



# Preserving South Portland

Winter 2018 • AAAP 410/510 • Preservation Studio

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## **Acknowledgements**

The work presented here could not have been accomplished alone. The author would like to acknowledge and thank the TriMet and City of Portland staff for making this project possible and for their enthusiastic involvement in the process.

## About SCI

The Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI) is a cross-disciplinary organization at the University of Oregon that promotes education, service, public outreach, and research on the design and development of sustainable cities. We are redefining higher education for the public good and catalyzing community change toward sustainability. Our work addresses sustainability at multiple scales and emerges from the conviction that creating the sustainable city cannot happen within any single discipline. SCI is grounded in cross-disciplinary engagement as the key strategy for improving community sustainability. Our work connects student energy, faculty experience, and community needs to produce innovative, tangible solutions for the creation of a sustainable society.

## About SCYP

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a year-long partnership between SCI and a partner in Oregon, in which students and faculty in courses from across the university collaborate with a public entity on sustainability and livability projects. SCYP faculty and students work in collaboration with staff from the partner agency through a variety of studio projects and service-learning courses to provide students with real world projects to investigate. Students bring energy, enthusiasm, and innovative approaches to difficult, persistent problems. SCYP's primary value derives from collaborations resulting in on-the-ground impact and expanded conversations for a community ready to transition to a more sustainable and livable future.

## SCI Directors and Staff

Marc Schlossberg, SCI Co-Director, and Professor of Planning, Public Policy, and Management, University of Oregon

Nico Larco, SCI Co-Director, and Associate Professor of Architecture, University of Oregon

Megan Banks, SCYP Manager, University of Oregon

## About TriMet

The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon was created by the Oregon Legislature in 1969 to operate and oversee mass transit in the Portland Metropolitan region. This public entity was formed by the legislature as a municipal corporation to replace the multiple private interest mass transit companies that previously operated in Multnomah County, Clackamas County, and Washington County; the counties that make up TriMet.

In addition to operating bus lines, light rail, and paratransit in the defined Tri-Metropolitan district, TriMet also connects to external mass transit services to provide wider blanket coverage for the region. TriMet's nationally recognized transit system provides more than 100 million rides annually, and carries 45% of rush hour commuters going into the downtown Portland area. TriMet not only moves people, but helps build sustainable cities by improving public health; creating vibrant, walkable communities; supporting economic growth; and working to enhance the region's livability.

Several civic leaders have been highlighted as key Figures in the creation, establishment, and ultimate success of TriMet. Governor Tom McCall is credited with the initial call for the creation of the public corporation; other key contributors include Congressman Earl Blumenauer, Rick Gustafson, Dick Feeney, and Mayor Neil Goldschmidt. All were instrumental in shaping the organization itself, as well as the land use, civic development, and transformation policies that make TriMet the success that it is today.

The vision and efforts of these individuals and countless others have borne fruit. Recently, TriMet celebrated the second anniversary of the opening of its most recent light rail line. Since its inauguration the 7.3-mile MAX Orange Line has experienced continued growth, having a six percent year-to-year increase in ridership. Illustrating the holistic approach that has been a part of TriMet from its inception, there have been wider community benefits such as a positive impact on employment and a focus on sustainable practices such as bio-swales, eco-roofs, a first-in-the-nation eco-track segment, solar paneling, and regenerative energy systems.

TriMet is a key partner in the region's Southwest Corridor Plan and Shared Investment Strategy. Eleven partner agencies are participating in planning for a new 12-mile light rail line in southwest Portland and southeast Washington County that will also include bicycle, pedestrian, and roadway projects to improve safety and access to light rail stations. Southwest Corridor stakeholders include Metro (the regional government), Washington County, Oregon Department of Transportation, and the cities of Beaverton, Durham, King City, Portland, Sherwood, Tigard, and Tualatin. This collaborative approach strives to align local, regional, and state policies and investments in the Corridor, and will implement and support adopted regional and local plans. These initiatives and outcomes from participation with the UO's Sustainable City Year Program will help develop ideas that are cost effective to build and operate, provide safe and convenient access, and achieve sustainability goals while supporting the corridor's projected growth in population and employment.

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*This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in the University of Oregon's Sustainable City Year Program for TriMet's Southwest Corridor project. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from the University of Oregon.*

## **Course Participants**

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## Executive Summary

Situated between Marquam Hill and the Willamette River, South Portland is a unique remnant of Portland's past. Its history encompasses the city's immigrant roots, industrial prowess, and tumultuous early urban development. In its current state, it is an isolated fragment of historic Portland surrounded by increasing urban growth. The potential impacts of development within the district, spurred by TriMet's proposed Southwest Corridor, have led community members, stakeholders, and the general public to reflect on the future of the area.

