Elements of Vitality
RESULTS
OF THE
DOWNTOWN
PLAN

CITY OF PORTLAND
OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION
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This is a limited *draft* print of this document.
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INTRODUCTION
The History of the Downtown Plan

“I have seen a lot of scenery in my life, but I have seen nothing so tempting as a home for a man than this Oregon country. You have a basis here for civilization on its highest scale, and I am going to ask you a question which you may not like. Are you good enough to have this country in your possession? Have you got enough intelligence, imagination and cooperation among you to make the best use of these opportunities?”

Lewis Mumford, address to the Portland City Club, 1938

More than thirty years after Mumford appeared at the City Club, Portland citizens took his challenge seriously. Building on the city’s natural beauty and the inherent grace of its traditional architecture, they created a bold plan to strengthen their city’s urban core.

Since Portland adopted its Downtown Plan in 1972, the central city has been transformed. Today, downtown Portland is the economic, cultural and social center of a dynamic region. Downtown supports a vigorous retail and commercial economy. An array of cultural and entertainment options and an increasing variety of housing opportunities assure round-the-clock activity, creating a safe, attractive and welcoming environment.

The Downtown Plan set the policy direction for Portland’s emergence as one of the world’s most livable cities. The following pages highlight the products resulting from the Downtown Plan and the way they contribute to Portland’s charm, beauty and vitality.

The State of the City. In the 1960’s, downtown Portland seemed to be headed for the same dreary future as other cities across the country, characterized by urban blight and a profound lack of faith in the potential of the city center.

The emergence of the suburbs and the advent of large shopping malls — with seemingly endless, free parking—was draining the retail vitality from downtown. Traditional residential neighborhoods adjacent to downtown had been torn up to make room for high rises and highways, and other housing throughout the central city was threatened with demolition.

Increasingly, downtown Portland was becoming a 9 to 5, Monday through Friday place with little human activity in the evenings and on weekends. Even its role as the regional employment center was in jeopardy as businesses looked for more competitive locations.

Portland’s air quality was bad —violating federal standards one out of every three days. Drivers experienced congested roads and highways in and out of downtown. In response to complaints about inadequate parking, property owners were tearing down historic buildings and using the land for parking lots.

Downtown was losing its character, its charm and its economic base.

Taking Back the City. By 1970, Portland was experiencing a grassroots movement to reclaim the city, to orient Portland toward people rather than automobiles. A proposal to expand Harbor Drive, the freeway that separated downtown from the Willamette River, met with strong opposition from many citizens. This popular movement evolved into a historic consensus — to remove Harbor Drive and create a waterfront park.

When a major retailer proposed building a 12-story parking garage on one of the most historic sites in downtown Portland, “all hell broke loose,” in the words of journalist Nell Peirce. Unprecedented public opposition caused a stunned city government to kill the project.
At the state level, a progressive Republican governor and law-makers of both parties were creating national models of environmental policy. In 1973, Oregon adopted the nation’s first comprehensive land use planning strategy. The establishment of urban growth boundaries around municipalities has been tremendously important in saving farm and forest land throughout Western Oregon while encouraging development inside central cities.

In this context grew Portland’s Downtown Plan.

Creating the Downtown Plan. It started with a group of business people who worried that congested streets and limited parking were sending shoppers away from downtown to the newly developing regional malls. The Downtown Improvement Corporation, a group of executives representing major downtown businesses, hired a consulting firm to study better ways to accommodate cars.

The firm's chief planners convinced the business group that the city's problems went far beyond parking and circulation. What was really necessary, they argued, was a comprehensive study of development needs and patterns throughout downtown. City and county officials agreed, and soon offered professional staff. State funds became available for research and special projects.

Citizen activists had grown skeptical of downtown renovation ever since an urban renewal project had leveled an established central city neighborhood. Residents began demanding that average citizens — not just business people or bureaucrats — should have a say in the planning effort. While the technical staff continued its work with close supervision by the business community, a Citizens Advisory Committee crafted the essence of the Downtown Plan — its planning goals.

The Principles. A mix of individuals with different talents and backgrounds sat on the Citizens Advisory Committee. Some were trained in architecture and urban design. Others were community activists who may not have had the technical expertise of their professional counterparts — but they knew what they liked. Together, the participants identified a variety of design elements that are universally recognized as making a city look and feel good.

They knew that blank walls on giant buildings made people feel uncomfortable and offered little encouragement to pedestrians. They knew that street-level retail space would offer reasons for employees to stay downtown in the evenings, rather than abandoning the urban core when the offices shut down.

Participating citizens argued that it didn’t make sense to tear down gracious historic buildings to provide more parking. They recognized that public transit offered an alternative to congested streets with poor air quality. And they knew that they wanted to reclaim their river and protect waterfront views.

From these insights emerged key elements of the Downtown Plan: an emphasis on pedestrian comfort, promoting features like street trees, wide sidewalks and height limits; concentration of retail, office and government facilities in various sectors of downtown; easy-to-find parking facilities; improved transit; more and better designed parks and plazas; historic preservation; and creation of downtown housing.

The Concepts: The final product contained several key features that provided the basis for today’s downtown. These concepts continue to guide policy and regulatory decisions affecting downtown.

- **The Transit Mall as the spine of downtown.** The Downtown Plan recognized early on the link between transportation and land use. The densest office development occurs adjacent to Fifth and Sixth Avenue — the Transit Mall, which is designed for pedestrian use as well as buses. Current plans call for a light rail line along the bus mall.
- **East-west retail Core.** The plan envisioned an exciting retail area leading from the mall to the Willamette River. Transit would enhance access to this area, as well as to offices.
- **Replacing a freeway with a park.** Even before the Downtown Plan, Portlanders were looking at ways to regain access to the Willamette River. The plan codified the decision to move Harbor Drive and create a park. Today, Portland continues to expand river access, and both River District and North Macadam District development efforts emphasize public open space along the Willamette.
- **Preserving special places.** The Downtown Plan recognizes the importance of unique, historic and exceptional features that contribute to the city’s character. The plan calls for preservation and enhancement of these areas with the establishment of historic districts, the Bright Light District, the Government District and others.
Once City Council adopted the Downtown Plan in 1972, Portland city staff began the difficult work of translating policy into actual regulations. Central to this effort was creation of the design guidelines, establishing an array of recommendations and standards for different sub-districts of downtown. An emphasis on transit set the stage for the transit mall and later, light rail, which ultimately leveraged tremendous private investment throughout the central city.

