



memo

to **Dustin Nilsen, AICP and Will Norris, City of Hood River**

from **Nathan Polanski, PE, MIG**

re **City of Hood River, Heights District Urban Design and Engineering**
(MIG 15174.01)
Task 2.2 – Existing Conditions and Past Planning Document Summary
Memorandum

date **February 4, 2021**

This memorandum has been prepared to summarize findings of a review of existing planning documents relevant to the Heights District Corridor Study. Existing documents reviewed include those identified by Project Team and City staff and are listed in Appendix A – List of Documents Reviewed. This memorandum is structured to provide highlights of key findings from the most relevant documents reviewed as they relate to project scope.

Heights Urban Renewal and Urban Renewal Advisory Committee Documents

A. Hood River Heights Business District Urban Renewal Overview

Provides a brief overview of urban renewal in the Heights District, including a map of the participating area and goals of the Urban Renewal Plan, which include:

- Diversifying the economic base in the Hood River area;
- Promoting a livable community that better utilizes land uses;
- Creating a district identity for the area that also serves as a gateway to the City and place to live, work, shop and play;
- Implementing transportation improvements to improve livability for all users;
- Ensuring public infrastructure serves existing and new development; and
- Providing a participatory process to involve the public in the planning and implementation process.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Verify that project specific goals and project process is consistent with Urban Renewal Plan goals.
2. Identify Urban Renewal Plan goals and projects that need to be added/adjusted to facilitate the implementation of project outcomes.

B. Hood River Heights Business District Urban Renewal Plan, June 2011 and First Amendment March 2016

Identifies the purpose of urban renewal, which includes improving public infrastructure in poorly developed or undeveloped areas, and how the plan relates to other City plans (e.g. Comprehensive Plan, Transportation System Plan).

Defines Plan goals and objectives, those of which are applicable to the Heights District corridor study include:

- Goal 2. District Identity - Help create and enhance a distinct identity through streetscape features and signage and create public spaces for community gathering
- Goal 3. Recreation - Provide facilities to improve pedestrian and bicycle access and create public spaces to enhance and support the commercial core
- Goal 4. Traffic and Transportation - Coordinate with the state to implement improvements to improve livability, safety and access for all users.
- Goal 5. Public Utilities - Upgrade infrastructure and underground overhead utilities where feasible.
- Goal 6. Public Involvement - Work with the Heights Business Association and public to develop and implement the plan.

Identifies desired projects related to public infrastructure (public utilities, parking, and undergrounding franchise utilities) and district identity and streetscape enhancements (pedestrian and bicycle improvements, improved neighborhood connections).

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Verify that project specific goals and project process is consistent with Urban Renewal Plan goals.
2. Consider how desired/planned projects can be integrated into proposed concepts for the key study streets and how desired/planned utility projects are integrated in the final implementation plan.

C. Hood River Heights Urban Renewal Area Public Input - Live and Online (Elaine Howard Consulting summary memo), November 30, 2017

Provides a summary of public involvement feedback from November 2017 related to the community's preference for prioritizing projects presented in the Urban Renewal Plan and other community suggested projects (e.g., converting OR-281 to two-way traffic). Elaine Howard Consulting compiled and analyzed the community input to develop a ranking system and identify the highest rated community project. The four highest rated projects overall addressed public infrastructure and were:

- Undergrounding overhead utilities
- Converting OR281 to two-way traffic
- Providing district identity and streetscape enhancements

- Streetscape enhancements - introduction of angled parking

Safety for pedestrians and bicyclists was also an important theme of public feedback.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Consider how community preferences for infrastructure and streetscape enhancements are integrated into proposed concepts for the key study streets and final implementation plan.

D. URAC Thoughts to date on Proceeding with Heights Urban Renewal Projects (Steve Wheeler memo to URAC), January 30 ,2018

This memorandum summarizes public involvement from October and November 2017 for the URAC, which appears to indicate the community's preference for:

- "A multi-faceted project, or perhaps set of smaller projects, focusing on public transportation safety (particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists), streetscape improvements (could be facades, street furniture, decorative sidewalks, etc.) and perhaps angled parking on side streets.
- Undergrounding overhead utility lines, where feasible, to remove the visual clutter now prevalent among many streets in this District. Along with aesthetic improvements, undergrounding can provide safety benefits as the lines will not be subject to problems with ice and other situations."

