Vancouver City Center Vision & Subarea Plan

Vancouver, Washington

Adopted June 18, 2007

.

Vancouver City Center Vision & Subarea Plan

Vancouver, Washington

Prepared for:

The City of Vancouver
The Port of Vancouver
Identity Clark County

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Adopted June 18, 2007, by Vancouver City Council: Mayor Royce E. Pollard, Councilmembers: Pat Jollota, Dan Tonkovich, Jeanne Harris, Jeanne Stewart, Tim Leavitt, Larry J. Smith

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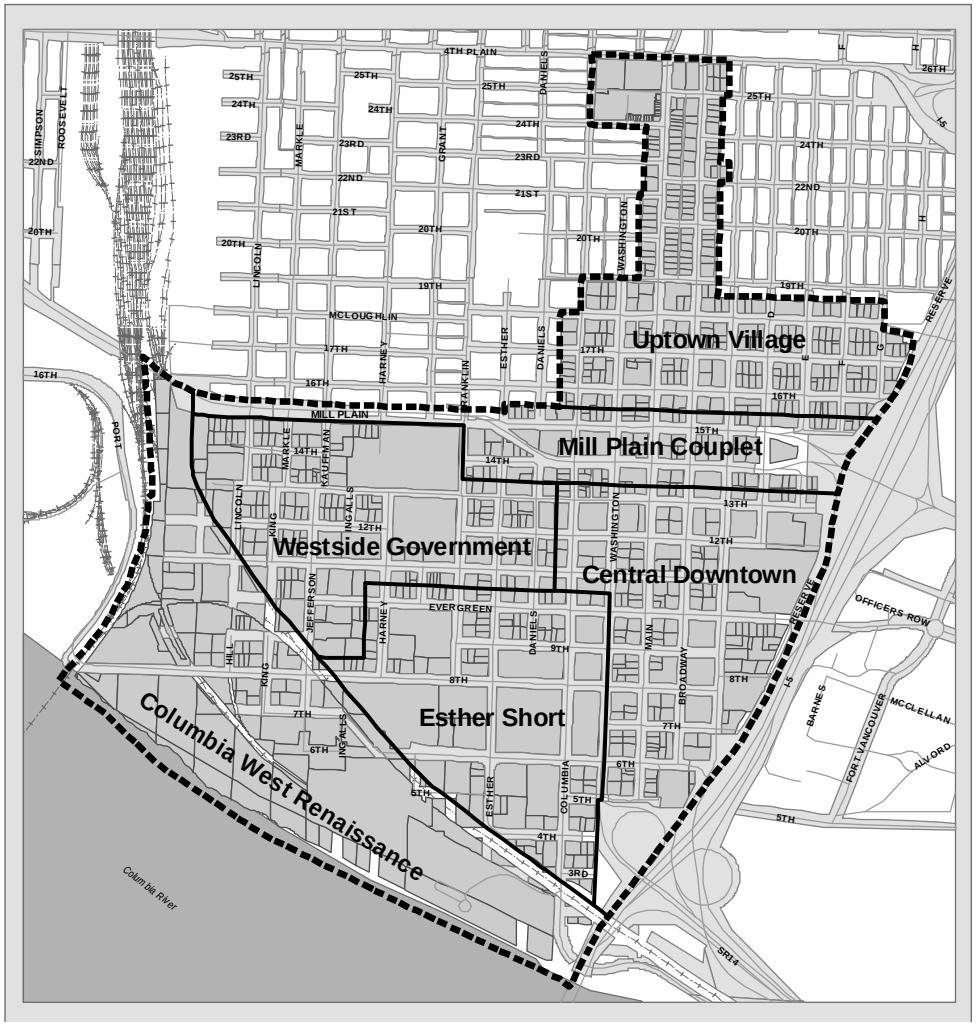
INTRODUCTION

"Intricate minglings of different uses in cities are not a form of chaos. On the contrary, they represent a complex and highly developed form of order." *– Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Based on the success of the 1998 *Esther Short Subarea and Redevelopment Plan**, and through the participation of many stakeholders, the Vancouver City Center Vision (VCCV) will foster and guide continued growth of the approximately 130-block City Center area of Vancouver.



Esther Short Park

Esther Short Commons

Main Street, central downtown

6th Street, central downtown

A Main Street cafe

The Academy

Guiding Principles

Working with a Citizen Resource Team (CRT) that represents local businesses, residents and other interests, five principles were identified to guide the vision, goals, concepts and policies for the plan. Those principles are:

- Build on the successes and experience of the Esther Short Plan.
- Promote residential development including affordable housing as key to a vital and attractive city center.
- Create and support “messy vitality”, a dynamic and rich mix of residential, cultural, civic, retail and entertainment places that will attract growth, jobs and round-the-clock activity in the VCCV area.
- Improve the Main Street Corridor (between Broadway and Washington Street) as a central spine of diverse and complementary uses that establish downtown as a regional center for commerce, culture and urban living.
- Support the Vision with strategic investments in public infrastructure – especially transportation.

Plan Policies

Land Use

- Encourage residential development including affordable housing as the key to city center vitality.
- Revitalize downtown uses along the Main Street Corridor (between Broadway and Washington Street) from 8th Street to Fourth Plain Boulevard and its connectors.
- Focus waterfront redevelopment on residential uses supported by significant public access, recreation, cultural, hospitality, entertainment and limited commercial uses.
- Protect key historic buildings and established residential neighborhoods.
- Encourage key support services, such as a full-service grocery store and lifestyle retail center.
- Encourage development within the west subarea of the VCCV primarily for government services complemented by residential, entertainment and cultural uses.
- Recognize and encourage arts, cultural and institutional uses as critical to economic development in the city center.

