

# The Streets Project

April 15, 2019

City of Hood River Planning Commission, Planning Director Nilsen and Senior Planner Liburdy  
211 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Hood River, OR 97031

Re: *Comments on portions of the Westside Plan - Neighborhood and District Framework, Streets Framework, and Parks and Open Space Framework*

Honorable Planning Commissioners and Planning Staff:

The individuals and organizations that put on last year's Streets Alive event in the Heights have decided to extend our support for people-oriented streets and wider transportation choices by forming an advocacy group under the working title "The Streets Project."

We are excited that the Guiding Principles contained in the Westside Concept Plan align so well with our goals and vision for Hood River, including:

- C. Create a plan that works for all ages and abilities of the community.
- E. Incorporate natural features and a sense of place into each neighborhood and district.
- F. Include open space and parks integrated into neighborhoods.
- G. Provide a connected transportation network with walkable, bike-friendly, and green streets.
- H. Promote active and healthy living through community design.
- I. Plan land uses and transportation facilities so the area may be served by fixed route transit in the future.
- M. Provide a realistic infrastructure funding strategy.

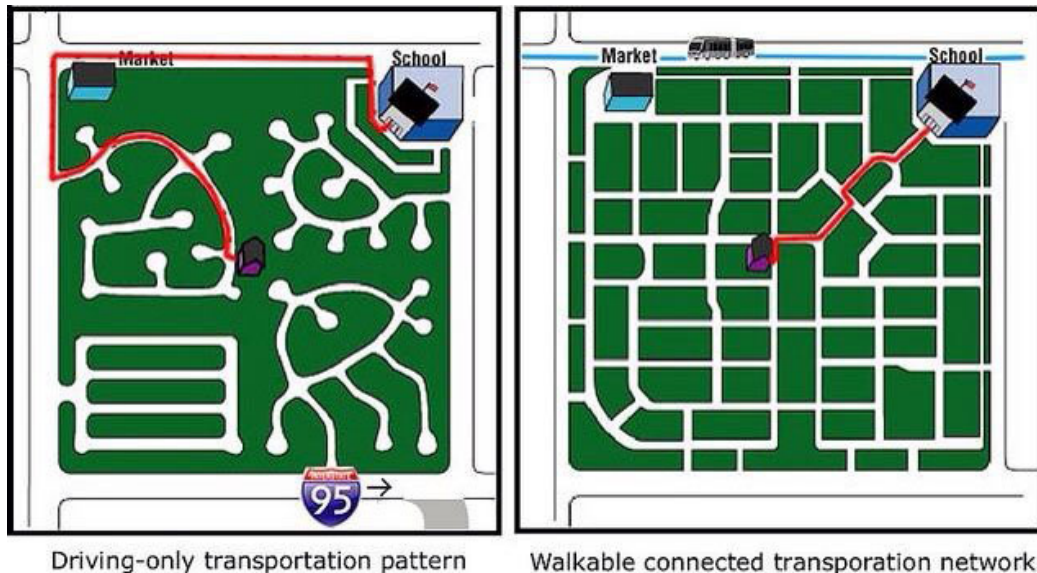
In support of those guiding principles, we offer the following comments on the Neighborhood and District Framework, Streets Framework and Parks and Open Space Framework:

## **Neighborhood and District Framework**

1. **Neighborhood Framework:** We support the Westside Concept Plan Report which bases Westside neighborhoods on "the 5-10 minute walk", also known as the "pedestrian shed." This is considered to be the distance people are willing to walk before opting to drive. A good description can be found at <https://morphocode.com/the-5-minute-walk/>

We suggest your commission consider some additional refinements:

- Block length and connectivity.** We are concerned that the maximum block length allowed by the current code (600 feet) is too long and that the street framework is insufficiently detailed across some of the larger parcels of undeveloped land. No neighborhood should be a barrier to the grid. We'd like to see a ban on cul-de-sacs as they reduce connectivity for all forms of transportation, increase trip length and put more pressure on arterials. Cul-de-sacs are also downright dangerous – in an area with wild fire risk there should always be at least two ways out of a neighborhood. We would also like to see revisions in the Planned Unit Development code which allows for private streets. Some existing PUDs are turning themselves into gated communities putting up signs reading “Private Road – No Access for Non-Residents.” Public streets are important not just for street connectivity but social connectivity.