With the plan’s adoption, the city also began an aggressive development program, resulting in public investment of time and funds that spurred a dramatic turnaround in the appearance and character of downtown Portland. Highlights include a major expansion of a small Nordstrom outlet into a retail anchor, creation of the Pioneer Place retail and office complex, construction and expansion of Tom McCall Waterfront Park; development of Pioneer Courthouse Square, substantial housing development on the South Park Blocks; creation of an exquisite performing arts center and renovation of the old Paramount Theater.

In 1988, City Council approved the Central City Plan, which updated and expanded the Downtown Plan concepts. The Central City Plan expanded the planning area to include districts adjacent to downtown and tying together two sides of the Willamette River. The plan also incorporated incentives for private developers to support a variety of community goals: creation of new housing, day care services, public art and water features.

The Central City, Today and Tomorrow. Since the adoption of the Downtown and Central City Plans, the central city has benefited from more than one billion dollars in private and public investment. Downtown Portland remains the region’s business center, with employment increasing from 70,000 jobs in the early 1970s to more than 100,000 jobs in the mid-1990s. Downtown Portland is once again a major gathering place for the region’s residents. Evenings and weekends find the city filled with residents and visitors engaged in shopping, dining, visiting galleries and museums, attending classes at Portland State University or participating in the many festivals in downtown parks and plazas.

As a result of the Downtown Plan and the subsequent Central City Plan, Portland has become a destination for urban planners and others interested in revitalizing urban communities around the globe. And the work of the Downtown Plan continues. Portland's leaders continually look to the plan for guidance and direction as the city attempts to preserve its valued quality of life in the face of tremendous population growth.

A product of citizen, business and professional planners’ efforts, the Downtown Plan has had an incomparable impact on Portland’s evolution. Twenty-five years later, the plan is a living document that continues to shape the city’s future.
The Downtown Plan originally had 13 goals, addressing various elements of a complex urban environment. The following pages highlight some of the original goals that have had a dramatic impact on the evolution of downtown Portland.

A. TRANSPORTATION

Goal: “To design a balanced transportation system which is supportive of other Downtown goals and which recognizes that the transportation system should provide more efficient use of both right-of-way and vehicles. This means reducing reliance on the automobile, increasing the number of persons per car and increasing the number of persons moving through concentrated areas on multiple-passenger facilities.”

The transportation goal inspired a variety of physical projects that have changed the nature of downtown — from the way it looks to the way people move around. Portland’s success in pursuing its transportation goal has had a dramatic impact on the amount of private investment throughout downtown and across the Willamette River in the Lloyd District.

The first major project was the Transit Mall on Fifth and Sixth Avenues completed in 1978, and more recently extended north to Union Station. The light rail line to suburban Gresham was completed ten years after the original transit mall. At the north end of downtown, the historic Union Station is being restored and will continue to serve as an Amtrak Station. Next door sits the Greyhound terminal, completed in 1985 at a cost of $7,000,000.

The city has also developed seven major short-term parking facilities in the retail core, south downtown and Old Town. Together, these garages accommodate some 3,200 cars. The city also works closely with developers to assure that parking is available for short-term shopping and business trips. But city policy discourages development of surplus parking, to encourage transit use and minimize commuter trips by car.

1. Transit Mall. The award-winning Portland Transit Mall dates to 1978, when the City of Portland dedicated a set of north/south streets almost exclusively to bus and pedestrian transportation. Widened sidewalks paved in handsome brick with granite curbs, fountains, public art, new trees and plantings, and well-designed bus shelters combine to create an attractive and efficient transit core for the entire region. This mall is set in downtown’s high-density spine, which continues to attract commercial development and high transit ridership. Planners attribute much of the mall’s success to the fact that it provides for auto and truck passage on alternate blocks, preserving access for delivery trucks, cabs and other vehicles as necessary.
2. Metropolitan Area Express (MAX), the regional light rail system. Following the success of the transit mall, the city has developed a handsome mall design for the popular MAX line. Like the transit mall, the rights-of-way adjacent to the downtown MAX line feature brick sidewalks, trees, attractive street furniture, fountains and sculpture. In deference to the historic district through which it passes, the tracks are laid in Belgian block “cobblestones.” Property owners along the downtown MAX line agreed to pay for the attractive features using assessments from a Local Improvement District (L.I.D.).

The first MAX line, which linked Portland to Gresham, 15 miles to the east, was built using federal funds originally intended for a second eastside freeway which was never built. The freeway would have destroyed about 1,750 houses — approximately one percent of the city’s housing stock. Popular opposition ended the freeway project.

The second MAX phase continued the Gresham line to Hillsboro, 18 miles west of Portland. It was designed to relieve congestion on a heavy traffic corridor and leverage investment in high density housing and business development.

Today, the region’s citizens and local governments are working with Tri-Met to design a light rail line linking the southeast suburbs to downtown Portland and eventually to Vancouver, Washington. This line will run on the transit mall, strengthening the connections between transit modes and reinforcing the corridor’s attraction for private investment.

3. Smart Park Garages. In an effort to assure an adequate supply of inexpensive parking for downtown visitors, the City of Portland built parking facilities throughout downtown Portland. The city-built parking structures at S.W. 4th and S.W. Yamhill and S.W. 3rd and S.W. Alder are designed to serve the retail core. The garage at S.W. 1st and S.W. Jefferson serves the emerging retail and entertainment opportunities at the downtown’s south end, and the Naito & Davis facility serves Old Town. A garage at S.W. 10th and S.W. Yamhill is adjacent to the Galleria, the Central Library and other destinations. The city also owns a small lot beneath O’Bryant Square, serving a primarily business-oriented clientele.