Like many of Portland's earliest neighborhoods, the history of South Portland is largely one of immigrants. Jewish and Italian immigrants were some of the community's first residents in the 1860s, drawn by nearby booming industry. Lair Hill, as it was later dubbed, was a neighborhood of residences and small businesses. While the majority of migrant residents and their families have moved elsewhere in the city, the district has maintained its working-class character and diverse household incomes. Unlike the majority of Portland neighborhoods, it is unique that a community so close to the downtown core would remain largely unaffected by massive economic gentrification and large-scale development.

Lair Hill is, and always has been, a neighborhood surrounded by public transportation. The neighborhood initially developed between two major railways connecting Portland to its southern neighbors. Portland's first horse-drawn streetcar ran through the neighborhood on what is now Naito Parkway. Construction of the Ross Island Bridge in 1926 and later development of major automobile thoroughfares like Barbur Boulevard, Naito Parkway, and Interstate 5 continued Lair Hill's history as a neighborhood surrounded by transportation. Residents consider their neighborhood "an island," not only surrounded by hills and water but literally and figuratively enclosed within transportation arteries and overshadowed by the ever-expanding downtown Portland.

TriMet's proposed Southwest Corridor expansion would add a MAX light rail line and stop to South Portland. Various stakeholders include Oregon Health & Science University, TriMet, Friends of Terwilliger Park, National University of Natural Medicine, and South Portland community members. At potential risk is the historic character of the South Portland neighborhood as defined in the Lair Hill Conservation District established in 1980 and the South Portland Historic District established in 1998. As with the addition of any transit hub, TriMet and the City of Portland hope to increase the density of the neighborhood and add more commercial businesses. South Portland is not resistant to change and wants to remain a vibrant community while retaining its history.

## Introduction

The Sustainable City Year Program Historic Preservation studio spent ten weeks focusing on assessing the existing fabric in South Portland, considering updates to design guidelines, and developing a design for the adaptive reuse of the Ahavath Achim Synagogue and site. Our goal was to provide tools to residents—such as updated design guidelines—in order to help shape their future discussions with TriMet and to generate ideas that create a cohesive transit corridor with compatible options to increase density.

To achieve this goal, we focused on three tasks for three weeks each. First, we analyzed the 1998 Historic District Nomination for South Portland and then assessed the neighborhood through a reconnaissance level survey. We identified the character-defining features of the district most critical to preserve or mimic in compatible infill. Through this process we ascertained that the district retained most of its integrity, but was threatened by various outside factors. Second, we analyzed the Conservation District Design Guidelines for Lair Hill from 1980 and determined necessary additions to bring the guidelines into the twenty-first century. Third, we examined the vacant Ahavath Achim Synagogue for possible adaptive reuse options. We determined that the existing building's acoustic element created by the dome was the most important feature to preserve, and therefore limited potential reuse schemes. We decided that creating an addition to the building and turning the space into an immigration museum would add to the neighborhood's character and be in line with the history of the neighborhood as a home for immigrants. We also designed a new building adjacent to the synagogue as an international market hall with green space in between to encourage commuters, residents, and visitors to use the site. We completed each task in three weeks and then presented our findings to stakeholders.

At its core, historic preservation involves sustainability. This includes sustainability of the planet, sustainability of the built environment, but more importantly sustainability of a community. Older buildings provide residents a sense of place and help shape their identity. Portland is rapidly expanding because people love the quirky, friendly, weird, and historic city. Newcomers tend to desire old condominiums in the alphabet district over new construction on the South Waterfront. It is nearly impossible to create affordable housing with new construction because of the high overhead costs and therefore these buildings have many vacancies. Walkable and visually interesting neighborhoods such as South Portland are indicative of why Portland is experiencing so much growth.

## National Register District Nomination of South Portland 1998 Evaluation

### The Existing Nomination

#### Defining a National Register District

A National Register District is defined as a group of buildings, sites, or objects in relationship to one another with significance on a national level pertaining to architecture, broad patterns in social history, an important person or event, or potential as an archaeological site. In order to qualify as a district, at least half of the buildings must be contributing to and maintaining integrity. Once registered as a historic district, any changes to resources within the boundaries using federal funding must undergo a Section 106 review and demonstrate efforts to comply with the character of the district. Because TriMet's proposed expansion will utilize federal funding, any alterations to South Portland must go through a lengthy review process.

## South Portland's Boundaries

The South Portland Historic District is an irregularly-shaped triangle situated between Marquam Hill and the Willamette River. It is bounded on the west by Barbur Boulevard and to the north by Arthur Street. The southeast boundary line follows Hood Avenue to Pennoyer Street on the south side. The 31-block area encompasses 284 structures, with 111 primary-contributing buildings (1876-1900) and 75 secondary-contributing buildings (1901-1926). The period of significance begins with the oldest resources within the district and ends with the completion of the Ross Island Bridge. The district is significant for its historic associations as an early immigrant community in Portland and its architectural merit.

