

To: Mayor and City Council

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Subject: Concepts for the Town Center

Attached is a document that lays out fundamental concepts for the town center. As you can see, we have divided the study area into two parts – one north of I-205 and one south of I-205. We have tentatively called these North Village and South Village. We are suggesting modest changes for the former and major changes for the latter. We have also attached a map that illustrates a layout of streets, buildings and public spaces in the South Village.

These concepts have emerged out of workshops with the public, numerous discussions with the Technical Committee and the Advisory Committee, and from our own experiences with planning and developing town centers. We believe that these represent solid, doable and aspirational directions for the City to pursue. Of course, all town centers take many years to evolve and mature. But we believe that these concepts will provide for a diverse, livable, and sustainable town center.

# Proposed Concept

## “North Village”: Modest Changes

1. Improve Willamette Drive

Willamette Drive would be upgraded, with safety and aesthetic improvements in accordance with the recommendations of the Highway 43 Plan and the Transportation System Plan. This would include improved sidewalks, bicycle routes, enhanced crosswalks, street tree planting, installing pedestrian-scaled lighting and adding wayfinding signage.

2. Transform the Area under the I-205 Bridge to a Local Park

This is land currently owned by ODOT as right-of-way for the freeway. The City should make an agreement with the State to retrofit this property to provide useful open space, garden areas, and access for light boats to the river. This park would also be part of a trail that would link the Bolton Neighborhood with the West Linn Mill area, and – over the long term – the Willamette neighborhood.

3. Redevelop the former Fire Station into Low Rise/Higher Density Workforce Housing

Approximately 20-25 apartment units in 2-3 stories could be accommodated on this site, which would be designed to create a face to Willamette Drive. This would likely require the City partnering with a non-profit housing provider.

4. Encourage “Gentle” Infill: Townhouses, Cottage Housing, Accessory Dwellings

Throughout the area there are multiple opportunities to insert small additions of various housing types in vacant lots, under-utilized properties, and locations where existing buildings are approaching the end of their useful life.

5. Encourage Limited Redevelopment in the Longer Term

There are several sites in this area that could, over time, be redeveloped into multi-story mixed use.

## “South Village”: Major Changes

### 1. Create a New Urban Intersection

This project would create a new centerpiece for the area south of I-205. It would straighten out the confusing tangle of streets and oddly angled intersections. It would create a wholly new, right-angled intersection with four legs, wide crosswalks, and a signal that would control traffic movements. Willamette Drive (Highway 43) would be slightly realigned to extend into the Mill properties, where the gas station is located at present. This necessitates acquiring the station property; the new intersection would consume the gas station property almost in its entirety. (The current Mill Street would be vacated, eliminating a current, hazardous turning point.) The overall effect would be much like an urban boulevard with adequate space for multiple means of travel: autos, trucks, buses, bicycles and walking. Dense landscaping would reflect the verdant nature of West Linn and add tree canopy to streets that are currently barren.

### 2. Convert Broadway into a Terraced Park with Public Parking Underneath

This project involves repurposing the right-of-way of Broadway, between the I-205 overpass and Willamette Drive. The space would be reconstructed to include several uses. The 60 foot wide strip would be reconstructed as a public park, which would be terraced up the slope. It would form the central public space for surrounding new development and redevelopment and serve as an incentive to attract new residential and mixed-use development. A single level of parking would be built under the park space.

### 3. Partner with a Non-Profit to Build Workforce or Senior Housing on City Property

The City-owned parcel on Willamette Drive, between Broadway and the off-ramp from I-205 should be developed into 50-60 units of housing, with some or all of the units being below-market. The City should solicit proposals from non-profit housing providers to construct a 5-6 story structure. The ground level should offer some spaces appropriate for community uses (such as human services or child care) and other spaces appropriate for retail, office, or medical services. Parking would be provided on grade to keep costs low. Access would be from Willamette Falls Drive, through a City owned parking facility described above. The City should assist the non-profit with its permitting process and could encourage the use of programs such as the Vertical Housing Tax Exemption authorized by State law.

4. Create a New “Complete Street”

Willamette Drive should be designed and reconstructed as a new “complete street.” It would extend into the Mill properties from the new intersection described above. As it extends into the Mill property, it should be a highly walkable street, with wide sidewalks, a landscaped center median, and wide crosswalks. It would provide access to multiple parcels, as well as continue to allow a limited number of trucks that serve the Mill. The streetscape should include wide sidewalks with street trees, distinctive lighting, street furnishings and wayfinding signage.

5. Build a New Central “Market Square”

Within the Mill property there should be a central square of green that is large enough to accommodate moderate sized events, fairs, festivals, markets and performances. This public space should take advantage of the sloping terrain and provide a pedestrian connection between destinations on the uphill side and destinations on the downhill side, conceivably all the way to the river’s edge. This could be accomplished by a cascading series of steps, terraces, ramps, and platforms. Ground level uses, such as restaurants, cafes and shops should face on to it.

6. Encourage Multi-story, Mixed-Use Development in the Core with High Density Residential

It is recommended that the core area, flanking Willamette Drive and the Broadway right-of-way be an appropriate location for buildings that are up to six stories in height (up to 75 feet) and contain a mixture of uses. In some case, this would be office over retail and in other residential over retail space. The area could accommodate as many as 350 dwellings in both rental and owner-occupied housing, approximately 50,000 square feet of office space, and 20,000 square feet of retail and restaurants over time. In addition, a hotel of up to 100 rooms could be accommodated. Parking for the hotel and rental housing would be provided by the central, shared parking garage. Condominiums and office development would likely provide their own secured and dedicated parking in order to satisfy lending practices.

7. Encourage Residential Development of Moderate Density outside the Core

Along Willamette Falls Drive and Territorial Drive, the density of development should be somewhat less than in the core – more like 3-4 stories (up to 45 feet). Housing in this range could include townhomes or garden apartments.