The Association for Portland Progress (APP) operates the lots under the name “Smart Park.” The city and APP also operate a system that allows retailers to relieve shoppers’ parking costs by stamping their garage tickets. “FreePark” has the largest number of participating retailers of any validation program in the nation.

4. Central City Streetcar. The Downtown and Central City Plans called for a “circulator” to move people through the central city. In 1994, City Council approved the first route of what is envisioned as a series of streetcar lines connecting residential, retail and employment centers in the central city. The initial line, expected to begin operating in the year 2000, will connect the popular retail area of N.W. 23rd Avenue and Good Samaritan Hospital to Portland State University via downtown Portland on 11th and 12th Avenues.

The streetcar system will use modern, low-floor cars for its standard service, but may also incorporate the existing stock of charming Vintage Trolley cars, which ran between Lloyd Center and downtown on MAX tracks for a number of years.

5. Union Station. Historic Union Station continues to serve as an active passenger rail terminal. It lies adjacent to a Greyhound bus terminal, a Tri-Met city bus terminal facility, and the recently-completed north transit mall extension. A future light rail line may also pass near the station, further reinforcing its role as a multi-modal transportation center.
B. COMMERCE

Goal: “Enhance downtown’s role as a leading center for retail goods and consumer services by providing an atmosphere conducive to investment.”

In the early 1970’s, Portland’s downtown, like many of those across America, was experiencing a considerable loss of retail activity. The Downtown Plan was generated to reverse this loss by focusing on downtown parking, transit, design, and other issues which impact retail vitality.

The plan’s goal of enhancing the retail core has been achieved. New retail development includes two new department stores, several specialty retail projects, and extensive rehabilitation of existing space, bringing the total retail space in the downtown area to approximately five million square feet. The most notable development resulting from Downtown Plan is the Rouse Company’s Pioneer Place.

Business and property owners strongly support continuing downtown improvement efforts. Downtown businesses created the nation’s first economic improvement district. Fees contributed by downtown properties are used for ongoing maintenance and street clean-up, as well as supporting downtown guides and security personnel. Paid guides offer assistance to businesses, shoppers and employees, while security officers work closely with the Portland police to reinforce the sense of on-street safety that is so critical to a dynamic urban community.

The city and private investors provide other key support services to attract and strengthen retail activity. These include city-owned short-term parking facilities and special activities and promotions to bring shoppers downtown.

1. Retail core. The retail core is the heart of downtown and centers around the MAX line and the transit mall.

2. Nordstrom. A major component in the revitalization of downtown retail activity, the Nordstrom Department Store was the first large new retail construction in downtown Portland in 50 years. The Nordstrom family’s investment jump-started a downtown commercial boom. Completed in 1977, the Nordstrom store consists of 150,000 square feet. The retailer added a story in 1989.

3. The Galleria. This vertical shopping mall features three levels of retail space and two floors of office above. Originally a department store that had been run down for many years, its purchase was a bold investment in downtown retail. The 1976 renovation restored the atrium at the center of the building.

4. Kress Building. Retail shops are located in a structure that was originally home to a Kress store and later housed a J.C. Penney’s until the early 1980’s. This project benefits from its proximity to the light rail line and to Pioneer Place. The building has been carefully restored, with high-end retail use on the ground floor and offices above. It is on the National Register of Historic Properties.

5. Pioneer Place. Pioneer Place may be the single most important commercial project in the history of downtown. The City of Portland purchased this four-city-block parcel and prepared it for development using tax increment financing from an urban renewal district. Developed by the nationally-famous Rouse Company, the project represents an investment of over $100 million. The first phase, completed in 1990, consists of a Saks 5th Avenue department store, a 15-story office tower, and 174,000 square feet of specialty retail space. The second phase,
scheduled for completion in 1999, will include 120,000 square feet of retail space and 30,000 square feet of entertainment use in a five-level pavilion-style structure.

The Downtown Plan encouraged developers to include public art in their projects. The exterior of Pioneer Place features art in a variety of ways — from plaques to inscriptions to dramatic sculpture.

6. ***Showcase Stores.*** High-profile “flagship” stores in the downtown core illustrate the attraction of downtown retail locations. The 20,000 square foot Nike Town, one of the first stores to feature an entire season’s product line, opened in 1991. Columbia Sportswear Company followed suit, renovating the historic United Carriage Building into a 30,000 square-foot showcase store in 1996. Jantzen Beach Apparel established its showcase store in the Galleria.

7. ***Marriott Complex.*** A $35 million hotel and retail complex at SW Broadway and Washington Street will include a 20-story, 252-room Marriott Hotel and 46,000 square feet of retail, as well as short-term parking for 460 cars.
C. OFFICE

Goal: “Strengthen Downtown’s role as an important center for administrative, financial, personal and professional business, service and government activities.”

One of the goals of the Downtown Plan was to create a sense of “order” with respect to building placement and the general organization of downtown. The city had been debating the location of small, medium and large office buildings. Planners also hoped to preserve views of the river, Cascade Mountain Range and the west hills.

In response, the plan identified a high-density downtown office core centering around the 5th and 6th Avenue transit mall. New zoning regulations set building heights and floor areas consistent with this role and allowed medium-density office development to the south and east of this spine.

Between 1972 and 1997, thirty-four new office buildings representing nine million square feet of floor space had been constructed in conformance with the plan. In addition, at least thirty existing office buildings have been extensively upgraded. Developers continue to plan and build new office buildings in downtown Portland.

1. and 2. U.S. Bank and Equitable Building. Two of Portland’s most distinctive landmarks located in the high-density corridor are the U.S. National Bank (1917) and the Equitable Building (1948). The Equitable, designed by Pietro Belluschi, was the first glass-skinned office tower in the country. The terra cotta-clad U.S. Bank headquarters represents only a small part of that institution’s developments in Portland, which include a 1,000,000 square foot office complex completed in 1984.