## South Portland's Key Characteristics

The character of the South Portland Historic District can best be described as a “narrow mixed bag,” with a select few characteristics uniting this small neighborhood. With a period of significance between 1876 to 1926, the district is primarily composed of Queen Anne, Italianate, Craftsman Bungalow, Georgian, Colonial, and 20th Century vernacular single-family dwellings. The scale of the buildings is also critical; at a maximum, all residential and commercial buildings within the district remain under four stories tall. The majority of historic single-family dwellings remain either one, two, or two and a half stories high, some raised with garages underneath. Neighborhood cohesion is also stressed. Residents describe the neighborhood as a very walkable community, with porches, community gardens, and houses situated on plot's edge bridging the gap between private residences and public spaces. Residents also consider their neighborhood “an island,” not only surrounded by hills and water but literally and figuratively enclosed within transportation arteries and overshadowed by the ever-expanding downtown Portland.

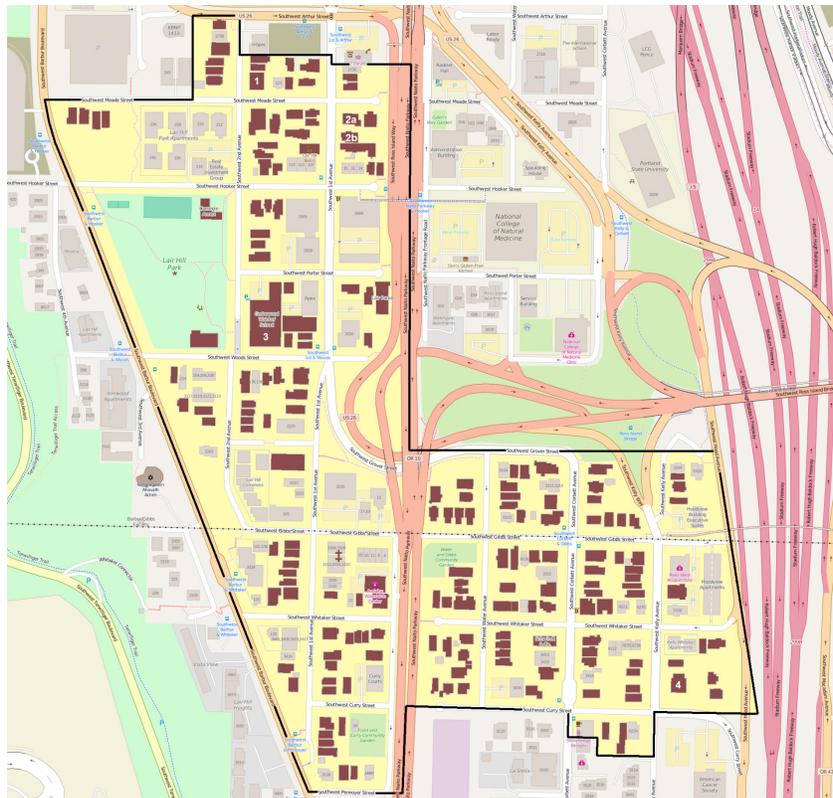


Figure 1: The yellow shaded area marks the boundaries of the South Portland Historic District. Maroon colored buildings indicate contributing buildings. Map data courtesy OpenStreetMap and Wikimedia Commons user Ian Poellet.