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. This will help frame stakeholder and community discussions.
2. Consider how community preferences can be integrated into proposed concepts for the key study streets and how planned utility projects are integrated in the final implementation plan.

E. URAC - Project Recommendations - The Heights (Steve Wheeler memo to URAC), May 14, 2018

Presents three recommendations for improving key study streets to the Urban Renewal Agency based on review of the Goals and Objectives established in the 2011 Urban Renewal Plans and community feedback conducted in 2017:

- In conjunction with ODOT, evaluate re-establishing two-way traffic flow on 12th and 13th streets to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and create a more "friendly atmosphere" for local businesses. The memo notes traffic was changed to a one-way couplet over 35 years ago.
- Develop a project, or projects, to underground utility lines, primarily along 12th and 13th Streets but also considering side streets. Coordination will be required with Pacific Power who owns the poles, ODOT, and other utility providers with overhead distribution (Century Link, Spectrum Communications, Gorge Net, and others).

- Develop a series of traffic safety and streetscape related improvements, prioritizing improvements on 12th and 13th Streets between May and Belmont. Improvements could include:
 - "bump-outs at street corners for pedestrian crossings;
 - Decorative features such as planter boxes, etc.;
 - Improved street lighting for public safety;
 - Improved and decorative building facades;
 - Enhanced pavement treatment for sidewalks;
 - Diagonal parking on side-streets;
 - A "festival street" designation category for one or two side streets; and
 - Designating certain streets as "truck only" streets."

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. This will help frame stakeholder and community discussions.
2. Consider how community preferences can be integrated into proposed concepts for the key study streets and how planned utility projects are integrated in the final implementation plan.

F. URAC - Issue Summary: Heights District (Steve Wheeler memo to URAC), July 26, 2018

- Notes that the traffic safety and streetscape related improvements summarized in Document E above have been accepted by the Urban Renewal Agency but project selection should also consider the process and findings from the Dan Burden Walkshop.
- Identifies the need for a feasibility study of power undergrounding.
- References a document detailing the process to apply to ODOT for returning to two-way traffic on OR281.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Identify and review the summary of observations from Dan Burden's Walkshop; request notes from the City that were attached to the July 26, 2018 meeting agenda.
2. Identify and review summary of process for converting OR281 to two-way traffic.

G. URAC Meeting Notes - Greenworks Team Project Update, July 18, 2019

Summarizes notes and public comments from a meeting with the URAC including:

- May Street Elementary School has a relatively new frontage along Pine Street.
- Public comments:
 - Latino business community is concerned improvements will lead to gentrification

- Bike lanes on 12th/13th Streets may not get adequate year-round use to justify removal of a vehicular travel lane; however, others noted that 12th/13th Streets currently provide four travel lanes dedicated to people driving and no space is dedicated for people riding bicycles. More people may walk or bike to the Heights with improved conditions for walking and bicycling.
- Involve emergency responders (police, sheriff, fire) in the planning process for the Heights given key issues are related to safety and access and it's important these stakeholders are part of the planning process and community discussion.
- There appears to be general agreement that safety, healthy businesses, and community identity are important elements to incorporate into corridor planning.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. This will help frame stakeholder and community discussions.

Walkshop with Dan Burden, Blue Zones LLC

A. "The Heights" Crafting our Vision, June 6, 2018

Outlines the goal of the "Walkshop", which includes reviewing the project area for walkability and identifying the best ways to strengthen the Heights District; discussing findings with residents, City staff, business leaders, and elected officials; and identifying priorities, opportunities, and barriers for implementing future improvements. The presentation highlights best practices for creating Complete Streets and introduces a few key elements that should be considered (e.g. traffic speed, intersection design treatments). Initial observations from Dan Burden included:

- The vehicle capacity of 12th and 13th is underutilized as a one-way couplet
- Driveways result in motorists backing over sidewalk, which is unsafe
- Bicyclists are forced into risky/unsafe places
- Crosswalks are long and poorly marked
- The sidewalk space is generally well organized

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. This will help frame stakeholder and community discussions.