3. PacWest. The PacWest Building, designed by Boston architect Hugh Stubbins, is one of the finest contemporary office towers in the city. The 28-story office tower sits on a two-floor retail podium which features an atrium.

4. Bank of American Financial Center. This highly-visible tower located near the Morrison Bridge was completed in 1987. The 18-story building contains 350,000 square feet of office space and houses Bank of America. The building’s lobby features exquisite hardwood paneling and pillars.

5. Fountain Plaza. This multi-use, three-block project is one of the most distinctive additions to downtown Portland. The first phase of the project is the 30-story KOIN Center. This structure includes six cinemas, ground floor retail and commercial space, 360,000 square feet of offices, and 44 condominiums on the upper ten floors. Market-rate housing was built in 1991 on a second block, and a third block will be developed for office use. Fountain Plaza applies the principle of “stepped back” construction, with upper floors recessed from the building front, providing a sense of light and spaciousness.

6. Robert Duncan Plaza. This 320,000 square foot office tower was completed in 1991 and houses the U.S. Forest Service and Army Corps of Engineers. The tower sits directly adjacent to the MAX line and includes street-level retail space and a daycare center.

7. 1000 Broadway Building. This unique rose-tinted tower combines an underground multi-plex theater, street-level retail space, seven levels of parking, and 15 floors of office space. The cinema continues SW Broadway’s tradition as a street of theaters. The domed building designed by Boora Architects received design awards upon its completion in 1991.
8. Pacific Gas and Electric Transmission-Northwest Building. This eight-story office headquarters adds a significant employment component to the Riverplace waterfront area (see “Housing”). Completed in 1995, the development includes 106,000 square feet of office space and structured parking for 189 vehicles.

9. Fox Tower. This 28-story office building on the site of the former Fox Theater will include movie theaters, 40,000 square feet of retail space on the lower two floors, a 400-stall parking garage on the next eight floors and 360,000 square feet of office space on the highest 18 floors. The building will also have a city-owned Smart Park garage in the basement for short-term parkers. The building is scheduled to open early in the year 2000.

10. ODS Morrison Tower. ODS Health Plans will be the anchor tenant for a 24-story full block office building. The project will include 33,000 square feet of retail on the first two floors and will be open in 1999.

11. Agricultural Center. See “River District.”
D. HOUSING

Goal: “To give high priority to increasing the number of residential accommodations in the Downtown area for a mix of age and income groups, taking into consideration that residents of Downtown and adjacent areas are essential to the growth, stability and general health of a metropolitan city.”

Housing is one of the most important components of a vital downtown. Responding to a strong mandate for housing in the Downtown Plan, the city used tools such as a required housing zone and bonus densities for the provision of housing, as well as tax abatements and other financial incentives to set the stage for increasing housing units.

The Downtown Plan specifically addressed the need to house low-income and homeless people. At the time of the plan’s development, Portland faced a dramatic loss in its stock of single room occupancy hotels. The plan set targets for preserving and building new SRO units. The purpose was to support the health and safety of low-income people, as well as to reduce vagrancy on downtown streets.

More recently, the City of Portland has increased its emphasis on central city housing to reduce urban sprawl and preserve natural resource land adjacent to the metropolitan area. The city is promoting development of both market rate and affordable housing.

The results have been impressive. Between 1996 and 1998, the central city has added 1,400 housing units. These include luxury condominiums, market rate apartments, and a wide array of affordable housing opportunities. In addition to new housing planned throughout downtown, the River District and University Districts (see the sections on the latter two districts) are planned to absorb extensive residential development.

The North Macadam District, located south of Riverplace along the Willamette River, is another area slated for intensive housing, as well as commercial, development. At this writing, a steering committee is working on a framework plan for district development, and no projects have yet reached the permit stage.

1. McCormick Pier. McCormick Pier is a 304-unit, market rate apartment complex built in 1981. The units boast such distinctive features as direct access to the Willamette River, a marina, swimming pool and roof-top solar collectors. McCormick Pier was the first riverfront housing development in downtown Portland and one of the first investments in downtown housing after the adoption of the Downtown Plan.

2. Riverplace. This major mixed-use, multi-phased project is located on the south end of downtown Portland’s waterfront. The Portland Development Commission acquired the property and requested development proposals. The first phase, completed in 1985, included 190 units of middle- and upper-income housing combined with a small luxury hotel, specialty retail, a marina, athletic club, and 40,000 square feet of office space. In 1990 and 1995, two more apartment complexes were completed, with 108 units and 182 units respectively. Future development phases will include additional office space, housing, hotel units, a grocery store and a continuation of the greenway trail from Tom McCall Waterfront Park.
3. **University Park.** In 1985, the city established the South Park Blocks Urban Renewal District to stimulate housing through public improvements and subsidies. The first project completed in the district was University Park, a 128-unit middle-income apartment complex adjacent to Portland State University. The project was designed to fit the flavor of the historic South Park Blocks area with brick cladding, traditional gabled forms, and a medium scale.

4. **Loft Conversions.** Developers have converted a number of vacant industrial buildings into lofts. Most of these are located in an area called "The Pearl District," recognized for the recent proliferation of art galleries. Some of these projects, such as the Everett Station Lofts, combine living space and studio or artists’ display space.

5. **The Yards at Union Station.** The Portland Development Commission purchased the property around Union Station and has been coordinating development of high density housing on the site. The first phase, to be completed in 1998, will offer affordable housing built in partnership with the Housing Authority of Portland. A second phase will be market rate housing. Together, the site will hold approximately 700 housing units. Public infrastructure improvements such as pedestrian crossings are intended to create a neighborhood feeling and improve access to the transit mall and the Willamette River.

6. **St. James Apartments.** This facility, developed by a non-profit affiliated with St. James Church, offers moderate and low-income housing. The complex was built using tax credits, tax increment financing funds and the tax abatement available to all downtown housing development. It is one of the first projects in the city to provide for mixed incomes and a mix of unit sizes.