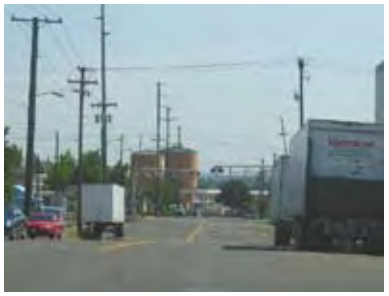
Connections

- Support the redesign and improvement of the Main Street Corridor as a priority project.
- Strengthen the primary street connections, (Columbia and Esther) to the waterfront.
- Support a secondary connection to the waterfront (e.g., Daniels).
- Connect downtown with the Vancouver National Historic Reserve via a Seventh Street (Heritage Way) pedestrian bridge.
- Ensure that expansion of I-5 and Columbia River crossing improvements improve access to the city center and minimize potentially negative effects.
- Overcome the barrier like feeling of the BNSF railroad berm between downtown and the waterfront.
- Provide improved access into the southern and western areas of the city center.

Anthem Park, Uptown Village

Uptown subarea

Waterfront Amphitheater



Industrial uses in Westside Government subarea

The Columbia River

THE VISION

Many of the components of a successful city center are already in place in Vancouver, such as Esther Short Park and the ring of new buildings around it. The vision that is articulated in this plan is to cultivate a diversity of new uses that will complement those that exist and, at the same time, serve the resident, and working and visiting populations in and adjoining the city center.

Waterfront housing with dining and entertainment at street level.

Esther Short Park

Urban waterfront

Main Street

7th Street

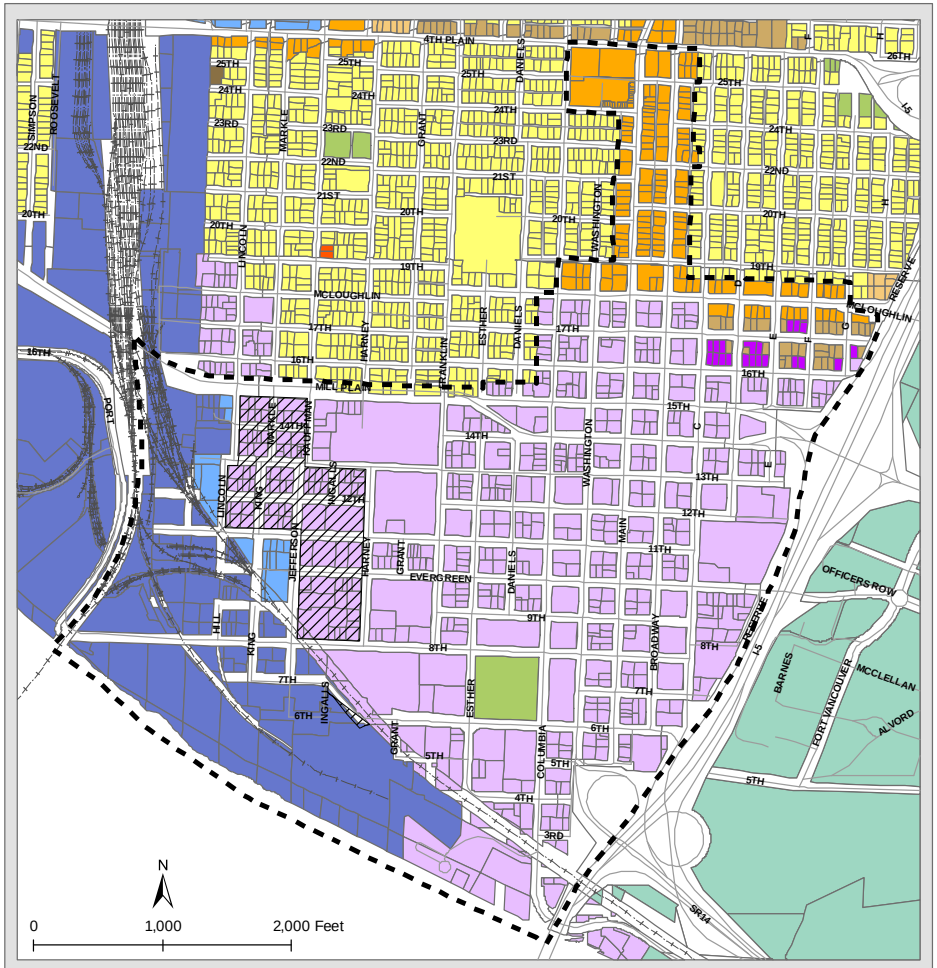
Daniel Street pedestrian connection

Landscape/penetrate BNSF rail berm

While the Main Street Corridor will extend active uses from uptown to downtown, the nature of those uses will differ from block to block. Retail uses will be focused in places where conditions are particularly favorable. Public participation in joint developments will be focused at pulse points where they will leverage the most beneficial private investment, and on residential development. Other segments of the corridor will be dominated by different types of housing, business and open space, each configured to complement and support its neighbors. Ties between downtown and the waterfront will be strengthened so that views across the Columbia River are opened to most of the downtown. Vancouver will at last be perceived as the largest waterfront city on the Columbia River.