B. "The Heights" Crafting our Vision Report, September 24, 2018

Provides a series of recommendations based on the outcomes of the "Walkshop" and conversations with community stakeholders. Discussion includes:

- Considerations for changing the vehicular use of 12th and 13th Streets by reducing a travel lane, returning to two-way traffic, or some combination of each.

- Identifies key projects areas related to traffic safety within the project area
- Provides recommendations for 12th and 13th Streets: explore ways to retain or add on-street parking, keep speeds low, maximize pedestrian crossings and allow businesses to thrive
- Provides recommendations for May Street: focus on the existing intersections, narrow travel lanes, complete sidewalks and bike lanes, and review parking configuration to best utilize space and further slow traffic
- Considerations for intersections on May St: explore short and long term solutions to improve safety
- Provides recommendations for intersections on Belmont Ave: improve visibility of crosswalk markings, consider gateway treatments, long-term options for intersection reconfiguration (e.g. a roundabout)

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. This will help frame stakeholder and community discussions.
2. Consider how Walkshop recommendations are integrated into proposed concepts for the key study streets.

2018 Streets Alive Demonstration Projects

A. 2018 Streets Alive - Heights Traffic Camera Study Sept 28 to Oct 11, 2018 (Mark Zanmiller email summary), December 8, 2018

Summary of observations from reviewing video feeds for cameras set up at three locations during the 2018 Streets Alive demonstration project. The goal was to collect a record of intersection vehicle/pedestrian activity and observe levels of safety with existing (minimal) crosswalk striping, and then with the enhanced striping that was added as part of the Streets Alive event. Videos were collected on six days to allow observation on both weekends and weekdays. Summary of observations included:

- Bicyclists don't appear comfortable riding along 12th and 13th Streets and pedestrians don't appear comfortable crossing the streets.
- The area around 12th/Pine is complicated and requires careful design consideration.
- Temporary crosswalk improvements installed for the demonstration (painted crosswalks and bump) appeared to make people crossing the street more comfortable.
 - Note: observed the bump-out at 12th/Pine had an unintended consequence of complicating right turns (both from 12th and from Pine), see document for additional discussion/detail.

The email noted intersections not part of the Streets Alive demonstration should get similar attention as the community has raised safety concerns about other intersections as well.

The email also provided a detailed log of observations and issues for each of the intersections observed with cameras: 12th/Pine, 13th/C, and 13th/Taylor

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. This will help frame stakeholder and community discussions.
2. Observations and issues documented as part of the demonstration project can help inform proposed concepts for the key study streets.

Planning for 2019 Streets Alive Demonstration Project

A. Updates on Near-Term Demonstration Project (Kathy Fitzpatrick memo to URA), July 5, 2019

The memo provides an overview of work completed to identify a potential demonstration project and a summary of the permit process to obtain ODOT approval.

The Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) Mobility Manager (Kathy Fitzpatrick) provided assistance to the URA Board by convening and facilitating meetings with established ODOT partners to identify a prioritized list of demonstration projects that could be installed in the Heights on 12th and 13th streets using simple materials like paint and ODOT-approved vertical traffic materials like candlestick bollards.

The purpose of the demonstration project is to:

- Provide interim safety improvements for people walking and biking
- Provide safer routes to school for the students of May St. Elementary and the Hood River Middle School
- Provide valuable data to inform ongoing planning processes, Safe Routes to School projects, and the eventual construction of permanent improvements.
- Build on the momentum of past and current public activities focused on enhancing livability, encouraging active transportation modes, and stimulating economic vitality in The Heights.