7. **Mark Hatfield Building.** City urban renewal funds and federal Section 8 dollars assisted with the rehabilitation and operation of this project, which converted a former office building to apartments in 1994. The building houses low-income people with drug and alcohol addictions coupled with another mental health diagnosis.

8. **West Shore.** The City of Portland established a housing trust fund with general fund dollars, which helped convert this former police headquarters to affordable housing. This building was designed and constructed by private, for-profit developers.

9. **Pearl Court Apartments.** The Housing Authority of Portland and a private developer became partners in developing these attractive affordable housing units.

10. **Hoyt Street Yards.** A single property owner is developing a large parcel in the River District which was previously used entirely as rail yards. A few of the projects make use of old railroad buildings. These developments will have on-site retail space. (See River District.)
E. HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Goal: “Identify, preserve, protect and dramatize historical structures and locations within downtown.”

Developers and the city have responded to this goal in a dramatic fashion. Some forty historical structures in the downtown area have been rehabilitated, representing an investment of more than $125 million. Rehabilitation has been focused in the Yamhill and Skidmore/Old Town Historic Districts, which together hold one of the country’s best collections of cast-iron, Victorian era architecture.

The extensive private investment in historic properties has been motivated in part by pivotal public support. The city currently provides grants for facade renovation and has also funded special historic district plaques and street lights. The city financed restoration of Skidmore Fountain, with its wonderful inscription, “Good citizens are the riches of a city.”

1. Pioneer Courthouse. When the structure was built in 1869, many citizens feared that the Pioneer Courthouse would be located too far from town, which at that time was along the riverfront. Today, the carefully restored federal courthouse building is the very heart of downtown, across the street from the popular Pioneer Courthouse Square.

2. New Market Theater. The New Market Theater dates to 1872. It is the crown jewel of the Skidmore/Old Town Historic District, where the city began in the 1840’s. A private developer restored the structure for retail/office use in 1984 with a $1 million grant from the city.

3. Yamhill Marketplace. The Yamhill Marketplace is a rare example of a new building designed carefully to blend with its historic setting, in this case the Yamhill Historic District. Located along the MAX line, the Marketplace features 36,000 square feet of retail space, with a central atrium as its focus. The city provided $1.5 million in low-interest financing for the project.

4. Thomas Mann Building. The Thomas Mann Building was constructed in 1884 and renovated in 1981. The ground floor is devoted to retail use with offices on floors two and three. A fourth floor with a mezzanine, which now holds eight apartments, was added as part of the renovation. This Italianate structure is located next to the Yamhill Marketplace, along the MAX line.

5. 1st Avenue Facades. The 800 block of SW 1st Avenue shows a typical street scene in the Yamhill Historic District. Ornate cast-iron facades make this a treasure-trove for aficionados of nineteenth-century commercial architecture. Portland is second only to New York City in its collection of cast-iron facade buildings.

6. Multnomah County Library. This 1913 historic landmark reopened in 1997 after a three-year, $24.6 million renovation approved by county voters. The restoration includes a doubling of public space, a new children’s library, specially commissioned art and oak furniture; and interior finishes and flooring that incorporate library themes in rich Georgian revival color schemes.
7. City Hall. Portland’s historic City Hall, built in 1892, underwent major renovation that was completed in spring of 1998. The $28.1 million renovation added an atrium, remodeled council chambers, replaced loose marble flooring, and made the building earthquake safe.

8. Lipman Wolfe Building. Once home to the Lipman and Wolfe Department Store, this building lay vacant for several years before its 1996 conversion to a luxury hotel and restaurant.

9. Multnomah Hotel. The once-elegant, and later, long-empty Multnomah Hotel, served as a government office building in the 1960’s. The building has been transformed into the 262-room Embassy Suites Hotel. The first floor restaurant adds to the night life activity in this emerging entertainment district.

10. Crystal Ballroom. This 1914 dance hall saw Portland through a myriad of music and cultural eras until its closure in 1968. Dormant and off-limits to the public for nearly 30 years, it was renovated by a local microbrewery chain and reopened in 1997 as a dance hall and pub. Its most notable feature is the “floating” wooden dance floor, one of only a few surviving such floors in the United States.
F. GOVERNMENT CENTER

Goal: “Strengthen Downtown’s role as the seat of local and regional government, by developing new municipal offices in proximity to the existing seats of government.”

The concept of a Government Center dates at least as far back as the 1912 Bennett Plan. That plan called for additional government offices to be built near the existing City Hall and County Courthouse. Since the adoption of the 1972 Downtown Plan, the city has continued to establish this area as a Government Center. A series of dynamic buildings flanks a chain of small parks. The district houses Portland City Hall and the administrative Portland Building, Multnomah County Courthouse, the Justice Center, a federal office building and the newest addition, the Federal Courthouse.

1. The Portland Building. Michael Graves’ Portland Building made international news upon its completion in 1982. Graves’ design was the winning entry in a city-sponsored national competition. Graves’ use of historic references, pastel colors, and other unusual facade treatments won out over more conventional solutions. The structure was hailed as the first post-modern office tower. The $28 million building features 285,000 square feet of municipal offices, with ground floor retail. The popular Portlandia sculpture, a dramatic example of public art, adorns the building’s front entrance.

2. Justice Center. Built in 1983, this structure is only slightly more restrained than Graves’ post-modern frivolity. The Justice Center contains state, county and city law enforcement headquarters, a 430-person jail, and courtrooms. The Justice Center is decidedly monochromatic, but features an eight-story concave glass wall on one elevation, and a glass barrel vault at the main entry.

In Portland, one percent of the capital costs for public buildings are applied to public art. The Justice Center illustrates the benefits of incorporating the art into the building’s structure, rather than adding the art after the fact as sculpture or painting.

3. Federal Courthouse. The federal government completed construction of this 16-story building in 1997. The main entrance incorporates many of the design concepts of the Downtown Plan, including a series of glass doors and weather protection. The main lobby features water sculptures and other public art.
**G. CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT**

**Goal:** “Promote downtown as the entertainment and cultural center of the metropolitan area.”

The core of Portland’s artistic life is the cultural campus. Located along the northern edges of the South Park Blocks, this “campus” includes the Portland Art Museum, the Oregon Historical Society, and the two-block Portland Center for the Performing Arts (PCPA).

