“Place refers to our surroundings. The environment in which we exist. More than a location, but the nature of that location. Place is powerful and it shapes us. All of our senses have the ability to change the way we feel, the way we act, to add or detract from our lives. But place trumps all of that. In one single place, we can hear sounds that cheer us up, smell something that makes our mouth water, see something that takes our breath away, feel a sense of connectedness and belonging.”
— Jeff Siegler
by 2040, the Troutdale Town Center will preserve its small-town feel while becoming the most vibrant, scenic, and historic hub in the region;

where families thrive, businesses prosper, and visitors return.
WHAT IS THE TOWN CENTER PLAN?

The Town Center Plan is a guiding document designed to help plan for the next 20 years of future physical, social, and economic growth in the historic heart of Troutdale, Oregon.

The original Town Center Plan was adopted in 1998 and set the tone for the first generation of intentional development and investment in the Town Center District, comprised of downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Those efforts have helped to establish a sense of place for the community at large and contributed to a small-town feel that is embraced by residents, businesses, and visitors.

Troutdale must now plan for the next generation of growth and opportunity under present and future circumstances which have changed considerably since the original plan was adopted.

The 2020-2040 Town Center Plan (also referred to as “the Plan”) is the result of a three-year effort to provide a comprehensive plan to achieve a vision for the Town Center District that is endorsed by community feedback.

The Plan contains detailed content that:

- reviews the history and present status of the District
- documents community feedback
- establishes a vision for the future
- sets expectations for new development
- creates community branding materials and marketing strategies
- informs potential changes to city policies and regulations
- provides an implementation strategy to set ideas into action
WHERE IS THE TOWN CENTER DISTRICT?

The Town Center District (also referred to as “the Town Center” or simply “the District”) refers to an actual geographic area as defined by the City and Metro, the regional government agency for the Portland metropolitan area. “Downtown” or the “Central Business District” refer to a specific location within the Town Center and are thus not directly interchangeable.

The District includes five distinctive yet interconnected neighborhoods:

**Downtown**, which is the core of the District and includes the commercial businesses along Historic Columbia River Highway and residential properties up to 3rd Street.

The **Hungry Hill** neighborhood to the south, a residential area which is anchored by Troutdale Elementary School and Helen Althaus Park, located between 3rd Street and 8th Street.

The **Eastside** neighborhood to the east, which stretches to the Sandy River and includes mostly residential properties along Beaver Creek, along with cultural, historic, and recreational amenities.

The **Halsey** neighborhood to the west, which includes residential development along Halsey Street in between Downtown and the Edgefield campus.

The **Urban Renewal Area**, which includes The Confluence site, the Columbia Gorge Outlets, and Depot Park. **The Confluence** site is the largest developable area in the District and will play a critical role in the long-term success of the Town Center and the City itself.
WHAT IS IN THE PLAN?

This Plan is more than just a typical district or neighborhood plan.

The Town Center Plan not only considers development potential for properties or improvements to infrastructure but also considers how social-economic factors and future trends may affect those changes. It also provides strategies to improve civic pride and sense of place through branding and marketing strategies. Lastly, the Plan includes implementation strategies and actions that identified stakeholders can consider and apply to fulfill the Town Center Vision.

The Plan is organized into three main chapters:

1 - The Past & Present chapter inventories the story of how the District came to be in its state in 2020. It also documents public outreach efforts to capture community feedback which helped to form the Town Center Vision and set the course for the other two chapters of this Plan. It contains info on:

2 - The Future chapter pivots to a discussion on how the community should approach for the next 20 years of growth and development for the Town Center. The chapter is comprised of four main sections elements and their components:

- The Town Center Vision
- The Socio-Economic Element
  - Social considerations
  - Economic considerations
  - Resiliency & Future Trends
- The Physical Element
  - Resources component
  - Land Use component
  - Transportation & Mobility component
  - Opportunity Sites & Corridors
- The Branding and Marketing Element