Zoning

- Amend the CX zone to allow for limited light industrial uses to accommodate clean industries that are significant employers and would add vitality to the city center.
- Amend the CC zone to allow for residential uses at ground floor on Main Street and Broadway.
- Rezone pockets of R-22 and mixed use zoning located west of I-5 near Mill Plain Boulevard to CX to allow for residential and mixed use development, more flexible development standards, and other uses appropriate to the city center.
- Update the Downtown Plan District Sections including building heights to allow for appropriate heights and consistency with the VCCV Plan and current FAA regulations.

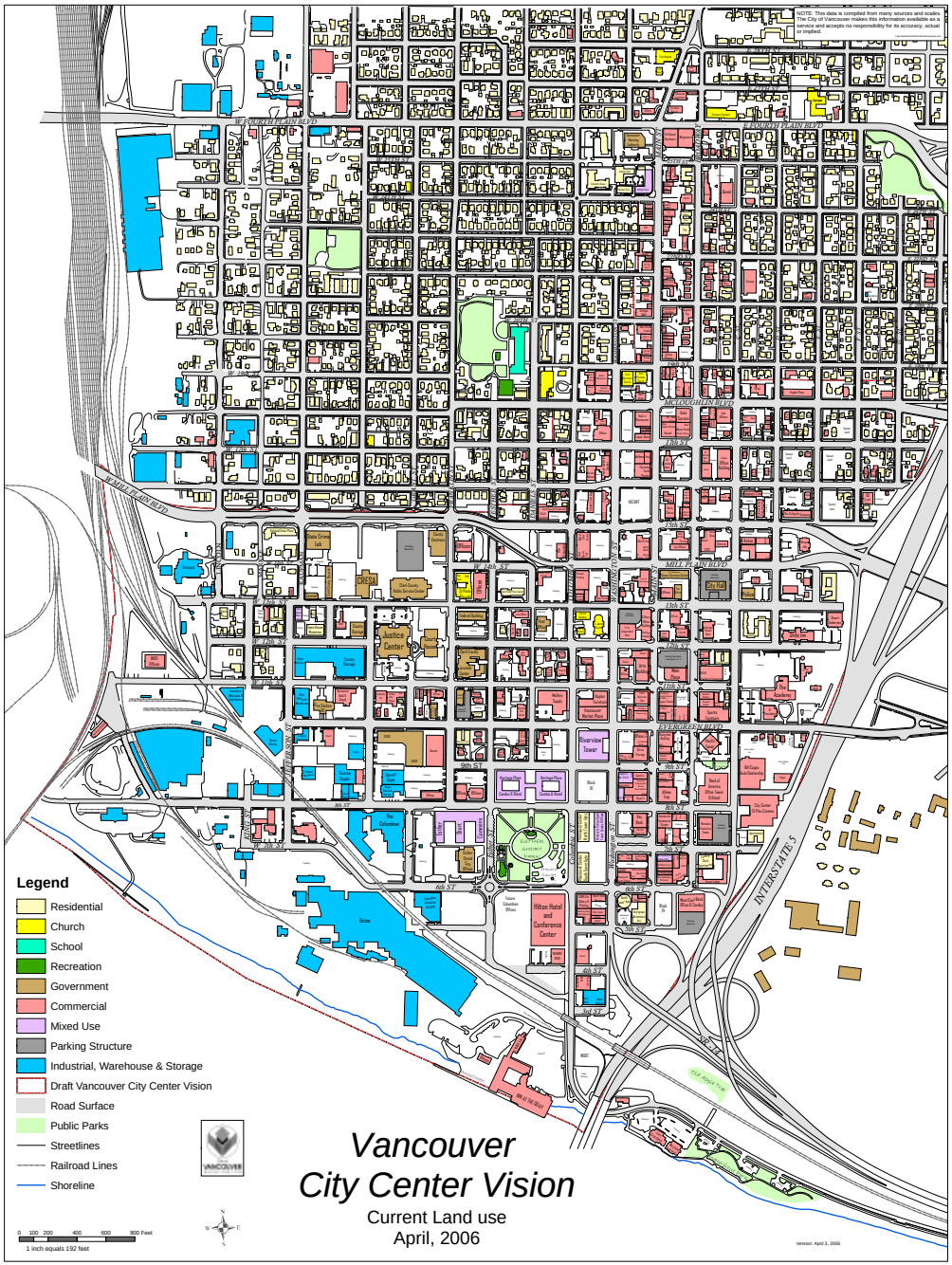


Vancouver City Center: Current Zoning

- R-9 - Lower Density Residential
- R-18 - Higher Density Residential
- R-22 - Higher Density Residential
- R-30 - Higher Density Residential
- Park
- CC - Community Commercial
- CN - Neighborhood Commercial
- CPX - Central Park Mixed Use
- CX - City Center Mixed Use
- VCCV Area
- IH - Heavy Industrial
- IL - Light Industrial
- MX - Mixed Use
- CX with IL Overlay

Growth Management Act and State Environmental Protection Act

- If the VCCV is adopted as a subarea plan, submit it for review by the City's Planning Commission and City Council during the annual review process for the Growth Management Plan. Property rezones could be considered along with the plan adoption process.
- Submit the plan, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and Planned Action Ordinance for review by the City Planning Commission and adoption by the City Council. The City should consider opportunities to prepare an EIS and adopt a subarea plan for the VCCV area.