The PCPA was funded by private donations and a $25 million bond measure, resulting in the beautifully restored Paramount Theater (now the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall), and smaller theaters holding 350 and 1,000 seats. A third piece of the PCPA is the Civic Auditorium, located south and west of the other two buildings.

While the PCPA is the jewel in Portland’s cultural crown, the city boasts a variety of other major achievements. A fine collection of galleries is concentrated in the historic districts and the Pearl District, which features many historic loft warehouses. Summer concerts are held in Tom McCall Waterfront Park and Pioneer Courthouse Square. The Portland Opera and Oregon Symphony are nationally acclaimed. Each summer, downtown fills with visitors eager to attend highly entertaining events, ranging from Cinco de Mayo and the Bite to the Rose Festival’s Family Fun Center.

Commercial entertainment also thrives. The six KOIN Center cinemas and the Broadway Theater four-plex, as well as the planned construction of two new theater complexes, are testimony to the fact that downtown is where people go for entertainment.

1. **Performing Arts Center.** The Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall holds 2,800 people and is home to the prestigious Oregon Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Maestro James dePriest. The New Theaters Building houses two theaters, an Intermediate Theater (1,000 seats), and the more intimate Dolores Winningstad Theater (350 seats). The new building was designed to carefully blend with its historic neighbors, including Schnitzer Hall.

2. **Civic Auditorium.** The 3,000 seat Civic Auditorium was built before the adoption of the Downtown Plan, but plays an important role in supporting the arts. Technically part of the Performing Arts Center, it provides the largest theater of all the PCPA buildings. The Civic Auditorium hosts the Portland Opera and is the setting for many of the popular touring musicals that travel through Portland.

3. **Broadway Cineplex.** Earlier this century, Broadway was a dynamic theater center characterized by a series of brightly-lit marquees. The Broadway Cineplex is the first new theater complex in the spirit of the “Bright Lights District,” as it is called in the Downtown Plan. Another 10 theaters are planned at the Fox Block renovation site.
H. OPEN SPACE

Goal: “Provide major and minor open space along the waterfront and within the downtown area adaptable to a wide variety of uses.”

Downtown Portland is blessed with a variety of fine public and private open spaces, each unique in its design and function. The Downtown Plan was a primary motivation in the city’s acquisition and development of such spaces, two of which are particularly noteworthy: The Tom McCall Waterfront Park and Pioneer Courthouse Square.

Waterfront Park replaced Harbor Drive, a freeway removed in the early 1970’s. The park’s broad grassy meadows hold a variety of events and serve as a respite for downtown workers and residents.

Pioneer Square is a very different kind of open space – a one-block, brick-paved plaza at the heart of the city. Originally the site of the grand old Portland Hotel, the structure was torn down in 1950 to make way for a parking lot. A team led by Will Martin won the design competition to create this extraordinary plaza. The square is funded partly by donations from the public.

In addition to these two preeminent public places, downtown Portland boasts many public and private fountains, gardens, and plazas.

1. Tom McCall Waterfront Park. This park was once the site of a state highway and the Oregon Journal Building. The city, in partnership with the state, replaced the highway with a grand park, which now stretches from RiverPlace to the Steel Bridge. Walkers, joggers, bicyclists and in-line skaters use the path along the river year round.

The City of Portland recently invested $2 million in Waterfront Park improvements, including installation of new utility lines and turf to better support multiple festivals and events that take place in the park each year. Some of these annual festivals contributed nearly $500,000 to the improvement project.

2. Pioneer Square. Dubbed Portland’s “living room,” the square invites a wide variety of uses, from people-watching to political rallies; from lunchtime concerts to sandcastle displays and the annual tree-lighting ceremony. This public plaza offers amphitheater seating and a terrace coffee shop. It is one of the city’s premier gathering places.

The bricks that form the plaza’s floor contain names of contributors, their family and friends. Sale of bricks was an important fund-raiser that engaged the public in the square’s completion.

3. Lovejoy Fountain. Lawrence Halperin designed this fountain in Portland’s South Auditorium Urban Renewal District. The concrete forms and splashing water suggest the waterfalls and rock forms of the Cascade Range, to the east of Portland.
4. **Chinese Classical Garden and Tanner Creek.** See “River District.”

5. **Salmon Street Springs.** This fountain was designed to celebrate city life and urban rhythms. Water patterns change to reflect the time of day through programming of the fountain’s 185 jets. Salmon Street Springs is a popular play spot for children. The Portland Development Commission financed the fountain in 1988. The name was selected in a public competition.

6. **Japanese-American Historical Plaza.** This memorial garden at the northern end of Waterfront Park contains bronze and stone sculptures which tell the history of Japanese-Americans in the Northwest. A non-profit organization, Oregon Nikkei Endowment, raised $500,000 toward this joint project which was completed in 1990.

7. **A New Park Block.** For years, Portlanders have dreamed of an uninterrupted park running from the south end of downtown to the Willamette River. The South Park Blocks connect Portland State University to the city’s main cultural institutions and offer a respite from the busy commercial development immediately to the west. North of Burnside St., the North Park Blocks provide a playground and green space, which will become increasingly important as the north end of downtown becomes more intensively developed.

Recently, the City of Portland received the opportunity to add another block to the South Park Blocks. Plans to build a parking structure on a surface parking lot at the north end of the South Park Blocks drew fire from many citizens who were committed to extending the park blocks. A $1 million grant to a local foundation has resulted in the block’s purchase, and the community looks forward to the addition of public open space on that site.

The following two areas are emerging districts that were not under consideration during development of the Downtown Plan or the subsequent Central City Plan. These districts are expected to help the City of Portland meet its goals for increased residential development close to employment centers. The impact will be to reduce reliance on automobiles for daily trips, encourage economical redevelopment using existing infrastructure, and decrease pressure on the urban growth boundary surrounding the Portland metropolitan area.
A. UNIVERSITY DISTRICT

Goal: “Foster the development of a distinct sub-district which has its character defined by its focus on Portland State University. Shape the University District into a vital multi-cultural and international crossroads with an environment which stimulates lifelong learning, collaboration between business and government and a rich cultural experience.”