3 - Implementation provides suggestions for implementing the plan into everyday practice not only for the City of Troutdale, but also for stakeholders who hold as much interest in the success of the District as the city government itself.
PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The Town Center Plan project was a three-year planning effort. The project outline closely resembles the overall layout of the Plan and generally followed the following timeline:

- Fall 2017 – Council directs Staff to update Plan, establishes Town Center Committee
- Winter-Spring 2018 – Previous planning efforts reviewed
- Summer-Fall 2018 – Public open houses and citizen feedback
- Fall 2018 – Development of Town Center Vision
- Winter-Spring 2019 – Socio-Economic topics
- Summer-Fall 2019 – Physical elements & Opportunity Site planning
- Fall 2019-Winter 2020 – Branding & marketing efforts
- Spring-Summer 2020 – Implementation discussion
- Summer-Fall 2020 – Plan finalization

Initiated by City Council action in 2017, an ad-hoc Town Center Committee (also referred to as “the Committee”) was formed to deliver a comprehensive update of the 1998 Town Center Plan. Providing support to the Committee was City of Troutdale Staff from the Community Development Department.

The Committee and Staff also relied on assistance and contributions from public, private, and non-profit stakeholders in addition to professional and technical partners in the fields of economics, housing, architecture & design, and community branding.

Public engagement was solicited largely at several occasions in 2018 and during the branding and marketing efforts in 2019, though a consistent feedback loop was always provided given the nature of planning and the interest in the topic. Several community open houses were held in 2018 and outreach efforts were made at the Troutdale SummerFest in 2018 to solicit community feedback. Over 300 individuals provided a measure of feedback; whether it was a simple suggestion on a comment card or a detailed response to a survey.

The feedback that was most instrumental to the committee was in the form of a SWOT Analysis, which surveyed the Town Center’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

Small Town Feel
Overwhelmingly, the greatest strength identified in public engagement was the District’s small-town feel, which translated to both the built and human environment. This was attractive to residents, businesses, and visitors alike. People are appreciative of a smaller scale in comparison with surrounding areas, and there is a genuine and understandable worry that future growth and development will radically affect that dynamic.

A Pivotal Moment for Downtown
Several “first generation” businesses who invested in Downtown in the past 20 to 30 years are considering the sale of their buildings or businesses, making way for the possibility of new investment. Public feedback suggests that while many view Downtown with interest and appreciate the aesthetic that has been created, there are concerns about the current and future retail mix of businesses.

Feelings of Disconnect
A troubling bit of feedback was shared that reflected a disconnect between the typical Troutdale resident and the services offered in Downtown. A sizable number of people felt that Downtown was “for the tourists” and not a place that was receptive or interesting to residents and families in particular. Furthermore, younger residents did not feel as connected with the community and often moved to Troutdale more for cost-of-living and less for community attraction. Increased community amenities and things to do were frequently brought up as desired outcomes to improve the District.

Bridging Aspiration with Reality
Of critical concern for the District’s long-term viability is the relatively low population density of the district when compared to other town centers in the region. Stakeholders indicated a desire for increased commercial services such as additional food and dining or a grocery store, but those services often require on having a critical mass of people close by to sustain their business models.

Simply put, visitors alone cannot make the District more attractive for commercial services, nor will it bridge the disconnect felt by some residents. Residents—existing and new—are needed, too. The ability for the Town Center to accommodate additional people living in the District without fundamentally changing its character is the defining balancing act that this Plan seeks to address.

Pride in Place
Included with that effort is a softer but equally important effort, which is to better connect the Downtown with the rest of the District and the balance of the community itself. Downtown should be not be a place only geared for visitors. It must be a place that current residents wish to go to and new arrivals will want to live near. As a result, businesses will want to set up shop and tourists will want to visit too. Fostering community pride is as important an action as any one development idea or incentive program.
TOWN CENTER VISION

The Town Center Committee took in hundreds of comments and detailed feedback from dozens of stakeholders to create a unifying vision statement for the District:

By 2040, the Troutdale Town Center will preserve its small-town feel while becoming the most vibrant, scenic, and historic hub in the region; where families thrive, businesses prosper, and visitors return.