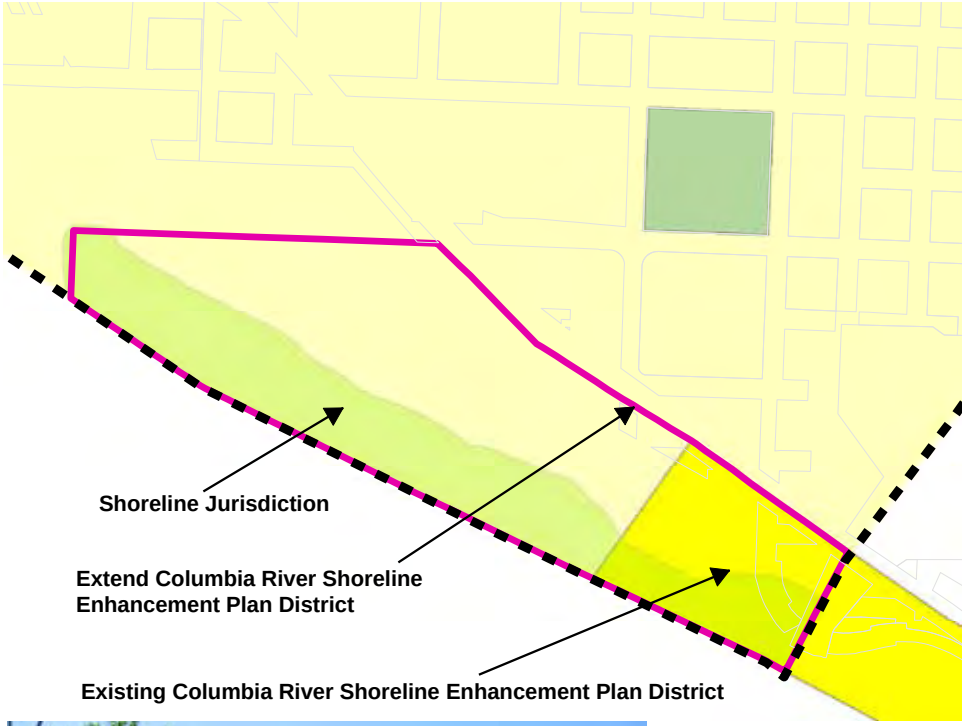


Shoreline Management Master Program and Critical Areas Ordinance

- Amend the height limitations in the Columbia West Renaissance District to accommodate more dense urban development.
- Extend the Columbia River Shoreline Enhancement Plan District west to the railroad bridge and north to the BNSF berm. This would allow a master plan process to govern mixed-use development and significant public access to and along the shoreline area of the Columbia West Renaissance District waterfront.
- Ensure that planned redevelopment of the VCCV waterfront can be accommodated under the adopted Critical Areas Ordinance.
- Following adoption of the Critical Areas Ordinance, obtain a Statement of Exemption as a result of existing development or subarea plan approval.

Expedited Permitting

- Ensure that projects within the VCCV area and in conformance with the VCCV Plan are able to utilize the most expedited permitting system offered by the City of Vancouver.



Existing conditions on the waterfront

TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICES:

Street Network

- Maintain collector and arterial capacity and continuity.
- Maintain and restore the 200-foot grid pattern for all travel modes.
- Discourage closures of local streets.
- Require a thorough review and analysis of any proposed change to the existing street system prior to recommending a street closure to City Council.
- Encourage the provision of interior walkways where the roadway network grid is interrupted or discontinous, such as in the case of superblock development.

Traffic Signalization

Traffic volume growth should be monitored and new traffic signals installed where warranted. In addition, the traffic signal system should be fully interconnected to improve efficiency for typical operations and for special events.

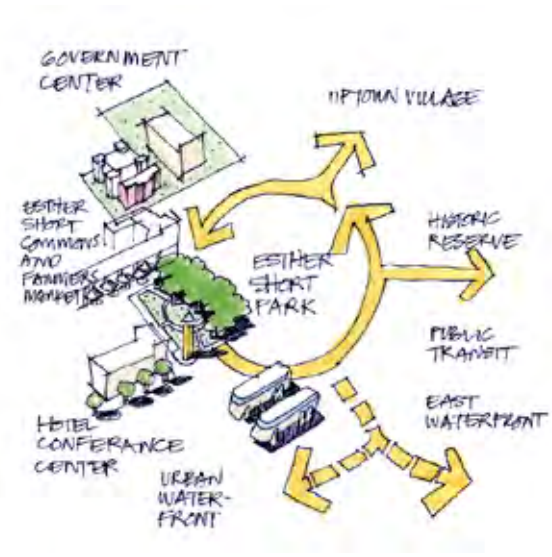
Pedestrian and Bicycle Systems

Increase sidewalk width and remove safety and convenience conflicts on designated pedestrian streets, including 6th, 8th, Evergreen, 13th, Mill Plain/15th and McLoughlin. Bike lane striping and signing should be provided on major bike corridors, except where motorized traffic is light.

Public Transit

Pursue High Capacity Transit to Oregon in conjunction with the I-5 Partnership.

Trolley Circulator: A transit service with headways of 10 minutes or less should be considered to link major downtown destinations and major transit stops.



Trolley Circulator for the downtown area

Traffic signalization

Pedestrian and bicycle systems

Parking Management

A primary goal of parking management is to create an effective and efficient parking system that caters to the needs of priority users. The City's identified priority user for the public parking system is the "city center patron", the person who shops, visits or recreates.

Current City code requires minimum numbers of parking spaces for new commercial and residential buildings in downtown. These minimums often require more parking than is necessary to (a) support the development project and (b) establish compact and efficient land use and urban form.