The memo is organized to document work completed and key takeaways from four key tasks:

Task 1: Research and compile a list of project options from projects identified through the Urban Renewal public outreach and committee work, Dan Burden's Walk shops, the SRTS Action Plans, the Streets Alive! Open Streets event, and the City of Hood River Transportation System Plan. Work with City staff to map potential project to inform ODOT discussions.

- Work included development of a prioritized list of projects to be installed on OR281 using simple materials (i.e. paint and plastic posts) based on previously identified community priorities and needs to improve safety for

people walking and biking and improve walking routes to/from schools. Potential projects were mapped and can be accessed here:

<https://cohr.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d8c1c5b846f7408cb7000951feeda911>.

Task 2: Convene and facilitate coordination with ODOT regional staff to review and prioritize the most feasible projects for implementation. Work with ODOT staff currently developing a permitting process for this type of project to determine permitting requirements for the top 3-5 projects. Work with City to determine costs associated with permit requirements. If it is determined that no demonstration projects are either feasible or appropriate, Mobility Manager will submit a final memo.

- The memo includes a detailed description of coordination and communication with ODOT regarding a possible demonstration project and the required permitting process. Notes also indicated ODOT is exploring removing existing crosswalks in the Heights, which the City will have the opportunity to respond to.
- Notes ODOT recently underwent a statewide review of unpermitted painted crosswalks. The City understands the review was prompted by injuries and resulting litigation that occurred on unofficial painted crossings of state roadways. The Heights District has the distinction of having the State of Oregon's highest concentration of unpermitted painted crossings. ODOT representatives, Katelyn Jackson and Zackary Horowitz, will discuss the upcoming Heights crosswalk modifications with URAC.

The changes include removing the paint from roughly twenty unpermitted crosswalks, restriping approximately ten crosswalks in locations determined by state traffic engineers, and adding new crossing signage. Two crosswalk locations will be closed, at north side of Taylor crossing 13th Street and the south side of Belmont crossing 13th. All other crosswalks remain legal and protected crossings under state law, without or without painted lines on the roadway.

Tasks 3 and 4: Provide information to City Staff in preparation of a public outreach meeting and subsequent URAC/URA meetings; coordinate with City staff and the ODOT work team to determine permitting and implementation steps and identify cost sharing options; work with ODOT to determine most feasible projects; and work with City staff to develop a final map of the chosen projects.

- Using a project list based on all previous planning and public engagement events three categories of potential projects were identified for public presentation and for the narrative of an ODOT permit application; see the

summary of document "B – URAC Public Outreach Event for 2019 Demonstration Project" below for a list of the categories presented and the summary of public feedback.

Draft designs and a map of possible demonstration projects were reviewed by ODOT staff (a multi-modal planner and an engineer) to help develop language for a future permit application, including suggestions for the narrative of the application. Feedback also include suggestions for transit locations and a list of demonstration projects more likely to receive ODOT approval.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Summary of ODOT coordination will be re-evaluated if/when a demonstration project is considered as part of this project.
2. Follow up with City regarding ODOT desire to remove/removal of crosswalks on OR281 in the study area.

B. URAC Public Outreach Event for 2019 Demonstration Project, June 4, 2019

Discussed three options with the public for long-term demonstration projects:

- Projects that create a transportation network for people biking north and south through the Heights. Options discussed with participants included:
 - 2-way bike facility on 12th
 - 1-way bike facilities on 12th and 13th
 - Using alleys instead of 12th and 13th Streets
- Projects that support "Neighborways", east/west connections across 12th and 13th Streets to improve access to/from the Heights District and adjacent neighborhoods.
- Crosswalk improvement projects to restore crosswalks recently removed by ODOT; ODOT suggested certain crosswalks could be restored if demonstration projects provide the necessary requirements such as slower traffic and increased pedestrian visibility.

Feedback from participants noted which crosswalks people use most often within the project study area. Frequent responses (those with more than five votes) included: North 13th/Taylor, North 13th/Belmont, both crosswalks at 12th/Pine, South 12th/A, North 12th/Union. A summary table was provided of all responses.