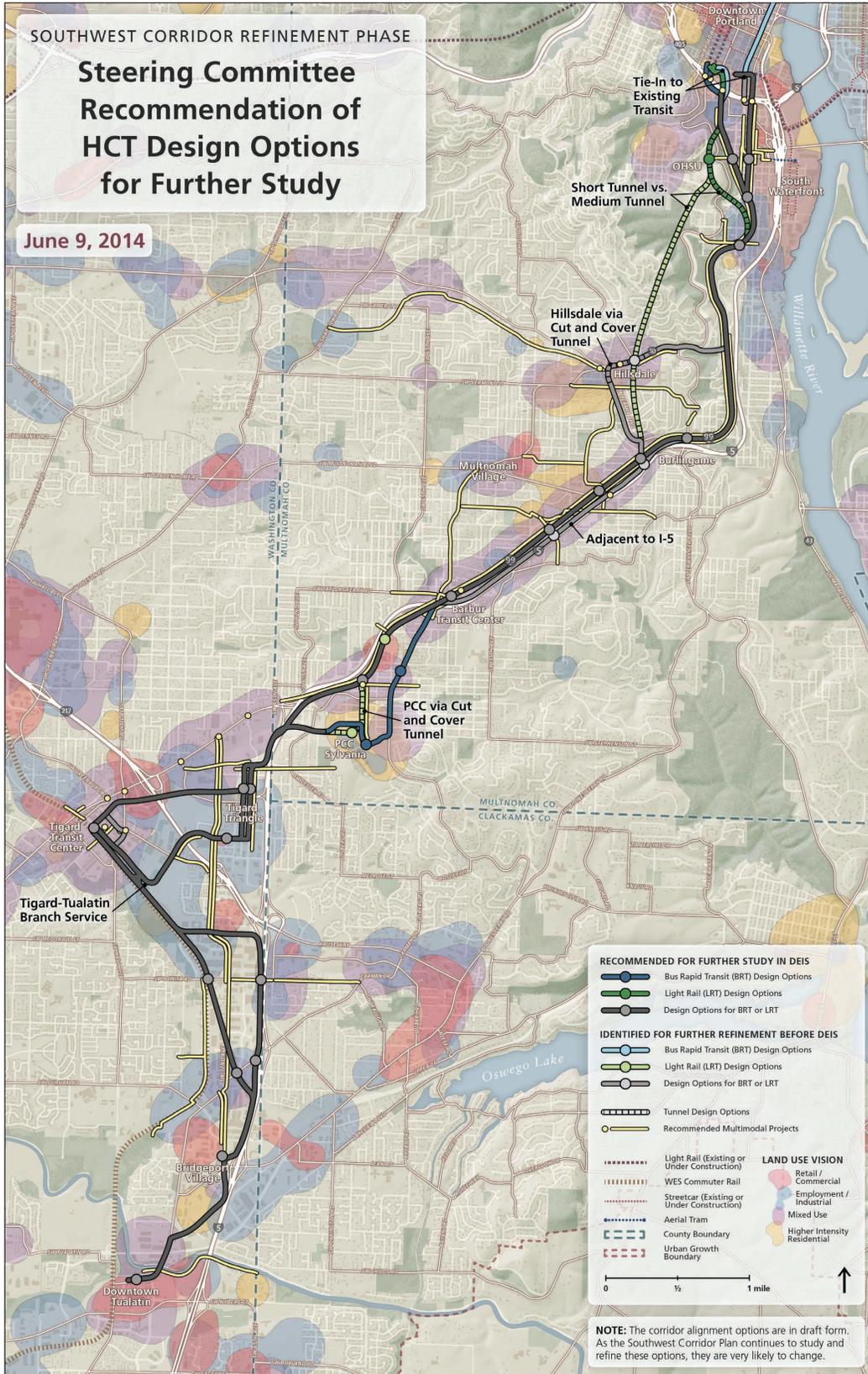


Figure 2: The proposed TriMet Southwest Corridor includes multiple route options for a light rail line on the outskirts of the South Portland Historic District.

## Reconnaissance Level Survey Findings

### Needed Updates to National Register District Nomination

Approximately 75% of the original 1998 nomination remains accurate and those buildings still retain integrity. In the 20 years since the nomination, four buildings are gone and almost all vacant lots are now filled in. These buildings need to be removed from or added to the district nomination. Approximately 20% of the buildings require significant description updates and may be recategorized as contributing depending on the loss of integrity. Five buildings within the district appear abandoned and need serious repair. All five buildings are primary-contributing and critical to maintain.

Along with the necessary updates, the document would greatly benefit from more general updates. The building descriptions vary in detail ranging from an entire page of text to two sentences. A rewriting of all descriptions to include important character-defining features such as style, plan, levels, roof form, foundation, siding, openings, appendages, and architectural details would create a more comprehensive nomination. Also, the order of structures in the nomination appears to be random and follows no geographic or temporal pattern. Reordering the nomination to follow either pattern would help paint an overall portrait of the district and allow for future surveyors to conduct their work more efficiently.

### Threats to Preservation

Throughout the term we identified various threats to the continued preservation of the South Portland Historic District. We believe that all of these threats can be addressed and transformed into benefits to the community through communication.

### Proposed TriMet Southwest Corridor Route

Oregon Metro and TriMet have laid out a proposal centered on increasing mass transit connections in the Southwest Corridor to address growing roadway congestion, unsafe walking and biking routes, as well as increasing demand for transit services. A new light rail line has been identified as the best means to achieve this, and a proposed route has been established (Figure 2). The line is slated to begin on the northern outskirts of the South Portland Historic District and has two route options:

- Along the center of Naito Parkway through the district until it intersects Barbur Boulevard
- Along Barbur Boulevard on the western boundary of the district

Either of these routes will have significant impacts on South Portland including increased pedestrian and vehicular traffic, safety concerns, and new development.

The creation of a light rail line on Naito Parkway or Barbur Boulevard will increase the number of non-resident pedestrians commuting through the South Portland Historic District. There could also be an increase in the amount of vehicular traffic through the area if commuters chose to drive to and park near the proposed Gibbs Street stop on the Naito alignment. This may threaten the character of the South Portland Historic District if noise, litter, and safety concerns increase. The most relevant challenge presented by the light rail line is the potential new development along either route chosen. Metro highlights its equitable development strategy, which addresses fair housing “to increase supply and meet demand for diverse places to live to fit the needs of individuals and families of all incomes and sizes,” and economic development to “provide individuals and families with sufficient wages that allow them to live within the corridor.” While these goals are unequivocally positive, increased business and housing in the South Portland Historic District is likely to change the character of the neighborhood.