In addition to the Town Center Vision, a series of guiding statements will help to provide direction for decisions, projects, ideas, and strategies towards fulfilling the vision. They serve as a reminder for why certain actions are being undertaken and the value that the community sees in it. Each guiding statement directly matches with a Plan component.

- **Social**: The Town Center is a place where all people call live, work, and visit in a safe and accessible manner.
- **Economic**: The Town Center is a place of unique economic prosperity and opportunity due to the high desirability of our area and deep commitment to support local business.
- **Resiliency & Future Trends**: The Town Center is a place that is adaptive, creative, and flexible to address future trends while ensuring the vision remains in place.
- **Resources**: The Town Center is a place that ensures the common good through prudent growth management and preservation of our community resources.
- **Land Use**: The Town Center is a place that will conserve what is good and ensure that future development patterns are complementary to what is already here.
- **Transportation & Mobility**: The Town Center is a place where a 10-year-old, a 90-year-old, or anyone in between can get around the district in a safe and accessible manner.
- **Opportunity Sites**: The development (or redevelopment) of an opportunity site has a positive impact not only on the site or its surroundings, but on the Town Center as a whole.
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ELEMENT

The Plan considered a multitude of social and economic factors along with considering resiliency and future trends that can affect the Town Center District. Below are some of the key findings.

Social

- **Youth and Families:** Encourage diversification of businesses, addition of civic uses, and investment in recreational facilities to improve the family-friendliness of the District.
- **Seniors and Accessibility:** Promote live-in-place opportunities through expansion of retail and human services in addition to investments in housing, transportation, and ADA compliance.
- **Education:** Expand continuing education possibilities and tie them with entrepreneurship.
- **Housing:** Allow for a range of housing types and price points, but with a preference toward quality and complimentary development while encouraging homeownership and civic pride.
- **Public Safety:** Begin efforts to discourage vagrancy and improve lighting in the District.
- **Hazard Mitigation:** Ensure a safe built environment through enforcing existing codes while promoting best practices in structural siting, material usage, and property upkeep.

Economic

- **Market Positioning:** Tourism alone will not sustain downtown Troutdale. Downtown must increase attractiveness for residents and nearby residents, particularly east of the Sandy River.
- **Commercial Services:** Diversification of retail is critical, and certain services must be equipped to have both a physical and online presence to succeed.
- **Economic Development:** An entity committed to downtown is expected to take a leading role in terms of recruiting new business and supporting entrepreneurs and existing businesses.

Resiliency & Future Trends

- **Demographic Changes:** Troutdale will become more racially diverse over time. The Town Center should strive to remain appealing to all.
- **Affordability and Equity:** The Town Center can provide a balance that allows people of all incomes and socio-economic statuses to live in, work in, and enjoy the district.
- **Shared Economy / Micro-Retail:** Flexibilities should be afforded to allow these types of commerce to exist in the District along with standard commercial services.
- **Automation:** Future investments in infrastructure should be flexible and adaptable in considering how autonomous vehicles may change consumer needs or behaviors.
- **Energy Conservation:** Consider financial incentives for new development.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Consider methods to increase implementation of green infrastructure.
- **Climate Change:** Establish a climate resiliency plan that ties into hazard mitigation plans.
THE PHYSICAL ELEMENT

Most area plans are focused on the physical element, which contains analysis and ideas on land use and transportation in concert with existing resources. This Plan covers these items and provides several key findings based on the categories below:

Resources

- **Natural Resources and Environment**: The District’s natural resources are a major factor in the desirability of the area and should not be fundamentally altered by development.
- **Recreation and Open Spaces**: Park investments should be made to increase family-friendly activities while providing resources to also conserve more sensitive natural areas.
- **Public Facilities and Services**: Additional civic uses should be brought into the District, but potentially consolidated to limit costs and improve service delivery.
- **Scenic and Historic Areas**: Troutdale should consider new historic landmark designations, conserving historic resources, and establish viewsheds or easements to protect scenic areas.
- **Community Design and Architecture**: More consistency in design is sought in public areas, along with a higher level of design review and oversight for larger private development.