The City should create an effective and efficient parking system that caters to the needs of priority users, "the city center patrons" through means such as:

1) Reducing parking minimums for commercial development in the downtown thereby encouraging tighter, more pedestrian-friendly development.

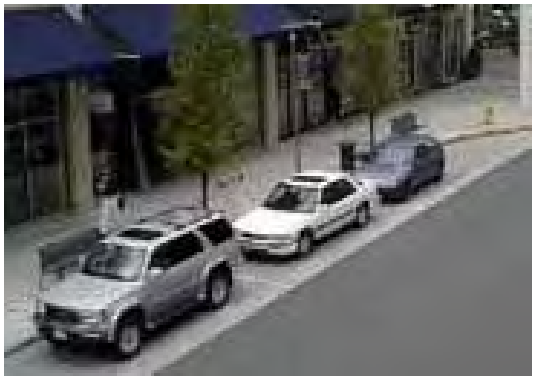
2) Reducing parking minimums for residential development in the downtown commercial zone in tandem with restrictions on residential on-street permit parking in the same zone to assure that priority users are accommodated within the on-street supply.

3) Implementing maximum parking ratios on both residential and commercial development, until such time that surface parking lots are prohibited within the Parking Control District 20-630-5, to support and facilitate (a) more efficient land use and (b) integration with City goals for increased use of alternative transportation modes (i.e., transit, bike, walk and rideshare).

4) Limiting the development of new surface parking facilities in the downtown, recognizing the inefficiency of land use that such facilities create.

5) Providing incentives to encourage structural parking in the downtown to prevent excessive use of downtown land for parking and to preserve the continuity of retail use and building frontage in the downtown shopping area,

6) Coordinating parking policies, programs and strategies to facilitate the transition of a greater percentage of users of the downtown (particularly employees) into alternative modes of access (i.e., transit, bike, walk). This will assure that public investment in parking will (a) be prioritized for customer/visitor access and (b) reduce the overall supply of parking built utilizing public resources.

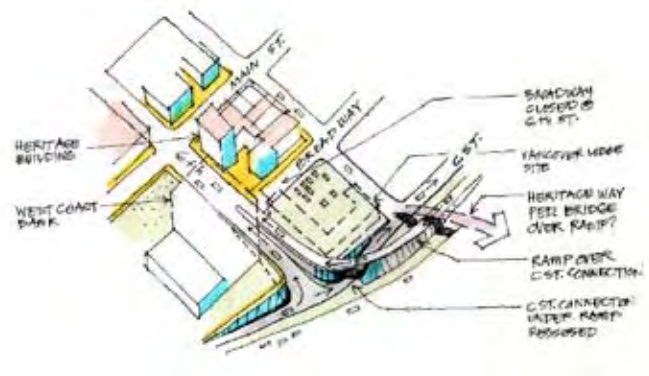


On-street parking

VCCV I-5 Expansion and River Crossing Goals for the CRT:

The I-5 expansion process and alternatives are in the early stages of development. The environmental impact process began in the summer of 2004. The CRT developed goals that can be utilized as the City participates in the I-5 process as follows:

- Analyze proposed engineering design that could potentially effect adjoining properties negatively and result in wasteful use of downtown land.
- Enhance existing connections between the Vancouver National Historic Reserve and downtown.
- In addition to the I-5 southbound ramp to 6th Street, explore other opportunities to improve access to downtown.
- Integrate the Heritage Way Bridge concept into the I-5 improvements project.
- Integrate all modes of transportation, including high-capacity transit, bicycle and pedestrian circulation, to achieve a true regional multi-modal corridor.
- Coordinate I-5 improvements with city center access and circulation needs.
- Take into account the new city blocks that may become available for development as a result of the Columbia River Crossing Project (shown in blue on map)



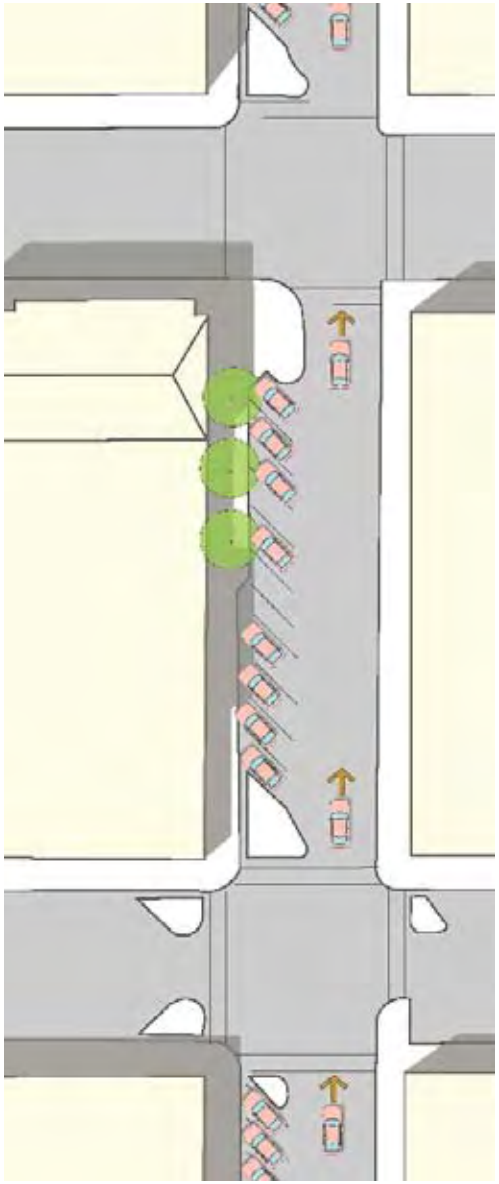
One option for I-5 south bound ramp to 6th Avenue.