To address these issues we have several recommendations. First, in response to increased pedestrian and vehicular traffic, more safety features can be constructed within the neighborhood. We recommend that more pedestrian crossings be established along Barbur Boulevard and Naito Parkway, more street lights be added in under-lit areas, and an alternative to the pedestrian tunnel beneath Naito Parkway be addressed. These changes would ensure the safety of both commuters and residents of the neighborhood. In response to concerns about new development within and bordering the historic district, we recommend a development planning process and new design guidelines that take into consideration key characteristics of the neighborhood to be maintained. This would include maintaining the scale of the neighborhood as mostly one- to three-story buildings, creating compatible new construction, and ensuring that any new businesses constructed in the area serve neighborhood residents and support small and local enterprises.

### **Portland Housing Crisis**

In 2015 the Portland City Council declared a housing emergency in reaction to the city's critical shortage of affordable housing. This emergency is ongoing as Portland's population steadily increases by 1% to 2% a year, with rents rising on average 8.4% per year in the metro area. There is a need for increased housing density within Portland, and new large-scale developments are attempting to meet this demand. The South Portland Historic District's proximity to downtown and its relatively undeveloped nature make it especially susceptible to this push for increased housing density.

Although the construction of higher density dwellings in or along the district will be out of line with the area's character, it is highly unlikely that it can be avoided. There are ways to achieve higher density that will have minimal impact on the district's physical appearance and overall character. For instance, a development planning process including new design guidelines should be developed to maintain the character of the district. This should include ensuring new development is a maximum of four stories and is characterized by smaller scale apartment buildings, triplexes, or duplexes that will increase density but have less visual impact. A percentage of new units constructed should also be made eligible as low income housing and priority should be given to renters that work in or close to the district. This would ensure workforce housing is available within the district and would help rejuvenate the historically working class character of the neighborhood. Two apartment buildings already within the district are good examples of appropriate scale and character. The Lair Parke Apartments (16 Southwest Porter Street) are housed in a three-story, circa 1913 building with 30 studio units. Curry Court Apartments (11 Southwest Curry Street) is a circa 1979, three-story building with 21 one-bedroom units. Neither of these provide as many units as a mid-rise or high-rise construction, but they add density to the district in a way that is appropriate in regards to the visual character as well as current zoning. It would also be beneficial to develop regulations or incentives for current homeowners in the district to subdivide their properties into duplexes or triplexes, similar to the proposed Residential Infill Project that applies to R2.5 zoned areas of Portland. The same development planning process employed within the district is recommended to guide new construction on the boundaries of the district and directly outside of it.

### **Absence of a Sense of Place**

Our opinion is that the South Portland Historic District has been altered and alienated by urban development and has lost its sense of place. Commuters and pedestrians can pass through the neighborhood and leave with no recognition of the historical significance of the area. This lack of recognition of the district's importance by the general public makes it challenging to garner support and awareness when the area is threatened. It also detracts from the neighborhood's character as a historically vibrant community and gateway for Portland newcomers.

There are several potentially simple and straightforward ways to address this challenge as well as more creative initiatives. The addition of signage placed atop street markers denoting the area as a historic district is a change that could create far-reaching positive outcomes. It would promote awareness of the district for pedestrians and local commuters as well as help reestablish a sense of cohesion between the two sections of the district split by Naito Parkway. The addition of wayfinding methods would also help ground the location of the historic district. Small, low profile signs or markers directing pedestrians to areas like Lair Hill Park, the neighborhood's two community gardens, and OHSU would provide a sense of location to pedestrians and encourage district exploration.

The potential for larger, more creative methods of increasing sense of place within the neighborhood is limitless. Weekly walking tours could be led to educate participants on the area's important place in Portland's history. The Ahavath Achim Synagogue could be adaptively reused as a community center with permanent exhibits on the neighborhood's Jewish and immigrant community. If the Naito light rail alignment is chosen, the proposed Gibbs Street stop could provide many opportunities to solidify the presence of the historic district. A sculpture or statue depicting the historic gateway community could be placed at the stop, similar to the goose statue located at the Kings Hill MAX station in the Goose Hollow neighborhood. A mural could be commissioned on a building close to the stop depicting the district's change over time, similar to the Buckman Community Mural on Southeast 12th Avenue and Morrison Avenue. These possibilities would increase community cohesion, outsider awareness, and foster a character of creativity and historic awareness within the South Portland Historic District.

### **Naito as a Schism**

Naito Parkway's relationship to the South Portland Historic District is complex and multifaceted. It is both a schism, literally splitting the district in two, and a character defining feature. The construction of Naito Parkway initially fundamentally changed the character of South Portland, but it has since acted as an insulator, allowing the district to remain relatively unchanged compared to neighboring areas. This intricate connection between Naito Parkway and the historic district is challenging when considering preservation: how do we simultaneously acknowledge the historic importance of Naito Parkway in the area's development but also address and attempt to correct the damage it has caused to the neighborhood's cohesiveness?