Driving-only transportation pattern

Walkable connected transportation network

- Destinations.** Having quality walking and biking infrastructure doesn't on its own make a community walkable or bikeable. There need to be places to walk or bike to. Along with homes, the three neighborhood frameworks need parks, schools, churches and some level of commercial use within the pedestrian shed if they are going to be truly walkable neighborhoods. Parks should be seen as a required, not optional, aspect of each neighborhood. The Commission should consider creating a “neighborhood commercial” overlay that allows neighborhood scale and oriented commercial development (for instance a coffee shop or bakery) to be located throughout the Westside as long as certain locational factors are met. The Dalles has a “Neighborhood Center” zoning designation that might be a good starting point.

## **2. West Cascade District:**

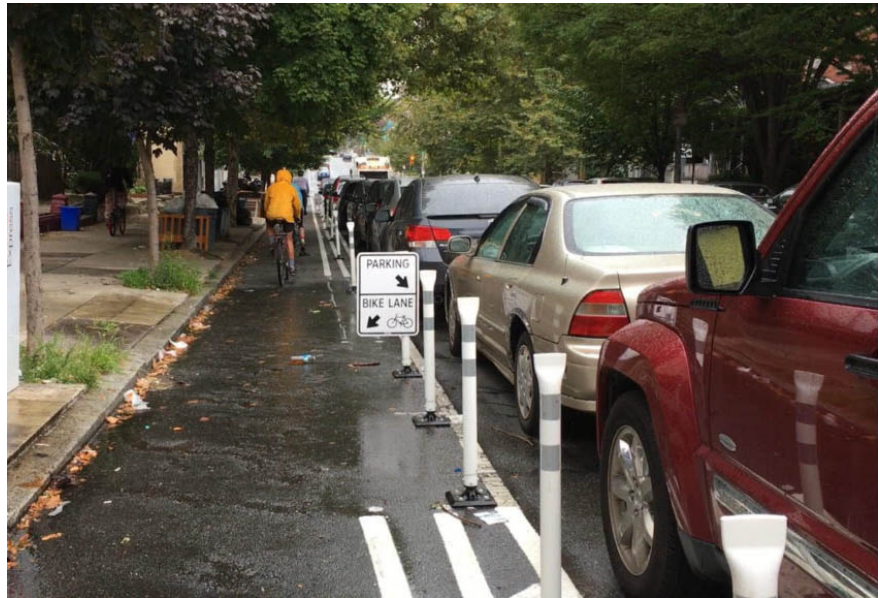
The vision calls for transforming West Cascade's auto-oriented development into a mixed-use district. Land should be used more efficiently (less one-story buildings and more three story buildings containing both commercial and residential uses) and less land should be devoted to parking. The code changes proposed by the Concept Plan Report are good first steps but insufficient to lead to the type of development that is desired. We recommend that the City explore additional code changes (like form-based code and reduced parking requirements) and

also financial incentives such as tax abatement or creating a new Urban Renewal District to help fund a retrofit of the current strip mall-style development. There is a truism in the planning world: get the infrastructure right and the development will follow. If a mixed-use district is desired, Cascade Avenue's public right of way needs to look more like a mixed-use district with street sections that are pleasant and comfortable for people on foot and bike.

### **Streets Framework:**

Our vision is that Hood River residents and visitors of all ages will have a variety of safe, comfortable and efficient transportation options including walking, biking and transit (check out this video of [the "8 to 80" vision](#)). This means not just supplying sidewalks and bike lanes, but designing them so that they are actually used. This often requires providing physical and psychological separation between the auto-zone and the active transportation zone.

For sidewalks, this means always having a planting strip between the roadway and sidewalk, and planting it with trees. Hood River's



*Parking Protected Bike Lane Example*

current TSP allows sidewalks connected to the curb on

local streets. We strongly support adopting the Concept Plan Report's recommendation which requires planting strips as shown in Figure 17 "Local Street Cross Section" (page 32). For biking, a guiding principle is that there are two kinds of bike facilities: 1) low traffic, low speed neighborhood streets where bikers feel comfortable sharing the roadway with cars and 2) protected bike lanes that separate auto and bike traffic with a physical barrier. Painting sharrows or even bike lanes on a busy street will attract hardcore bikers but not make the mother of a ten-year old feel comfortable with her child on that street. A simple fix is a "parking protected bike lane" where the typical configuration of parking lane and bike lane are reversed so that the bike lane is against the curb and the parking lane is between the bike lane and the travel lane for automobiles. This should be considered for May Street and Belmont Avenue.