Existing Columbia River crossing

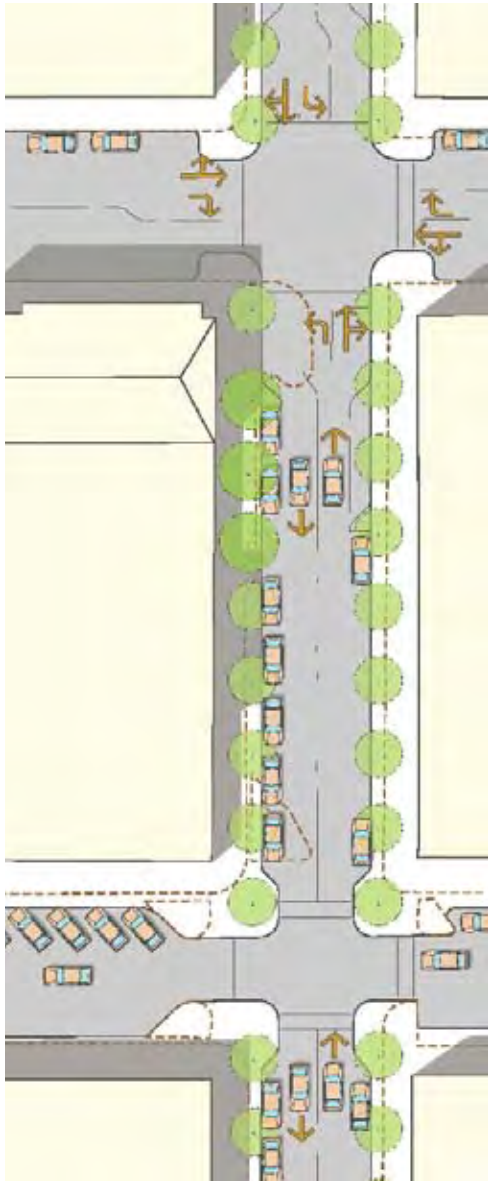
Near Term Projects

Several projects that have yet to be completed have been identified in previous studies. These should be included in the provision of future transportation improvements and include:

- Convert Main Street and Broadway Street to two-way operation between Mill Plain Boulevard and 5th Street. Encourage transit and improve parking, street lighting and pedestrian safety. Proposed improvements to Main and Broadway would significantly improve conditions for shoppers and others on foot without reducing on-street parking.
- Extend Esther Street south of the BNSF Railroad berm to intersect with new connector street.
- Relocate 4th Street to be adjacent to the BNSF railroad berm.
- Evaluate options for relocating the 7th Street Transit Center.



Existing one way Main Street (general location)



Proposed two way Main Street (general location)

Longer Term Projects

North-South Arterial Street Improvements

Many downtown arterials have been identified for new construction or capacity improvements. Among them are:

- Improve and extend Jefferson/Kauffman south to waterfront.
- Improve Columbia Street multi-modal capacity.
- Improve and preserve Franklin as an arterial street.
- Consider Grant Street for improvement and extension to south waterfront.

East-West Arterials & Historic Reserve Connections

- Construct a new arterial route south of the railroad berm and approximately parallel to it, extending from east of I-5 to Jefferson, and connecting with Columbia, Esther and Jefferson Streets.
- Improve Esther Short Park arterials, including 6th Street and Esther Street.
- Construct a new Heritage Way pedestrian bridge across I-5 as a continuation of 7th Street.
- Enhance Evergreen Boulevard with wider sidewalks and improved way-finding signage to reinforce pedestrian linkages.
- Construct a southbound I-5 off-ramp to 6th Street.

7th Street Transit Center

8th Street crossing BNSF Rail lines

Extend downtown streets under the BNSF rail berm.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Success of the Vancouver City Center Vision will depend on cooperative implementation of recommendations by the City, by community and business initiatives, and through partnerships. Recommended implementation measures include:

- Use the City's Residential Tax Abatement program as the primary means for encouraging a variety and affordable residential uses in the city center.
- Assist in land assembly for significant uses such as housing, employment, public open space and a full-service grocery store. Land assembly could involve use of community renewal and condemnation powers as appropriate.
- Consider Local Improvement Districts (LID) as a viable option to fund infrastructure improvements within the VCCV area.
- Encourage service and entertainment uses in the city center that serve the youth of the community.
- Dedicate staff to retail recruitment and work with merchants to influence the mix of retail.
- Concentrate efforts on small businesses in the city center, including the resurrection of the building facades improvement program.
- Encourage incentives for new small businesses to locate in the identified retail focus areas.
- Promote the funding and development of a Federal Courthouse in the Westside Government district.

Main Street in Uptown

- Support the development of destination cultural institutions (library, performing and visual arts venues, museums) in the VCCV area.
- Consolidate City services within the VCCV into a single facility.
- Encourage public partnership to better explore public investments such as transit, the Columbia River Crossing, public buildings, and others to ensure that those projects meet the VCCV.
- Support the development of a full-service grocery store in the city center.
- Support development of a lifestyle retail center.
- Enable and promote waterfront development.
- Facilitate the redevelopment of buildings adjoining the present 7th Street center.
- Improve utilization of parking resources.
- Respond to private development initiatives at the Mill Plain and Main street pulse point with appropriate public investments.

