

# North Old Town / Chinatown Redevelopment Strategy

## Background Materials for the SAC WORKSHOP #2 – 14 November 2006

### Brief Synopsis of Previous Reports

This Redevelopment Strategy must be reviewed within the context of a long history of comprehensive planning and urban design studies. A brief overview of some of the more pertinent reports is listed below:

#### Central City Plan, 1988

While far reaching in scope and covering the whole of the central city, the *North of Burnside Urban Design Plan* references several specific goals and actions pertaining to the area surrounding the current study blocks. They include:

- Preserving and enhancing the district's architectural character and international character,
- Focus development along the extended transit mall
- Maintain those social services in the area while supporting business activities and development opportunities,
- Pursue implementation of the Chinatown Development Plan,
- Preserve and maintain up to a maximum of 1282 SRO housing units and shelter beds.
- Limit the maximum number of permanent shelter beds to 252 and allow the replacement of all district shelter beds with SRO housing units.

In addition, several specific North of Burnside action items affecting the current study area were noted:

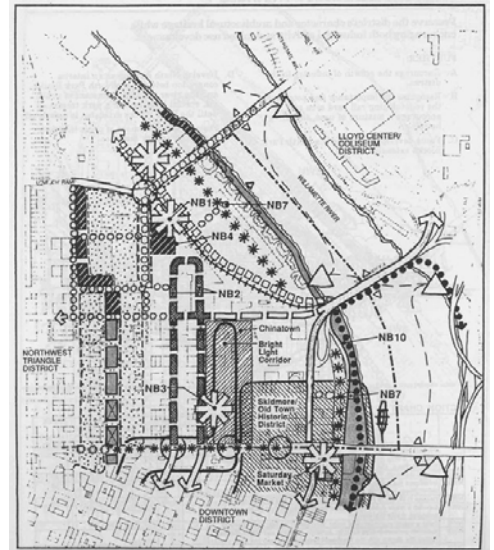
- NB3 - Establish an Asian Market with a rooftop public plaza or Chinese Garden on the block bounded by 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, Couch and Davis Streets.
- NB6 - Provide 'Portland Ornamental' cast iron lighting standards throughout the district.
- NB8 - Maintain a community center for area residents with clean-up facilities, medical support, and a job bank.
- NB11 - Build North of Burnside District gateways in locations shown on map, including additional cultural gateways on the north side of Burnside.
- Increase the supply of housing for no and low-income individuals.
- NB12 – Develop a strategy to reinforce the international character of this area.

The Human Services Sector was addressed with several recommendations, and three main items of note: establish a centralized human services info center; establish a youth center offering recreational programs, health care, counseling, and job placement; and to conduct an additional study developing a city-wide plan to guide the siting and expansion of social services facilities.

#### Old Town / Chinatown Vision Plan, 1997

This collaborative document brought together representatives of the neighborhood's diverse stakeholders and set forth a series of agreements, addressing five main areas. Periodic updating of the vision was recommended to create a living document. The five main areas were:

- *Communication/Conflict Resolution* reinforced the neighborhood's commitment to increased communication, namely through good neighbor agreements, while diversifying the housing, shelter, and social services.
- *Crime/Safety* made mention of addressing not only the reality but the perception of safety in the district.
- *Street Environment and Public Improvements* made broad recommendations regarding the physical appearance of the neighborhood.
- *Night Life/Marketing/Promotion* encouraged businesses creating active, off-hour activities and a street life inviting to visitors.
- *Development, Parking, and Circulation*, listing the goals of the planning and implementation strategy. One item of note in the social service section opposed the notion of a single, centrally located assessment center,