Our specific comments:

#### **1. Gateway to Hood River** (Old Columbia Hwy - Exit 62 I-84 to Cascade Avenue)

Hood River should have a grand entrance from I-84 that sets the tone for the town as a place that welcomes travelers of many different modes. As the Old Highway bike/ped path is completed, it becomes even more important to have a safe, multi-modal entry to Hood River.

We prefer Gateway Option B (the roundabout) to the Option A (traffic signal as in current TSP) for safety, traffic flow and aesthetic reasons. Our preferred option:



**\*\*NOTE:** Intersection treatment alternatives will be evaluated if certain cost and minimizing impact thresholds are feasible.

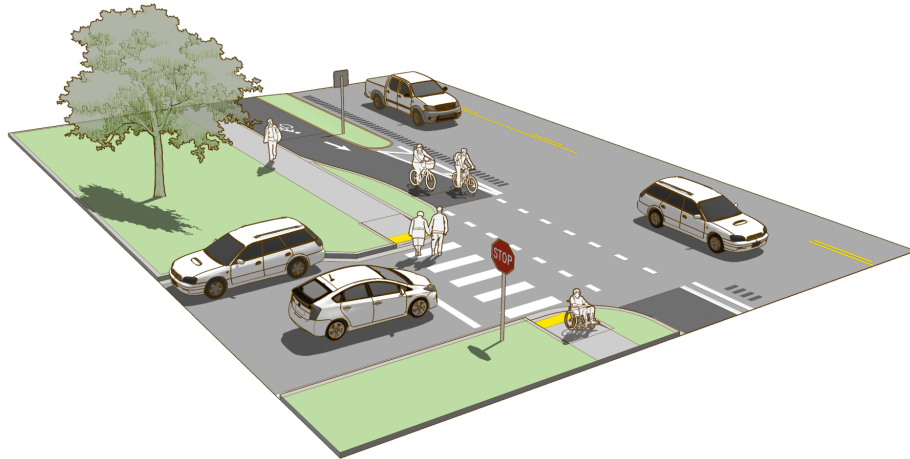


**GATEWAY OPTION B**  
roundabout with HCRH wall

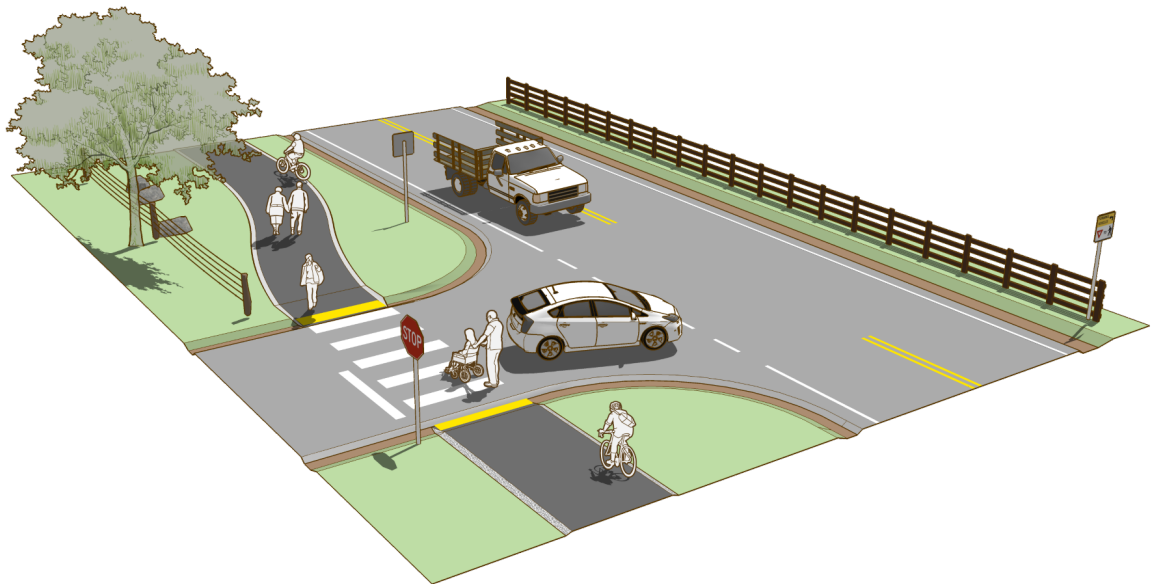
**2. Cascade Avenue** – Transforming West Cascade from strip mall style development to a mixed-use district requires changes in the transportation infrastructure. Currently, Cascade is an uncomfortable street for all but cars: bike lanes are unprotected and pedestrians must use narrow sidewalks connected to the curb. On busy streets, bikes lanes should be physically separated from auto traffic.