We recommend a two-fold plan to bridge the divide created by Naito Parkway. First, more pedestrian crossings need to be established across the section of Naito Parkway that divides the historic district. Presently there are only two options for crossing the four lanes of traffic on Naito Parkway that pass through the neighborhood: an outdated pedestrian bridge next to Hooker Street and a dimly lit tunnel beneath Naito Parkway, along Southwest Grover Street. Street level crossings at regular intervals with appropriate signage, lighting, and safety features along Naito Parkway would help restore the walkability and cohesiveness of South Portland. Safe crossings of Naito Parkway would also allow Lair Hill residents to quickly access the Gibbs Street pedestrian bridge and subsequently the South Waterfront.

In addition to constructing pedestrian crossings, we recommend that efforts be made for a general revitalization of Naito Parkway, whether or not it is chosen as the route for the Southwest Corridor Plan. Pedestrian sidewalks and designated bike lanes could be constructed, and established pedestrian ways can benefit from more stringent maintenance. The Portland Bureau of Transportation is currently in the design phase of a plan to repave and entirely rebuild certain sections of Naito between I-405 and Southwest Jefferson Street. The proposal includes installing new traffic signals, constructing pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and creating improved crossings at major intersections. Extending this plan to

include the section of Naito within the South Portland Historic District, or applying some of the same strategies, if the light rail line is constructed, would address the fragmented nature of the neighborhood and increase cohesiveness.

### **South Waterfront Development Project**

The South Waterfront, once a hub of industry within Portland proper, is perhaps the most rapidly transforming area of the city. Boatyards and docks have been replaced with gleaming high-rises, a public park, and a transit center that is home to the aerial tram. More development is planned for the area as the construction of Zidell Yards continues. This former 33-acre home to the Zidell Barge Business located near the Ross Island Bridge will be developed to house “2,600 residential units, 1.5 million square feet of office space, a grocery store, a retail anchor, restaurants, parking, a 200-room hotel, three parks, a public plaza and a waterfront greenway.” Zidell Yards and the areas of the South Waterfront that have already been developed are a short walk across the Gibbs Street pedestrian bridge from the South Portland Historic District. From the streets of the neighborhoods, the development is an everyday reminder of the changing character of Portland. The development of the South Waterfront has impacted vistas of the Willamette from the neighborhood, may encourage new development up to the district’s eastern boundary, and may draw South Portland residents away from spending time or money within the historic district.

Steps can be taken to prevent potential impacts of the South Waterfront development on the historic district. The previously recommended development planning process should ensure that any development that spans I-5 meets design guidelines and is compatible with the district. To retain the current small businesses within the district, we also suggest a main street revitalization strategy. While Zidell Yards and the rest of the South Waterfront will have a high concentration of amenities, they will likely lack a character that South Portland could capitalize on—a small town, main street business center. Southwest 1st Avenue would be the best candidate for increasing small businesses as it is already home to the Lair Hill Bistro—a popular neighborhood cafe, is highly walkable, was historically a center of business, and is zoned CS Storefront Commercial. Encouraging small local businesses to develop in this area would bring more capital into the neighborhood, ensure that the South Waterfront does not deter residents and nonresidents from patronizing already established business, increase cohesiveness, and restore the historic nature of the district as a center for small business.

### **Portland Sustainability Goals**

In 2015 the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability published a comprehensive Climate Action Plan to support sustainable urbanism and livability within the city. This plan outlined various goals to reach by 2030, all aimed at increasing sustainability. These goals include reducing the total energy use of buildings built before 2010 by 25%, having 50% of all energy in buildings drawn from renewable resources, ensuring all new construction produces zero net carbon emissions, and salvaging all materials from demolished historic structures. The Climate Action Plan is an invaluable resource for addressing issues of sustainability, but it presents interesting challenges to preserving the South Portland Historic District.

To reach the goal of reducing the total energy use of buildings constructed before 2010 by 25%, historic buildings will need to be retrofitted with renewable energy technology. This should be promoted and addressed in new design guidelines for the historic district. Homeowners could be encouraged to retrofit their homes with low profile solar panels as these would be the least obtrusive option for renewable energy. Homeowners could also be encouraged to upgrade their weatherization to decrease energy waste. The design guidelines should also include requirements for new construction to address the goal of zero net carbon emissions from new development. New construction within the district should be required to integrate compatible renewable energies and make use of sustainable landscaping features such as

rainwater collection, rain gardens, and native species planting. Although increasing needs for sustainable development will likely alter the physical character of the South Portland Historic District, it also presents the neighborhood with an opportunity to be more communally and environmentally aware.