Land Use

- **Conservation Areas**: Established standards should continue to limit development impact.
- **Existing Built Environment**: Troutdale’s scale and structures contribute to its small-town feel. New development should respect this and seek to blend harmoniously to what’s already here.
- **Adaptive Reuse**: Troutdale risks losing places that have contributed to its history. The adaptive reuse of certain buildings may provide authenticity, creativity, and interest to a development.
- To support the above efforts, **opportunity sites** should be established (see next page).

Transportation & Mobility

- **Vehicular**: Troutdale will not “declare war” on cars, understanding that personal vehicles provide convenience in a suburban community as they evolve towards automation.
- **Parking & Loading**: Parking problems are not just a supply issue (not enough spaces). Parking demand must be considered as well, with loading areas will become increasingly important.
- **Active** (Bicycle and Pedestrian): People are more comfortable with biking and walking when they are separated from traffic in higher-speed corridors.
- **Alternative**: The District’s size and geography make it worthwhile to consider other ways to get around town, including micro-transit, electric-assisted vehicles, and golf carts.
- **Transit**: Though regional transit efficiency is limited; localized “last mile” transit opportunities in the District may emerge to compliment and improve the overall system.
OPPORTUNITY SITES & CORRIDORS

How can needed or desired development be added to Town Center without fundamentally changing the characteristics of the district? This is a difficult question that the Committee wrestled over time. Without a clear strategy on how to deal with the effects of density, the existing built and natural environment would be subject to development that would alter what people appreciate about the District. A strategy to be intentional about how and where development should go began to emerge.

The Plan establishes 12 opportunity sites (not including The Confluence site) and eight corridors where development and investment should be focused to help fulfill the vision, optimize those parcels to their highest and best use, and conserve the existing built environment.

In establishing these sites, the Plan is not demanding when (or how) a site should develop. Instead, the Plan sets an expectation for development preference when the site is under consideration. The Committee reviewed the carrying capacity of each site and its relationship to surrounding properties, other opportunity sites, and the District as a whole. Then, based on market analysis and community feedback, ideas for preferred land uses emerged and were ranked accordingly.

Although the Committee arrived at a general consensus on preferred land use types, there were strong concerns from some members about the impact of certain development on opportunity sites 3 and 7. Please refer to those site details in the plan and the corresponding minority report in Appendix XXX.
URBAN RENEWAL AREA / THE CONFLUENCE SITE

The Confluence site is a collection of city-owned parcels within the Urban Renewal Area. The site provides Troutdale with the most exciting and challenging opportunity site of all; a once-in-a-lifetime chance to transform roughly 20 acres adjacent to Downtown and along the banks of the Sandy River into someplace special.

The site is strategically situated to take advantage of its surroundings, though is also hamstrung in some cases by them in terms of access restriction. The major public amenity will be a four-acre linear park along the embankment of the Sandy River, with a multi-use trail connecting the site to Downtown and regional trails to the north and east.

Beyond the difficulties of access considerations and cost, perhaps the main community concern remains that this location should complement Downtown, rather than compete with it. As a result, the Committee established certain development expectations that it hopes will be considered as the Urban Renewal Agency engages in solicitation and prospective developers create proposals.

- The **street grid** should be carried over from downtown as an organizing principle
- The **water tower** should be retained as an iconic feature of the site and future development
- The **exchange of property** with the ownership of the outlets should be allowed in order to provide more direct access to/from the west
- A centralized **parking facility/garage** should be established
- A direct connection with downtown via a **pedestrian bridge** should be built
- A direct **vehicular connection** with downtown should be studied and constructed
- A consistent and specific **architectural style** should be established
- Building heights may go as high as 75 feet but should be **stepped-back** or terraced to lessen visual impact from adjacent public spaces and streets
BRANDING & MARKETING

During public engagement, it became clear that many people liked living or working in Troutdale, but often cited conveniences such as “proximity to” or “more affordable”. When tested regionally, Troutdale’s knowledge within the area became less well known. It was clear though there was an undercurrent of pride in the community but a belief that the community could do a better job in telling its story. This is where community branding and marketing kicks in.