We recommend replacing the street section recommended by the Concept Plan Report with one of these two options:

*Option 1: Separate walking path and biking path protected from roadway by planting strip*



*Option 2: Wide multi-use path separated from roadway by planting strip. 8-80 design and greater comfort for bikes than unprotected bike lanes on road.*

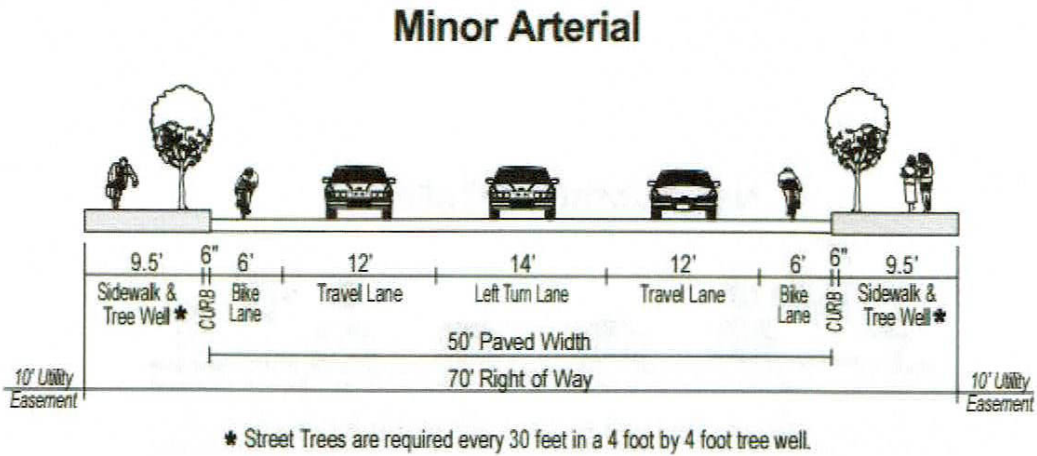


**3. Mt. Adams Extension and Alignment D** – We prefer “Alignment D” to the north-south Mt. Adam/30<sup>th</sup> extension shown in the current TSP. We also support building this arterial as a two-lane street with turn lanes as needed at intersections (Figure 14. Minor Arterial Option Cross Section, page 27 of the Concept Plan Report) rather than using the arterial street section in the TSP which shows a three-lane section (two travel lanes and a central turn lane for its entire length). The Figure 14 Option will allow for needed traffic flow but is more appropriate in the context of this neighborhood. A West Cascade-style three-lane arterial would rend the neighborhood in two. However, we recommend modifying Figure 14 by moving the bike lanes off the roadway as in the street sections Option 1 and Option 2 pictured above.

#### 4. Cross Section for 30<sup>th</sup> Street Extension south of May and Belmont/Post Canyon –

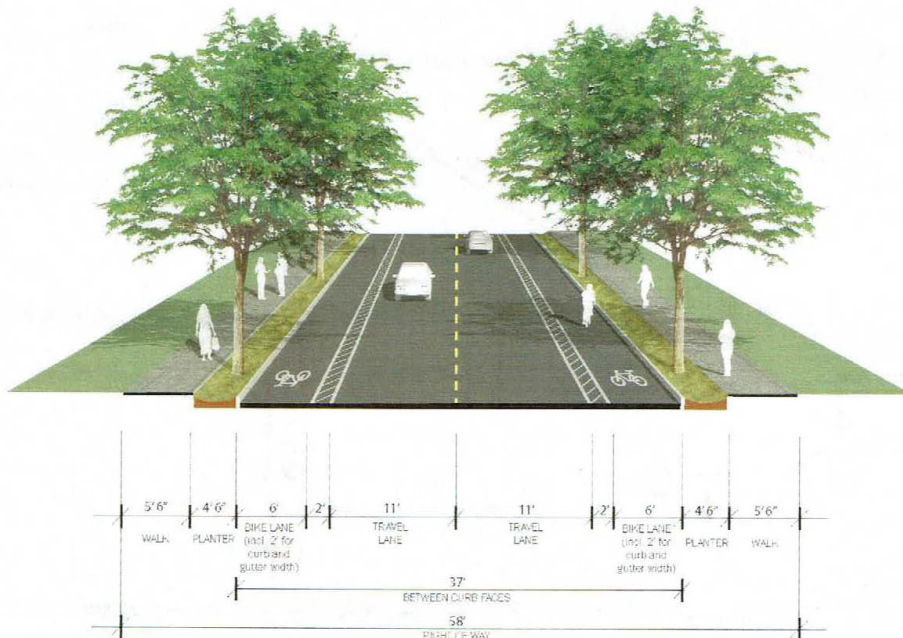
These streets are designated as minor arterials. The approved cross section for minor arterials in the TSP looks like West Cascade Avenue.