### **Realignment of Ross Island Bridge Ramps**

Since its construction, the Ross Island Bridge has played a pivotal role in the development and division of the South Portland Historic District. When Harbor Drive was constructed along the downtown waterfront, and Front Avenue widened to connect it with OR-99W, it “split the residential community in two, displaced homes and businesses, removed the streetcar line, and thus destroyed the neighborhood’s social and functional core.” The tangled interchanges were added during the height of “urban renewal” in the 1950s, and according to the Portland Bureau of Planning’s 1978 South Portland Circulation Study this “‘band-aid’ approach” to circulation woes in the neighborhood “undermined the stability of a once strong community.” Today, realignment of the bridge ramps are being considered as a part of the proposed Southwest Corridor Plan called the Bridgehead Project.

The Bridgehead Project could potentially reintroduce up to four acres of land to the South Portland neighborhood. Since this area remains outside of the historic district and conservation district lines, the neighborhood is cognizant of the potential development that could occur nearby. There are numerous ways that the neighborhood could address possible redevelopment. First, by extending the period of significance to incorporate the period of urban renewal, the district’s boundaries could potentially be redrawn to incorporate the bridge ramps and the nearby National University of Natural Medicine. This option would gain more jurisdiction for future development and use of the design guidelines. Another option is the adaptive reuse of the ramps. Major cities across the nation like New York City have successfully turned to adaptive use of freeways, rail spurs, and other industrial components. The ramps could potentially be used to integrate with existing neighboring structures while maintaining the overall character of the neighborhood—such as a park or pedestrian and bike trail. The Green Loop, a bold new linear park concept that is part of the city’s Central City 2035 Plan, could be introduced through the Ross Island Bridge area, connecting the neighborhood to the rest of the central core and southeast Portland.

Alternatively, if the historic district or conservation district can or would not be altered, the neighborhood could attempt to collaborate with the city and developers to limit the scale of new construction in the area. In an instance where a potential development or transit project is slated for that area and uses federal funding, a federal process called Section 106 is a tool the historic district could lawfully use to mitigate nearby projects that could cause a severe impact to the surrounding area. Part of this process entails an “Area of Potential Effects” (APE), which is federally defined as:

The geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. The area of potential effects is influenced by the scale and nature of an undertaking and may be different for different kinds of effects caused by the undertaking. [36 CFR 800.16(d)]

If the neighborhood could be determined within the APE, a Section 106 review could be an option for the South Portland Historic District residents to influence infill decisions for the Ross Island Bridge realignment should a negatively impactful federally funded project be proposed. For more information, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s “Protecting Historic Properties: A Citizen’s Guide to Section 106 Review” is a helpful tool for getting acquainted with the complexity of this process.

# Revising the 1980 Lair Hill Conservation District Design Guidelines



Figure 3: An example of the streetscape in Lair Hill.

## Existing Design Guidelines

The Lair Hill Conservation District Design Guidelines, written in 1980, would greatly benefit from a 21st century update.

### What a Conservation District Entails

A Conservation District in Portland is less stringent than a National Register District but still contains certain standards and a review process. A Conservation District is established for local significance in terms of architecture, significant persons, and local history. Conservation Districts adhere to a set of design guidelines established by residents and Portland's Landmark Commission. These design guidelines are specific to that area and include topics such as materials, design, streetscape, etc. Any alterations in the Conservation District must adhere to the design guidelines and be reviewed by the Landmark Commission.

### Lair Hill's Boundaries

The boundaries of the Lair Hill Conservation District are currently only a portion of the South Portland National Register Historic District boundaries. The Conservation District is bounded to the north by Arthur Street, to the west by Barbur Boulevard, and to the east by Naito Parkway. An expansion of the boundaries is discussed in our Design Guideline Update.

### Important Foreground for Future Development

The original Design Guidelines from 1980 included a very interesting section called "Residential Construction" with this as its stated goal: "To encourage an increase in the residential density as this is essential for Lair Hill to continue its function as a neighborhood, not just a collection of historic buildings."

We believe this statement to be a true representation of the Lair Hill community and its potential moving forward. The residents of Lair Hill are not afraid of change but rather embrace it to enhance their neighborhood's vibrancy. The Design Guidelines can, and should be, used as a tool to create a cohesive, lively neighborhood.

## Proposed Changes and Adaptations to the Guidelines

For the most part, the existing 1980 Design Guidelines retained integrity in terms of neighborhood planning as well as building and landscape components. We included minor updates to emphasize various characteristics, such as the small scale of the homes and varying roofscape of the neighborhood. The major changes were made in the concerns component, and the newly added energy efficiency and climate change component.

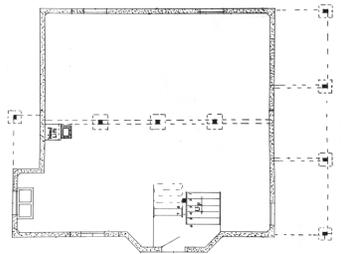


FRONT ELEVATION

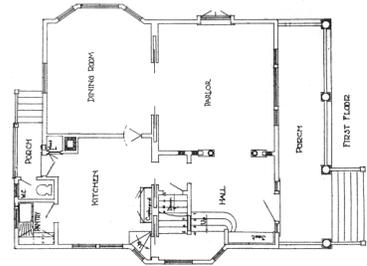
**EXISTING BUILDING SUMMARY**

The existing building is a two-story 1910s Portland foursquare on a tight site with an attic and basement. For the purposes of this study the attic and basement are assumed to have adequate head height without beams, collar ties or other items that might prevent conversion to living space.