Portland State University’s motto - Let Knowledge Serve the City - highlights the University’s critical role in the future of the Portland metropolitan region. PSU provides undergraduate, graduate-level, and continuing education programs to a diverse population of students.

PSU’s downtown location is relatively unique among institutions of higher education and provides many opportunities for campus/community interaction. However, until recently, the campus area has been economically stagnant.

The original Downtown Plan addressed PSU and the Park Blocks in a single goal. More recently, City Council adopted a plan for the University district, addressing the school’s role in downtown housing and economic development, as well as education.

Local leaders and university staff have developed a vision for a more vibrant and distinctive district encompassing 52 blocks on the southern edge of downtown. This University District will exhibit a strong pedestrian and street-level shopping environment, new private housing to serve a greater residential population, additional academic buildings, and public spaces and physical features which identify the district as unique.

1. District Housing. PSU envisions 1000 units of new private housing for the University District, much of it concentrating along S.W. 4th and 5th Avenues. This new housing will help make the district a vibrant place by creating a greater market for commercial establishments and university-related cultural activities.

2. Urban Center. Design work is underway for PSU’s “Urban Center,” a six-block area that will be the focus of redevelopment. A public plaza surrounded by retail establishments will anchor the University District and serve as a transit hub. The Urban Center will also include a new building for the School of Urban and Public Affairs, additional academic or conference space, new retail space, and new housing.

Plans to build the South/North MAX line call for extension of the transit mall to Portland State University, with light rail running along the line. Light rail plans catalyzed plans for the Urban Center. The Central City Streetcar is also expected to run adjacent to the center.

3. Elementary School. A key element of the University District will be five stories of housing above a two-story grade elementary school. This project will fulfill a Central City Plan goal of establishing a grade school to serve central city residents as well as a University Vision goal for additional housing in the district.

4. Harrison Hall. Completed in 1996, this beautifully designed 7500 square-foot, 400-seat multi-purpose lecture hall expands University classroom space and is equipped for sophisticated presentations using advanced technology.
B. RIVER DISTRICT

Goal: “Extend downtown development throughout the River District that is highly urban in character and which creates a unique community because of its diversity; its existing and emerging neighborhoods housing a substantial resident population, providing jobs, services and recreation; and most important, its embrace of the Willamette River.”

The River District is a triangular area bounded by West Burnside St., Interstate 405, and the Willamette River. It contains several distinct areas such as Old Town, with its historic structures, Portland’s Chinatown, and the Pearl District, featuring art galleries and industrial buildings. With its central location and a significant amount of vacant land formerly devoted to rail yards, the River District represents some of the highest-value urban redevelopment land in the country.

Recognizing this potential, a group of north downtown property owners, business interests, and citizens collaborated to create a River District Vision. Adopted by City Council in 1992, this conceptual plan provides a framework for new development in the district. The vision describes a community of neighborhoods housing a population of 15,000 or more supported by services, open space, and jobs. It advocates restoring the district’s connection with the Willamette River waterfront.

Public-private partnerships will play an important role in plan implementation. The City of Portland will contribute infrastructure such as street improvements, while the private sector will provide the majority of investment money for new projects. The Portland Development Commission plays a strong role in directing River District development.

1. Lovejoy Ramp and Reconstruction Project. This project will demolish two above-grade bridge ramps and rebuild both at street level. Ramp reconstruction will allow the city and private developers to complete the street system in the existing grid pattern, allowing people to walk and ride bicycles easily through the emerging River District community. Ramp reconstruction is also critical to the city’s streetcar plans.

2. NW Naito Parkway redevelopment. The city is coordinating major transportation improvements with private development occurring in the Union Station/Old Town area. These will include widened sidewalks, new street trees and street lights, and numerous pedestrian connections to provide residents and workers convenient access to the North Transit Mall and retail activity in Old Town/Chinatown. The Portland Development Commission has planned a pedestrian bridge to connect Union Station Housing with the transit mall, allowing clear passage above the train tracks. The city is also working with the owners of McCormick Pier to design a pedestrian corridor connecting Naito Parkway to the river.

3. Chinese Classical Garden. Citizen groups, in partnership with the City of Portland, have selected a one-block site in Old Town for a Chinese Classical Garden. Designed in the style of private urban gardens in Portland’s Sister City of Suzhou, the garden will serve as a cultural showpiece and center for community activities. The garden will be funded by a combination of corporate and individual sponsors.
4. **Tanner Creek Park.** Tanner Creek once ran through Northwest Portland into the Willamette River. For many years, it has been buried inside the city’s sewer pipes. As part of the city’s efforts to reduce overflows into the Willamette River during rainstorms, the city will bring Tanner Creek back to the earth’s surface — or “daylight” the creek. Current plans call for the creek to flow through a public park for several blocks before it joins the Willamette.

5. **Agricultural Center.** Planning began in 1996 for an $18 million joint public-private project. Construction began in spring 1998 on the Food Innovation Center, developed by Oregon State University and the Oregon Department of Agriculture, which will contain approximately 36,000 square feet of office space. The Oregon Agricultural Center will be a privately-developed, five-story, 100,000 square foot office building. Together, these research centers will represent a significant employment center in the River District.

6. **River District Housing.** The City of Portland has established a goal for the development of 5,500 new residential units in the River District by the year 2010. New River District housing will include loft conversions, new construction on former industrial lands, and the maintenance and renovation of affordable rental units. Many housing projects in the district are already underway:

A. **Redevelopment of former industrial land**

   1. **Hoyt Yards Housing.** A long tract of former warehouse land stretching north from Hoyt Street is targeted for new residential development. Several condominium, apartment, and townhome projects have already been constructed (examples: Hoyt Commons, Irving Townhomes, Johnson Condominiums, Burlington Plaza, Pearl Lofts.)