The notes include additional comments and map markups from participants documenting other issues under a "What did we miss?" topic.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. This will help frame stakeholder and community discussions.
2. Community feedback can help inform proposed concepts for the key study streets.

C. 2019 Street Alive Application Packets, final packet dated August 15, 2019

Final application packet and maps developed for submittal to ODOT for the installation of an 11-month demonstration project. Project goals are to facilitate safe travel by bike and foot on 12th and 13th Streets, including modeling a complete street design with enhanced crosswalks, protected bike way and transit stop, and the creation of the City's first "neighborway" to improve neighborhood connections across 12th and 13th Streets. The purpose of the event is to connect the community, inspire active transportation, bolster local business, foster free-range play in children of all ages and abilities and demonstrate the future.

The 2019 Streets Alive project is planned to be slightly larger in geographic scope, incorporating The Heights' neighborhoods on the east and west sides of OR 281, as well as the south side of the Indian Creek ravine; the application includes a list and map of the proposed demonstration projects some of which are located outside of the key study streets for this project.

The application packet include discussion related to the goals/desired outcomes for each type of demonstration project category (i.e. bike facilities, neighborways, and crosswalks) and data collection proposed (before and after installation) to document project results.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Review maps and locations of demonstration projects to help frame stakeholder and community discussions.
2. Review proposed demonstration projects to help inform the development of concepts for the key study streets.
3. Summary of ODOT coordination will be re-evaluated if/when a demonstration project is considered as part of this project.

Greenworks Team Documents

A. Scoring Criteria Workshop - Results, October 9, 2019

Summarizes the results of a scoring criteria workshop conducted with the Hood River Urban Renewal Agency Board (URAB), the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee (URAC), and members of the public. Workshop focused on collecting feedback related to:

- What a successful Heights District looks like,
- Important goals of the Urban Renewal Plan for this project, and
- Identifying additional other goals the project should consider.

The workshop also asked participants general questions related to safety, transportation access, and identify. Findings and potential design implications that were documented included:

- "Walkability, safety, and a thriving district are the clear priority outcomes for the URAB and URAC."
- Public Involvement is a very important goal, second only to Transportation.

- The need for improving the pedestrian environment was consistent for all participants and should be an important focus of proposed concepts.
- Safety improvements including painted crosswalks, slower speed limits and shorter crossing distances as well as intersection improvements (e.g. roundabouts) were identified as appropriate tools to consider as part of a concept plan.
- Access for all users (people walking, biking, driving, first responders) is important but a difference across participants (e.g. URAB vs URAC) was observed in what users should be prioritized.
- Notes state that roundabouts should be the most appropriate type of intersection proposed for evaluation with traffic signals not being pursued unless required by traffic study data.
- The identity of the streetscape should reflect local priorities/needs rather than focusing on tourist needs.
- Undergrounding utilities, street trees, and integrating green stormwater facilities were highlighted as community priorities.

What will we do with the information moving forward?

1. Frame kickoff workshop agenda and discussion with URAC particularly related to project goals.
2. Request additional information/summary from City staff and URAC/URAB about considering traffic signals unless required by traffic study data.

Appendix A: List of Documents Reviewed
Heights District Corridor Study
 MIG #15174.01

Date: December 2, 2020

Heights Urban Renewal and Urban Renewal Advisory Committee Documents
A. Hood River Heights Business District Urban Renewal Overview
B. Hood River Heights Business District Urban Renewal Plan - First Amendment, June 2011 and March 2016
C. Hood River Heights Urban Renewal Area Public Input - Live and Online (Elaine Howard Consulting summary memo), November 30, 2017
D. URAC Thoughts to date on Proceeding with Heights Urban Renewal Projects (Steve Wheeler memo to URAC), January 30, 2018
E. URAC - Project Recommendations - The Heights (Steve Wheeler memo to URAC), May 14, 2018
F. URAC - Issue Summary: Heights District (Steve Wheeler memo to URAC), July 26, 2018
G. URAC Meeting Notes - Greenworks Team Project Update, July 18, 2019
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