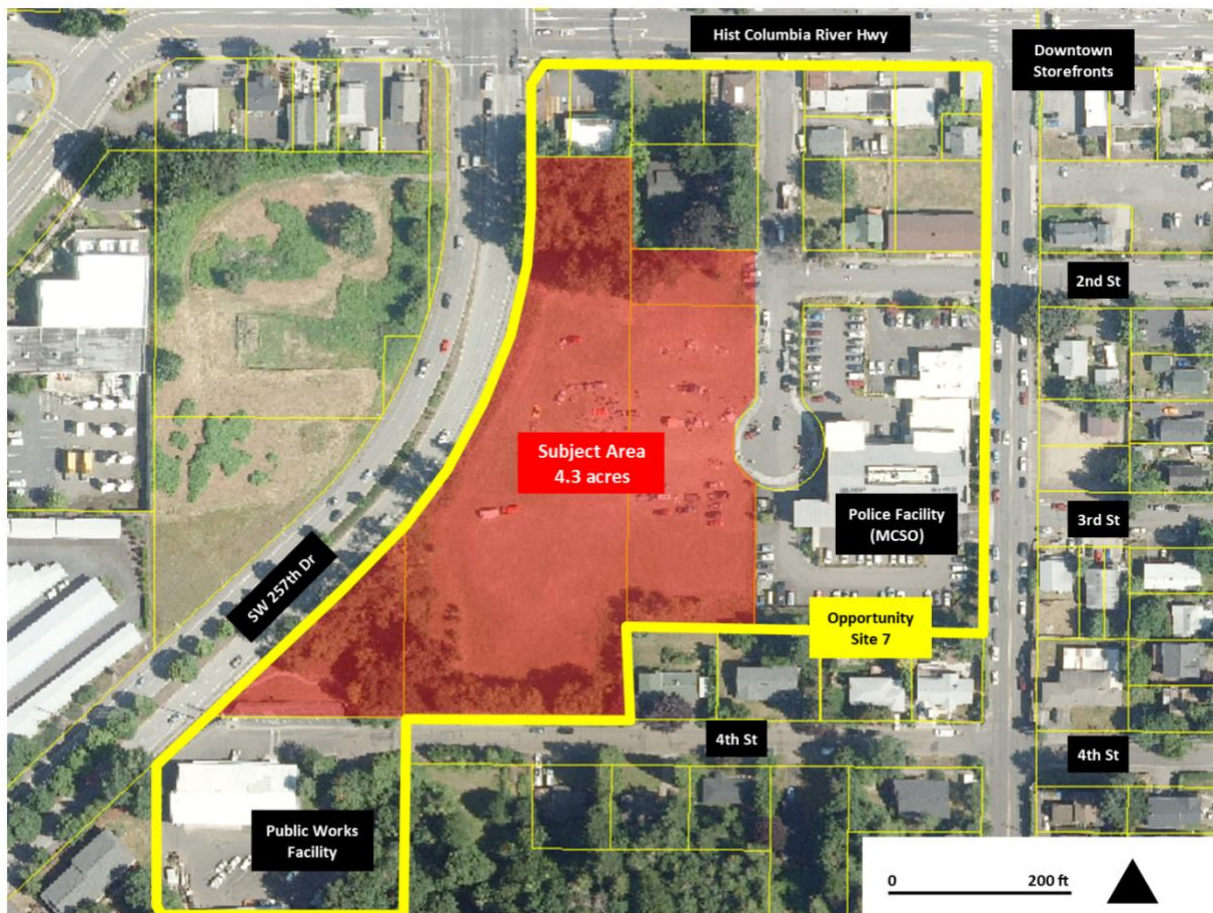


Opportunity Site 7 – Overlook Tract

The City of Troutdale’s forthcoming Town Center Plan will formally establish 12 opportunity sites located in Troutdale’s Town Center zoning overlay district. These sites were specifically selected due to their transformational potential impact to improve not only the site itself, but on surrounding properties and the Town Center area as a whole.

Opportunity Site 7 (yellow boundary) is known as the Overlook Tract, which is an appropriate name given its unique geographic situation overlooking portions of downtown Troutdale and significant viewsheds mostly to the north. It is a mix of mostly commercial and civic use properties with some residential-style buildings immediately to the southwest of our downtown core. The largest portion of the Overlook Tract are three vacant parcels; two of which are presently owned by Multnomah County; one of which is owned by the City of Troutdale. Colloquially, they have also been referred to as the Windust property, named for local developer Frank Windust, who was the former long-time owner of the property who sold it to Multnomah County in 2017. These three properties and a small portion of convertible right-of-way is the subject area for study, roughly 4.3 acres in size (red shaded area).