   2. **Union Station Housing.** The Portland Development Commission plans for a total of seven hundred units housing on these former Union Station rail yards. Construction on the first phase began in 1997 (see description under “Housing”).

B. **Ongoing loft conversions.** Many vacant former industrial buildings have been converted to loft housing. A number of these projects combine living space and studio or artists’ display space.

   1. **McKenzie Lofts.** This half-block project includes 75 units completed in early spring of 1998.

   2. **Chown Pella Lofts.** A private developer converted the historic Oregon Transfer Company Building into 70 condominium lofts with ground-floor retail space. Completed in 1996, the project cost $12 million.

C. **Affordable housing projects.** The city has established a goal of maintaining the affordable housing traditionally available in the district. The first phase of the Union Station Project and Pearl Court Apartments are two recent projects designed to provide housing for low and mid-income people.

   Some single-room occupancy buildings combine social service components with housing.

   1. **Sally McCracken House.** A partnership between the Housing Authority of Portland, the non-profit Central City Concern and a private developer renovated a building into affordable housing units for people in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction.
SPECIAL FEATURES

Downtown Portland has a special identity. That identity is embodied and nurtured in the Downtown Plan’s goals and guidelines. It is also expressed in the special features, the human scale and the colorful details that give downtown its vitality and character. Both the public and private sectors have invested in special features which augment that character.

1. Chinatown Gate and Dragon. The Chinatown Gate stands at the entrance to New Chinatown. It is the culmination of other projects in the area, and was partially financed by the city, donations from the Republic of China, Portland’s Chinese community and other private citizens.

2. Flowers on Street Lights. Portland’s traditional ornamental cast-iron street lamps are bedecked in the historic district with beautiful hanging flowers.

3. Rose Festival/Waterfront Park. Portland’s Rose Festival dates to the beginning of the century. It now lasts three weeks every June, with dozens of events, including operation of the Family Fun Center carnival in Waterfront Park.

4. Portlandia. The 5th Avenue entrance to Michael Graves’ Portland Building is adorned with the statue Portlandia, designed by Raymond Kaskey. Portlandia is the second-largest copper sculpture in the country after the Statue of Liberty. Portlandia came to Portland by barge, and the people of Portland celebrated her arrival with a parade through downtown streets.
THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PLAN

The Downtown Plan was an inclusive process. The widespread public participation paved the way for later public involvement efforts that characterize the way Portland does business today. The following people are some of those who greatly influenced the downtown plan. They represent elected officials, business leaders and active citizens.

As a volunteer, **Mildred Schwab** chaired the Planning Commission when it deliberated the Downtown Plan. Appointed to City Council, she had the opportunity to debate the plan a second time as a council member.

Commissioner **Charles Jordan**, in concert with Mayor Goldschmidt, appointed a task force that took on the challenge of identifying downtown housing. Downtown housing was one of the plan’s most controversial elements — the financiers said it wasn’t feasible, while the visionaries thought it was essential.

Commissioner **Frank Ivancie** appointed the Citizen Advisory Committee to the Downtown Plan, helping to formalize citizen involvement in Portland’s planning process. He later became Portland’s mayor.

Mayor **Neil Goldschmidt** took office shortly after the plan’s adoption. Portland historians credit his personal visits to the Nordstrom family with saving — and significantly expanding — the downtown Nordstrom store, which has served as an anchor for downtown retail development. Many other significant improvements, including the construction of the MAX light rail line, are seen as the result of his vision and perseverance.

**Dean Gisvold** chaired the Citizens Advisory Committee, charged with creating the goals and guidelines of the Downtown Plan. This group set the standards for citizen involvement that continue to be applied in all Portland’s planning efforts.

When Tri-Met board member **Bill Roberts** visited Minneapolis on business, he came back and announced that Portland needed a bus mall. Driven by a vision that included art, historic lamps and attractive bus shelters, he was an aggressive advocate for the mall in every aspect, from financing to design.

A trip to Milan刺激了Roberts’ interest in historic preservation. As the developer of Morgan’s Alley, he was one of the first downtown building owners to recognize that charm and aesthetics can add up to commercial value.

**Bill Naito**, Portland business man, was one of the most dynamic advocates for Downtown Plan principles that Portland has ever seen. When citizens were first debating the value of a small riverfront park several blocks in length, he visited city planners with a map indicating a park that extended all the way to the Steel Bridge.

Naito created the first large downtown housing project after adoption of the Downtown Plan — McCormick Pier. His renovation of the Rhodes Brothers department store into the Galleria, as well as other buildings throughout downtown and Old Town, demonstrated the financial viability of historic preservation. From street trees to trolleys, Naito was an outspoken and delightful proponent of downtown revitalization in the tradition of historic Portland.

One of his final public projects was the Japanese-American Historical Plaza, which lies at the north end of Waterfront Park. After his death in 1996, the City of Portland re-named Front Avenue, which runs next to the plaza and McCormick Pier, to Naito Parkway.
Lloyd Anderson was a chief planner for CH2M Hill before he was appointed to City Council in 1969. He and his colleague Dick Ivey envisioned a plan that would go far beyond downtown's parking problems. Through their discussions with the Portland Improvement Corporation, the two men sowed the seeds of the Downtown Plan.

Betty Merten opposed the 10-story parking garage that was proposed for the current site of Pioneer Courthouse Square. The appearance before the Planning commission of a housewife in a stunning yellow hat shocked the committee into paying attention, as they were unused to any public comment on planning policy. Later, as a member of STOP — Sensible Transportation Options for People — she helped shift the debate about downtown’s future from “parking” to “access.”

Glenn Jackson, a Pacific Power executive, was a member of the Portland Improvement Corporation and the Harbor Drive Committee. Conveniently, he was the chair of the state’s highway commission and was able to bring state funds to finance a parking and circulation study, as well as significant transportation improvements.

George McMath, whose grandfather was one of early Portland’s principal architects, rallied the community to save its precious historic buildings. He was an early chair of the Landmark Commission, created as a result of the Downtown Plan.