As the historic and cultural heart of the city, it became apparent that branding identity through placemaking and advertising would become of chief importance. Under the Town Center Plan’s project umbrella, the City retained the services of Arnett Muldrow & Associates, a nationally recognized leader in place-based community branding.

The consultants visited Troutdale on three separate occasions; to take inventory of the community’s thoughts through interviews, panel discussions, and surveys; to craft a brand identity and strategy based on further stakeholder input; and to refine those items based on feedback while providing deliverables that can be easily implemented through resources and guides.

At its heart, community branding is an exercise in pride of place. Troutdale was provided a branding statement and deliverables that clearly respected our place and provided excitement for the future.

**Troutdale: Our Nature Will Move You**

The core themes: shaped by natural forces; rooted in history; transported over time; connected in dramatic ways; and grounded in community are all part of a story that links to our physical and human nature and how the Town Center in particular has developed. Those values come across in the branding statement, the wordmark, the logos, the colors, and the extensions of the brand.

Branding and marketing will help the Town Center position itself as a destination to be enjoyed not only for visitors, but for residents too. In helping to foster civic pride, the brand can be extended to placemaking elements, community events, and general merchandise.
IMPLEMENTATION

The Town Center Vision can be achieved best if those who care continue to remain engaged. As a result, providing a sound implementation strategy will be critical in the ultimate success of the district, so long as it is flexible to accommodate for future conditions and situations. While it is impossible to predict the future, it is within the control of the community to be intentional in its decision-making.

Unlike many other planning documents, this Plan has already begun to set the tone for future expectations of implementation. Listed below are several items that have already occurred in 2020 or are in the process of establishment at the time of the Plan’s adoption.

- Aligning **Council Goals** to support planning efforts within the Town Center, particularly with the Urban Renewal Area
- Creating an **economic development role** within the Community Development Department
- Assuming short-term responsibility for **tourism promotion**.
- Implementing **community branding**, ranging from merchandise to city limit signage.

The implementation section establishes two general timeframes. The “Getting Started” timeframe carries forth implementation items through 2025. The longer-term “Maintaining and Revising” period of 2025 to 2040 will provide suggestions on future actions and periodic updates that could occur to keep the Plan relevant through 2040, when the Plan should be replaced in its entirety.

**Getting Started (2020-2025)**

A five-year horizon is convenient in that it matches up generally well with a mayoral term of the City Council and is more digestible in projecting financial considerations. In addition, a five-year window gives deference to technological and societal changes that are too difficult to forecast 20 years out.

Listed below are several actions that should be considered in the first five years. Further details and assigned responsibilities for each action can be found in the Implementation chapter of the Plan.

**Oversight Actions**

- Designate a City Staff member responsible for **carrying out the plan** on a day-to-day basis.
- Create a permanent **Town Center Alliance Board** (TCAB) as a successor entity to the Town Center Committee for implementation oversight and advisory functions.
- Empower TCAB to provide **feedback on community design**. This includes for public sector investments and private property development during a land use application process. This could evolve into a future design review committee or codifying heightened design standards.
- Participate in and improve coordination with **stakeholder partners** that contribute to civic life. These include but are not limited to the Troutdale Historical Society, Cascadia Arts Alliance, and regional tourism entities in addition to organizers of festivals and events.
Regulatory Actions

- Update the City’s **Transportation System Plan** and **Capital Improvement Plan** to accommodate for new investments in the eight corridors identified in the plan.

- Review and revise **development code standards** for the Town Center zoning overlay district and Central Business District zoning district, with particular focus on the Opportunity Sites.

- Review and revise **residential and commercial design standards** for the Central Business District and Town Center. Residential standards will have to be revised due to the passage in 2019 of House Bill 2001. Commercial standards could be reviewed simultaneously.

