakeholders. Additionally, retail and family entertainment uses also appear to have significant support with the local community. While, in general, developers expressed reservations about the local market for retail, uses that have a larger draw, such as athletic clubs, restaurants, sports complexes, theaters and family fun centers should be explored during the market study. Further, professional office, schools and medical clinics appear to have interest from stakeholders in both the local and the development communities and should be further explored from a market feasibility and community perspective. In addition, ethnic retail or food uses are of interest to the community and should be analyzed for their viability from a market perspective. One stakeholder's suggestion was for Wood Village to establish an identity around its diverse communities as a way to bring the various groups together.

¹ <http://www.clrsearch.com/Wood-Village-Demographics/OR/Crime-Rate>

APPENDIX A LIST OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

General Stakeholder Interviews

Beck Lonctot and Michelle Stevenson, AAA

Grant Brown, Poplar Mobile Home Park

Pastor Bill Ehmann, Wood Village Baptist Church

Michael Burlingame, Riverwood HOA President (recently relocated to Vancouver)

David and Michelle Van Vise, Riverwood HOA Board

Vasily Prychyna, Riverwood resident

John Connolly, Manager, El Torogoz Restaurant (plus five employees and family members)

Dorel Maftey, Andrey Koba, Yaroslav F. Globak, Marina Globak, Ukrainian Bible Church

John Miner, Retired Superintendent of Schools

Betty Dominguez, Home Forward

Pam Hillier, Theresa Rios Campos, Multnomah County Health Program Strive to Reduce Violence Everywhere (STRIVE) with Youth.

Elvia Angel and Aldo Dominiques, STRIVE with Youth members

Brad Loucks, Owner, The Rock Wood Fired Pizza

Ted Tosterud, Mayor, City of Fairview

Christy Wurster, Fairview City Administrator

Developer/Real Estate Stakeholder Interviews

Greg Mickelson, Developer, GM Realty Advisors

Jim Coombs, Real Estate Manager, Fred Meyer

Ken Boyko and Dennis O'Neill, Brokers, Norris, Beggs, Simpson

Dwight Unit, Developer

Pooney Grey, Owner of Office/Mixed-use building on Halsey St.

Sue O'Halloran and Martin Stone, Brokers of office and mixed-use property on Halsey St.

Ralph Pregizer, Store Manager, Kohl's

Jatin Patel, Owner, Best Western on Halsey St.

Tom Bouillion, Planning Manager (represents Vista Business Park Property), Port of Portland

APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

General Stakeholder Interview Questions

1. What is your perception of the Wood Village Town Center?
2. Does it need expansion/improvement to the undeveloped portion of the Town Center?
3. What would you like to see change/improved?
4. How would that benefit your family, friends, or community?
5. Are there specific types of businesses, residences, or other uses, you would like to see there?
 - a. Should there be a preference for business or residential uses or types?
6. Is it easy for you to get to the Town Center? How do you usually get there?
7. Are there transportation needs (roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity) to make access to the Town Center safer or easier? Please describe.
8. Do you like the design of the current Town Center? How can the design be improved?
9. Would you like to see more or big box retailers or a variety of other uses?
10. Are there other groups or individuals we should engage in this plan? What are the best ways to get their input?

Developer/Real Estate Interview Questions

1. What is your vision for the town center?
2. What do you think should go there? Why?
3. What are the opportunities for development there?
 - a. Residential
 - b. Office
 - c. Commercial
 - d. Open space/parks
 - e. Other

4. What kind of building standards should the city support for new development at the Town Center to add value to the property?
5. What are the barriers to investment? e.g., physical, financial, market, regulatory, political.
6. What can/should be done to address those barriers? (e.g., policy, plan, zoning, access, other changes?)
7. How is the real estate market in Wood Village (for relevant land uses)? E.g., lease rates, recent transactions, absorption, vacancies, etc. How does this compare to nearby or competitive areas?
8. Is the city a good place to do business/development? Why yes or no?
9. How can it be improved?
10. Is there anyone else we should talk to?