**Street Section from current TSP:** too big, takes too much right of way, diminishes every neighborhood it rips through.



Instead, we recommend that Figure 14 Minor Arterial Option Cross-Section for Alignment D is used for the other minor arterials in the Westside area. Again, with the modification that bike lanes are separated and protected from the roadway as shown in Option 1 and Option 2 above.

Figure 14. Minor Arterial Option Cross-Section (Without Turn Lane)



**5. Mini-circle on May at Rand/27th** –On long straight streets, mini-circles terminate the vista and slow traffic while still allowing it to flow. We support the use of a mini circle at May/Rand/27<sup>th</sup> and suggest that there may be other locations where a mini circle would be a cheap and attractive traffic-calming device.

## **Bicycle and Pedestrian Framework**

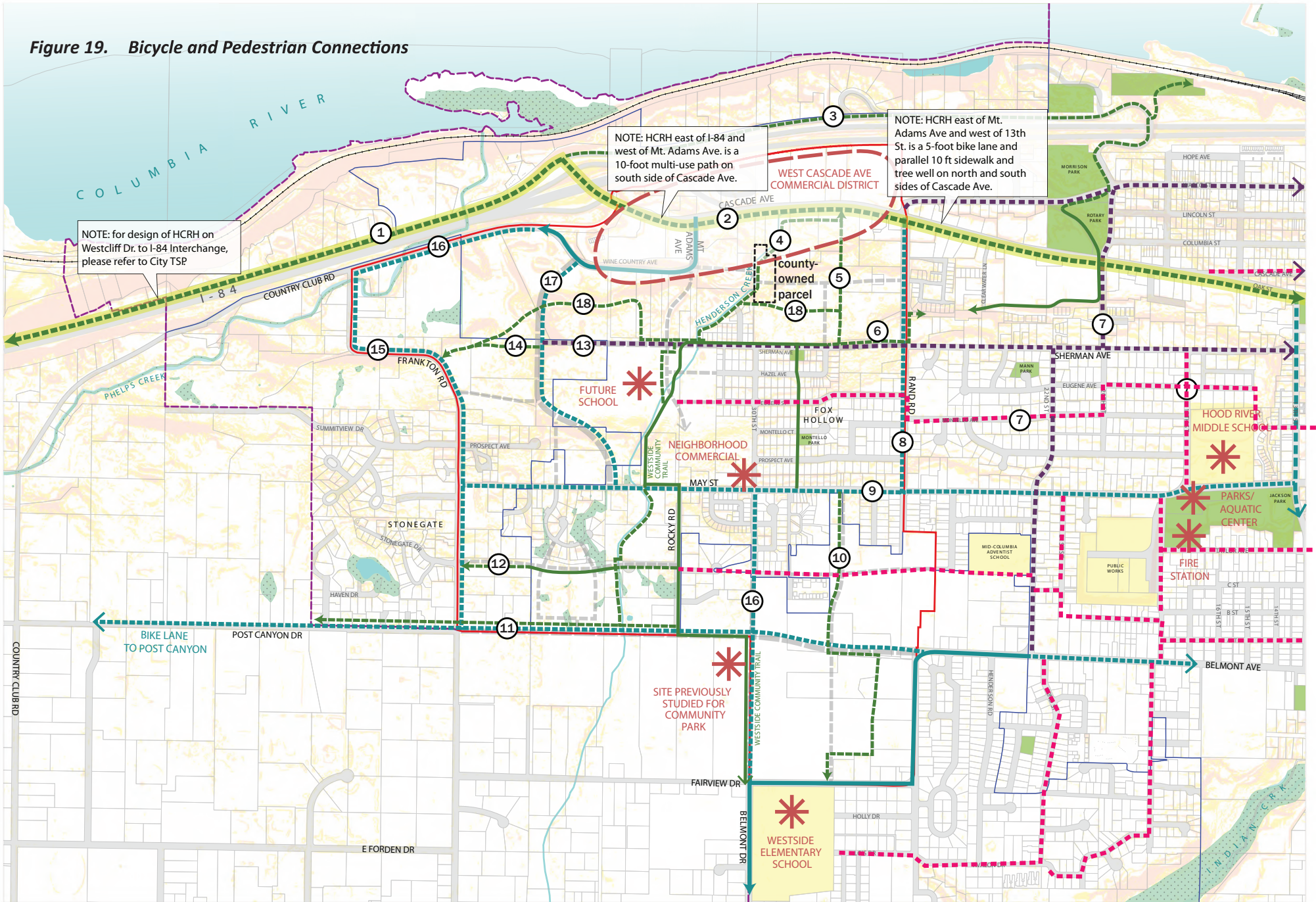
The next page shows a map we made of our preferred Bicycle and Pedestrian network.