Zoning & Land Use Considerations

The subject area is currently zoned Central Business District (CBD), which is commercially-oriented zoning district that is similar to the zoning currently in place in the core of downtown along Historic Columbia River Hwy. Residential uses are allowed. Although possible to consider, the City, nor the property owner or prospective development interests have indicated a desire to rezone the site.

Surrounding land uses include a police facility to the east (operated by Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), which provides law enforcement services to Troutdale), some older single family homes and a public works facility to the south, 257th Drive (a county-owned arterial road) to the west, and underdeveloped property to the north.

In the Town Center Plan, each opportunity site had preferred land uses assigned to them that indicated the community preference for future development. These preferences came from public feedback at community open houses and deliberation by members of the Town Center Committee, who took that feedback into consideration and made suggestions accordingly. For the Overlook Tract, Community Service Use (government and civic uses) was the first preference, followed by High Density Residential and Mixed Use. In terms of scale, high density residential in Troutdale is roughly 21 dwelling units an acre, based on land use guidelines set in the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Current Development Interest

Multnomah County acquired the property in 2017 and has effectively land-banked it for future uses. Originally, there was a possibility given to expand sheriff's office operations given the proximity of the existing building to the east, however that has since went away after MCSO acquired additional space in nearby Fairview after taking over police operations for that community.

In 2019, upon passage of the regional affordable housing bond measure sponsored by the Metro regional government agency, Multnomah County became interested in offering the land for affordable housing to Home Forward, the regional housing authority for Portland and east Multnomah County. Home Forward is one of several housing authorities that has been tasked by Metro to deliver affordable housing units with certain program parameters by 2025. For the non-Portland, non-Gresham communities in east Multnomah County, Home Forward is charged with developing roughly 110 affordable housing units and is expecting roughly \$15 million in funding from the bond for acquisition and/or construction.

Site Benefits

Removing politics from the equation and looking at this site from a strict planning sense, the site is well situated to accommodate affordable housing. It is adjacent to three bus lines that connect it in cardinal directions to large employment centers, the local community college, commercial services, and to other transit via the Gresham Transit Center. The site is situated adjacent to a police facility, which would eliminate a lot of community concerns about safety. The site itself is on a hillside, but is somewhat easy to develop. It also allows for road connections, though access to 257th would likely be limited due to terrain and proximity to a major intersection to the north.

Concerns & Challenges

Despite the obvious opportunities, the site does have several challenges as well. They are listed below, and it is hoped they could be studied and addressed:

- The visual impact of any type of development at this site is significant, and there has been significant community concern about the aesthetics of any type of development, but in particular low-income housing. The site sits on a somewhat gentle hillside, and although somewhat positioned away from the downtown core, is still very visible from several directions.
- The city's zoning restricts development building height to 35 feet, which may cause issues on fitting all 110 or so units on the site. Going higher can be accomplished with a variance, but may also lead to increased construction costs and a higher visual impact.
- The city's development code requires a high amount of parking for multi-family residential properties irrespective of unit size or income restriction. Home Forward will likely seek variances to the parking standards, but the City feels that thinking creatively about increasing transportation choice will be important here. Ideas have included a car-sharing pod, an adjacent bike/ped greenway along 2nd Street, and electric bikes/golf carts for local transport.
- The City has an expressed interest in incorporating senior housing into this development. As a result, consideration would have to be made to accommodate universal design and the possibility of amenities or services that are oriented towards seniors.
- Unlike Gresham or other denser areas in the region, Troutdale lacks many of the human and social services (employment center, library, health clinic, school/college extension, etc.) that are typically in close proximity to these types of affordable housing development. There is concern that without a connection to these services that this is just the warehousing of folks on limited or restricted incomes without convenience nearby.
- Co-location of public services such the ones listed above will lead to prevailing wage requirements for construction, thus increasing costs for site development.
- In addition to the human and social services, other nearby commercial amenities are lacking as well, most especially a grocery store or food market. How to deal with this?
- Studies have suggested the integration of affordable housing with market-rate housing is not a preferred solution for development outcomes that are better embraced by a community at large. Development proposed would be strictly income-restricted. Are there ways to accommodate market rate housing as well?
- The NIMBY element will remain strong. Multi-family development (not just affordable housing) is still viewed with skepticism by a healthy number of residents and some city leaders, no matter how much the site's strengths suggest that this is a good spot. Finding similar success stories of co-locating affordable housing in or near a downtown area that is particularly concerned about maintaining a small-town aesthetic feel will be critical in winning over hearts and minds.