- Improve standards for **food carts, food cart pods, micro-retail**, and other pop-up commercial investments and land uses.

- Improve **sign material and design standards** for downtown businesses.

- Require the use of decorative street lighting in all new developments.

Policy Actions

- Create a sanctioned **Main Street program** that is affiliated with the Main Streets America model and Oregon Main Street statewide program. The program should be established by the City and should be evaluated by 2025 for the potential to spin off into a separate non-profit organization, remain within the City’s responsibility, or some combination thereof.

- Consider implementing a **Business Improvement District (BID)** or **Economic Improvement District (EID)** to capture funding that can be reinvested within the Town Center for allotted purposes, particularly for Downtown.

- Evaluate the potential for **jurisdictional transfer** of Corridors C and D (Historic Columbia River Highway’s downtown and East End segments).

- Develop a **community signage and wayfinding system** in concert with the community brand.

- Evaluate the feasibility of a **city hall** or other civic uses at Opportunity Site 3 (Hurford Tract).

- Establish a consistent standard for **streetscape and park fixtures** made by the City.

Programmatic Actions

- Consider specific incentives or programs to **attract development** within the opportunity sites and encourage adaptive reuse of properties listed as historic resources.

- Consider revising the **collection method** for System Development Charges (SDC).

- Consider a **dining facility investment program** to support commercial kitchen improvements in existing commercial spaces and reduce SDC burdens by revising methodologies for rates.

- Develop an **entrepreneur support program** to foster new ideas and investments, including but not limited to micro-lending, rental spaces (incubator), and educational partnerships.

- Provide management of “**adopt-a-planter**” or “**adopt-an-intersection**” programs.
Urban Renewal Area Actions

- Prepare **additional development concepts** that can be tested for site suitability, economic feasibility, and community embracement.
- Establish a **new zoning district and land use designation for the URA** that is better geared to match development opportunity with community expectations.
- Allow for TCAB the ability to hold public meetings and make recommendations of development proposals at The Confluence site to the Urban Renewal Agency or its successors.
- Finish plans and construct the **Sandy Riverfront Park** and trail connection.
- Study options for a more **direct connection** between The Confluence site with Downtown.
- Study the viability of constructing a **parking facility** and securing partnerships for cost-sharing.
- Engage with the Governor’s Regional Solutions Team and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to consider future **rail service** for intercity and Gorge tourism purposes.

Future Studies & Parallel Efforts

- Update the City’s **Parks Master Plan** for specific plans to improve Opportunity Sites 1 (Depot Park), 8 (Helen Althaus Park), and 9 (Mayors Square) and create a public art master plan.
- Work with Multnomah County to **update road profiles** on County-owned corridors to improve future streetscapes and increase mobility options.
- Study reducing vehicular traffic on **Sandy Avenue** with improved bicycle-pedestrian facilities.
- Charter a new **economic and retail study** for Downtown to evaluate impacts of COVID-19.
- Charter a Town Center **parking and loading study**, with particular focus on Downtown and Glenn Otto Park and in concert with parking facility study (URA Actions).
- Develop a **mobility study** that can investigate alternative transportation methods (such as establishing a golf cart zone) and future trends in transportation and mobility.
- Develop a **tourism plan** that links promotion of amenities, activities and events with branding and marketing elements to fulfill destination marketing organization (DMO) responsibilities.
- Develop a **climate resiliency plan** that can incorporate suggestions to increase resiliency to climate change, improve hazard mitigation actions, and promote green infrastructure.

Maintaining and Revising

Long-range planning, particularly over a 20-year period is a difficult to get right. Circumstances and preferences can change. Plans must be able to do so as well, provided they are anchored to a vision and tended to on a periodic basis by people who care.

For the Town Center Plan, it is suggested that the Plan is revisited in 2025, 2030, and 2035 to provide necessary updates to projects and policies that reflect community expectations and economic realities at those times. It also provides an opportunity to re-assess priorities and pivot to new challenges.