High-capacity transit downtown

7th Street

Summary of District Development Goals

This plan establishes a capacity estimate for Vancouver City Center as a whole. Market and planning capacity evaluations were also made to estimate the potential for each district to contribute to realization of the Vision. The timing and extent of development will depend on market factors that are not predictable. Therefore, the goals for each district are meant to guide future development rather than act as fixed district goal totals.

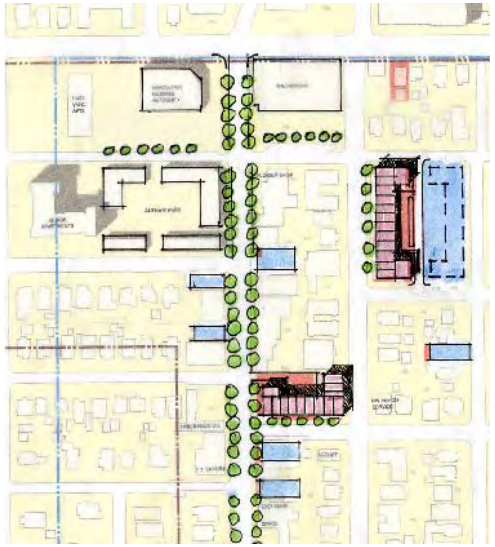
As future development progresses it may be necessary for district boundary lines to be somewhat permeable allowing one district to absorb a portion of another district's development goal in any use category. In addition, the flexibility to respond to market trends may result in a shift from the residential use category to the office use category or vice versa as long as the impact characteristics are similar and the overall impacts do not exceed plan targets.

The following summary table shows expected development capacity for each District. On subsequent pages, each District's development goals are more specifically described.

District	Use Category						
	Retail Sq. Ft.	*Office Sq. Ft.*	*Residential Units*	*Institutiona Sq. Ft.l*	*Hotel Rooms*	*Light Industrial*	*Shoreline Priority Uses*
Uptown Village	20,000	20,000	254				
Mill Plain Couplet	108,000	200,000	171				
Central Downtown	80,000	560,000	495		60		
West Government	12,000	360,000	267	500,000			
Esther Short	56,000	835,000	350	81,500			
Columbia W. Renaissance	125,000	450,000	3,014	10,000	200	100,000	200' landward of the floodway
TOTAL	**401,000**	**2,425,000**	**4,551**	**591,000**	**260**	**100,000**	

Specific Recommendations for Each District

Market and planning capacity evaluations were made to estimate the potential for each subarea to contribute to the realization of the Vision. The timing will be dependent on unpredictable market opportunities.



Property improvements and selective low-rise infill development will predominate in Uptown subarea.

Uptown District		
Land Use	*Description*	*Quantities*
Housing	Uptown Village: selective infill, town-homes and live/work McLoughlin/Main pulse point:: loft condo and rental housing Arnada neighborhood south of McLoughlin: townhomes and multi-family housing	**254 units**
Office	McLoughlin/Main pulse point: small office and live/work developments	**20,000 SF**
Retail/ Entertainment	Uptown Village: selective infill McLoughlin/Main pulse point: neighborhood and youth oriented retail	**20,000 SF**
Other	Main Street and Broadway: streetscape repair as needed	

Housing on Broadway

Anthem Park

New development on Main Street

Parks concept at Mill Plain

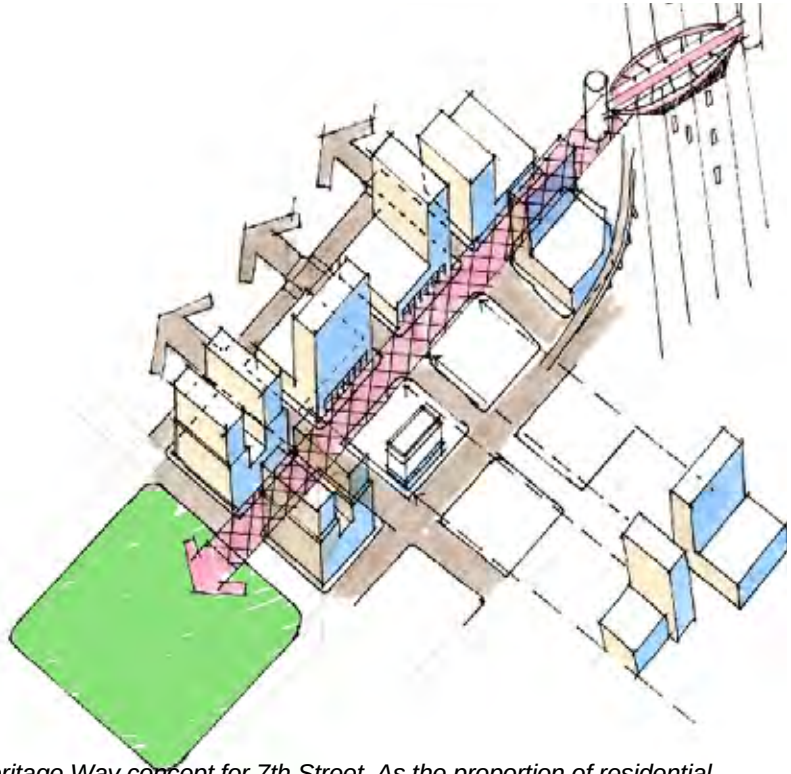
Clark County Historical Museum

Main Street and Mill Plain

Mill Plain and 15th Street Couplet District		
Land Use	*Description*	*Quantities*
Housing	Mill Plain/Main pulse point: lofts and condos above other uses	**171 units**
Office	Mill Plain/Main pulse point: regional mid-rise offices	**200,000 SF**
Retail	Neighborhood oriented retail Mill Plain/Main pulse point: regional retail Grocery store and parking. Note: possible overlap into Arnada neighborhood below McLoughlin	**108,000 SF**
Other	Mill Plain/Main Street pulse point: Twin Parks public/private open space Renovation of Clark County Historical Museum Main Street and Broadway: pedestrian streetscape	**2 blocks**