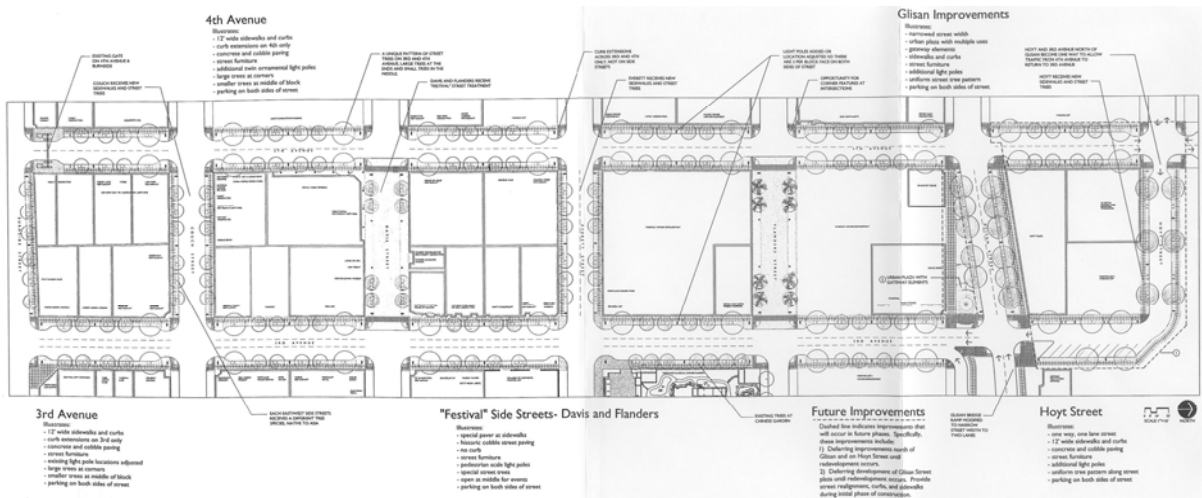


differing from the 1988 Central City Plan. Finally, the last chapter identified four specific action items: one or more housing developments in Chinatown, preparation of an Old Town/Chinatown Development Plan, soliciting a commercial development for the 'Trailways' block, and the construction of the Classical Chinese Garden.

### Old Town / Chinatown Development Plan, 1999

This report was designed to complement the spirit and implement the economic development objectives of the Vision Plan, and to serve as a broad blueprint for public and private investment. The plan addressed a large area, spanning from Union Station in the north to SW Stark street in the south, and from the Willamette River in the east, to 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the west, so holds a large range of recommendations spanning from and integrating the planned Public Market and Fire Station redevelopments, to the Burnside street improvements, to the Arts and Cultural Marketing Strategy. Specific recommendations for the current Study Area included:

- Reduce the barriers to the OT/CT district at the edges and access points, consider construction of a new gate or similar feature.
- Support new developments adjacent to the Classical Chinese Garden to enhance the visitor experience. Possibilities might include a hotel or Asian cultural center.
- Acquire most of Block 25, undertake predevelopment work, and prepare a development offering that would include parking, housing, retail, and accommodation of the Blanchet House functions.
- Address the district's parking needs with four levels of parking on Block 24, additional parking beneath and within large developments on Blocks 25 and 26, as well as Blocks O and P.
- Proceed to develop the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue concept diagram,
- Reconstruct the intersection at Glisan Street and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and proceed with a tree planting program on Glisan.



### Old Town / Chinatown 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Streetscape Plan, 2002

The improvements outlined in this document were intended to strengthen the identity of the historic district, fostering cultural and economic diversity, and promote a vibrant pedestrian streetscape. Three schemes were explored:

- *'The Ribbons'*, addressed the tree size and frequency, graphic signage, street furniture and lighting, and restriping along one, or both, of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues;
- *'The Ring'* emphasized creating a district center by temporarily blocking off Davis and Flanders for public events, and improving Glisan, to better link 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues, and,
- *'The Jewel Box'* which defined additional sidewalk improvements on Couch, Everett, and Hoyt, as well as introduced the Festival Street concept for Davis and Flanders Streets.

Ultimately, the Jewel Box approach was selected, and after some value engineering revisions, the design and engineering progressed and construction has now been substantially completed.

### **Old Town / Chinatown Vision / Development Plan Update, 2003**

The Re-Visions Committee, incorporating several members of the original 1997 and 1999 documents, was established to update and evaluate the progress of the earlier recommendations. In general, the 2003 report reaffirmed the goals and mission of the earlier efforts, while in some areas listed specific updates and recommendations. Pertinent items addressing the current Study Area centered on five topic areas:

- *Neighborhood Process* – The committee reiterated the priority of working with the Neighborhood Association to reach consensus on how to approach gentrification and balance in the area, ensure representation for all facets of the community in vision and land use work, and set up a clear communications network to promote relationship building and good neighbor agreements. The rebirth of a business association was emphasized.
- *Housing, Development, Circulation / Barriers* noted a lack of success in breaking down the barriers to the waterfront, across Burnside, and to the Pearl District. Transit options were supported, as were the preservation of landmark and contributing buildings. The committee reiterated their goal of increasing the number of for sale housing units, particularly in the 60-120 MFI range, with parking included for all new mixed-use developments.
- *Open Spaces, Community Center, Culture, History* emphasized the district's history, arts and entertainment, with particular note of the New Japantown Chinatown Historic District. It also included a clear priority for a Community Center and the desire to develop an appropriate model. A lack of consensus on the need for, or location of, potential open space in the district was also mentioned.
- *Nightlife / Marketing / Promotion / Job Creation* noted that the challenge remained regarding the interaction of active nightlife and housing and parking, and mentioned the lack of a clear job creation strategy.
- *Crime / Public Safety* stated a priority for future development to enhance the security of the neighborhood, as was the desire to address blank building walls, lighting, and provide safe public restrooms.

*Additional studies and reports recently completed, primarily addressing housing needs and retail uses in downtown Portland:*

### **Workforce Housing Report Central City Portland, Oregon, 2003**

### **Central City Housing Inventory, 2005**

### **Downtown Retail Strategy, 2002**

### **The 10-year Plan to End Homelessness in Portland and Multnomah County, 2002**

### **No Net Loss/Preservation Policy,**