**1. Neighborways** – The Concept Plan Report Bicycle and Pedestrian Framework depicts some “Future Sharrows” and the TSP shows a network of “Bike Boulevards”. We suggest instead a network of “Neighborways”. Neighborways are residential streets designed to give priority for people, young and old, to walk, bike and play. Neighborway projects focus on improving residential streets by calming vehicle traffic, making them easier to navigate and friendlier for walking and biking. They will combine street design measures tailored to each neighborhood, including speed humps, traffic circles, crosswalk upgrades and restrictions on thru traffic. If you have driven on residential side streets in Portland you are probably familiar with some of the treatments.

**2. Protected Bike Lanes** – Bike advocates like to say that “Paint is not infrastructure.” Meaning that merely painting a bike lane on a roadway without providing any physical barrier between cars and bikes does little to improve safety or use by cyclists. Most people still feel too vulnerable. If there are bike lanes on arterial or collector streets, they should be protected bike lanes, either by creating a barrier, using parking as the barrier or by moving the bike path off the roadway.

**3. Off road trails**—We enthusiastically support the Westside Community Trail, Henderson Creek trail and the Ridgeline trail as shown in the Concept Plan Report. All of these trails should be included in the TSP as they are transportation facilities. We believe these will be key walking and biking routes for many trips in the Westside. Time is of the essence. Easements for these trails should be obtained as soon as possible. When the consultants devised their plan, the tree cover of Oregon oaks on the ridgeline was one of the proposed trail’s most attractive features. Many of those trees are now gone. We recommend that your Commission consider modifying the City’s code so that it is more protective of natural features.

Figure 19. Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections



**BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FRAMEWORK**

DECEMBER 19, 2017  
HOOD RIVER WESTSIDE AREA CONCEPT PLAN

- HCRH STATE TRAIL
- EXISTING/FUTURE PROTECTED BIKE LANES
- EXISTING/FUTURE PED CONNECTION
- EXISTING/FUTURE NEIGHBORWAYS
- EXISTING/FUTURE BIKE LANES
- FUTURE NEIGHBORWAYS
- ★ ACTIVITY CENTER
- STUDY AREA BOUNDARY
- CITY BOUNDARY
- URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY





## **Implementation:**

The consultants and staff provided a well thought out and thorough chapter on implementation, and we support all the ideas for financing streets, bike and pedestrian paths, and parks.

**1. Zoning and Subdivision ordinances:** It is imperative that the City adopt code provisions that as part of a PUD, subdivision, townhouse project, or any private development that increases density by more than a single family dwelling or duplex, private developers are required to dedicate land to the public to provide lands to carry out a connected system within the planning area and City as a whole.

**2. Systems Development Charges (SDC's):** It is time for the City to have the conversation with the Parks District on why the collection of SDC's in the City and UGA has not resulted in the acquisition of land for park development as set up over 25 years ago. The only acquisition has been Barrett Park in the Exclusive Farm Use Zone and is not in the City or UGA and not an allowed use in the farm zone.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Plan.

Heather Staten and Cindy Walbridge for  
The Streets Project