Alternative parks concept for Mill Plain pulse point. The transitional area between Uptown and downtown will develop its own character, with a mix of individual developments, small green spaces and good visibility.

Central Downtown District		
Land Use	*Description*	*Quantities*
Housing	Evergreen/Main pulse point: lofts and condos above other uses 6th and 7th streets / Main pulse point: lofts and condos Main Street Corridor: lofts and condos Proposed River West project on C Street: condos	**495 units**
Hotel	River West project: upscale hotel	**60 rooms**
Office	Evergreen / Main pulse point, Main/ Broadway/C St. corridors including the proposed River West project	**560,000 SF**
Retail	Evergreen/Main pulse point and proposed River West project on C Street and other renovated storefront retail	**80,000 SF**



Heritage Way concept for 7th Street. As the proportion of residential development in downtown increases, restaurants and retail will respond, creating a vital center for the city.

Kiggins Theater

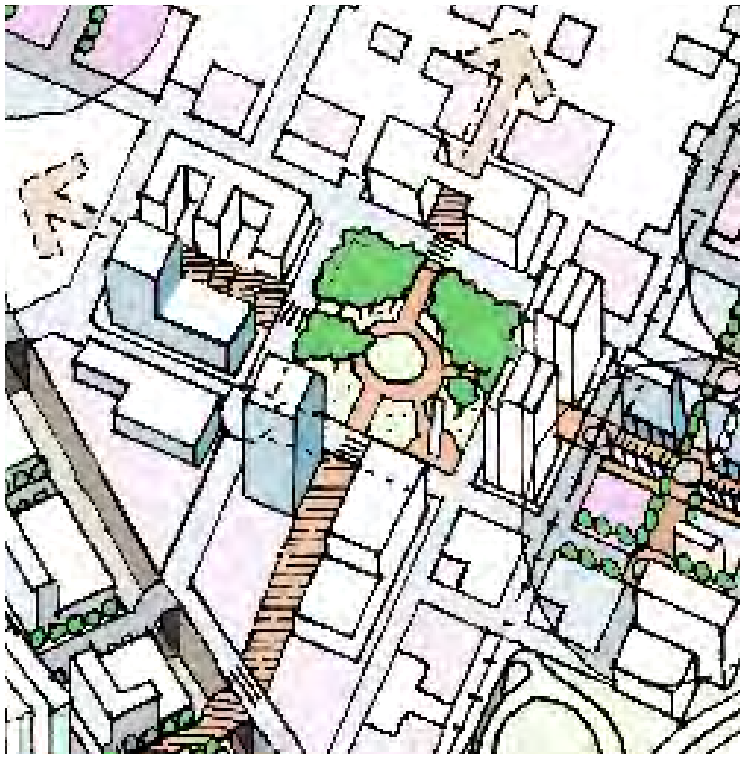
Main Street in Central Downtown

Westside Government District		
Land Use	*Description*	*Quantities*
Housing	Townhouses and live-work units	**267 units**
Office	Infill low- to mid-rise office	**360,000 SF**
Institutional		**500,000 SF**
Retail	Limited service retail and corner stores	**12,000 SF**

Government investment in this district will be complemented by residential, office and retail development, meeting market needs not addressed elsewhere.

Industrial subarea

Esther Short District		
Land Use	*Description*	*Quantities*
Housing	Mid-rise condos and lofts	**350 units**
Hotel	Convention and event space	**81,500 SF**
Office	Mid-rise office buildings with ground-floor retail	**835,000 SF**
Retail	Ground-floor retail below housing and offices. Limited retail-only buildings	**56,000 SF**



Esther Short Subarea

The area that surrounds Esther Short Park will soon be built out, but property improvements and infill development will continue.

Esther Short Commons

Vancouvercenter

Columbia West Renaissance (Waterfront) District		
Land Use	*Description*	*Quantities*
Housing	Mid-rise condos	**3,014 units**
Hotel	Upscale hotel Hotel other space	**200 rooms** **10,000 SF**
Office	Mid-rise office including waterfront and Northwestern office/light-industrial area	**450,000 SF**
Retail	Convenience and service retail	**125,000 SF**
Light Industrial	Northwestern office/light industrial area	**100,000 SF**
Shoreline Priority Uses	200' landward of the floodway	

Public access to and along the river's shoreline area of the Columbia West Renaissance District is a plan goal. The shoreline area of the waterfront should develop with one or more of the shoreline priority uses (water dependent, water related, water enjoyment and/or environmental protection refer to VMC 20.150.040B).

Establishing Vancouver's presence on the waterfront with an extension of the city center street grid holds enormous potential.

Boise Cascade facilities

Active waterfront

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City of Vancouver, Vancouver City Center Vision &
Subarea Plan (June 18, 2007)