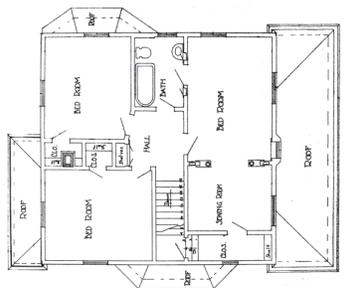
Building Area:	3,550 gsf
Building Height:	32 ft
Site Area:	2,500 sf
FAR:	1.03:1 (without basement)
Construction Type:	V-B (Unprotected Wood Frame)
Sprinklering:	No
Existing Occupancies:	R-3



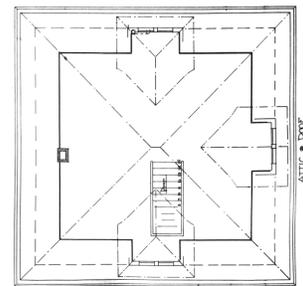
PLAN Basement 975 sf



PLAN 1st Level 1,000 sf



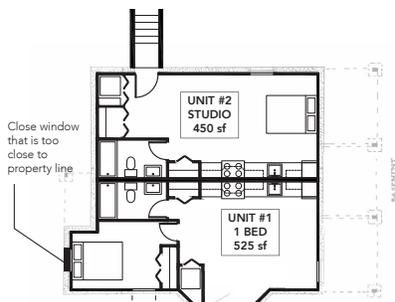
PLAN 2nd Level 925 sf



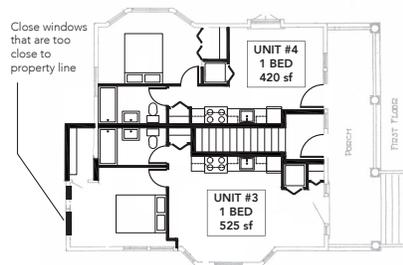
PLAN Attic 650 sf

1900s FOURSQUARE EXISTING BUILDING

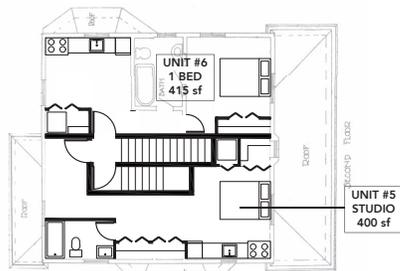
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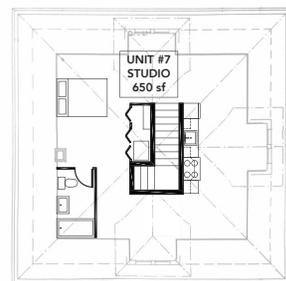
PLAN Basement 975 sf



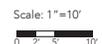
PLAN 1st Level 1,000 sf



PLAN 2nd Level 925 sf



PLAN Attic 650 sf



**LEGEND**  
 Existing construction (grey)  
 New construction (black)

1900s FOURSQUARE PROPOSED CONVERSION **OPT A - 7 UNITS**

7



Figure 4: An example of internal conversion potential for a South Portland building. From the 2017 City of Portland Residential Infill Project Report.

**EXISTING BUILDING SUMMARY**

The existing building is a typical one-story single family bungalow house with a full height basement and habitable attic space. Existing dormers at the roof allow for light and additional space in the attic. An interior stair connects the basement, 1st level, and attic. An exterior stair also provides direct access to the basement. The construction of the house is wood framing on concrete basement/foundation walls.

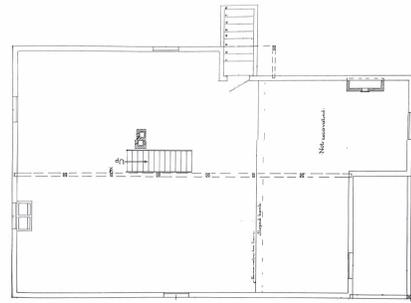
Building Area: 3,640 sf  
 Building Height: 20'  
 Site Area: 5,000 sf  
 FAR: 0.51:1 (without basement)

Construction Type: V-B (Unprotected Wood Frame)  
 Sprinklering: No

Existing Occupancies: R-3

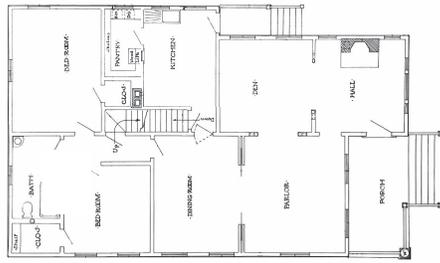


FRONT ELEVATION



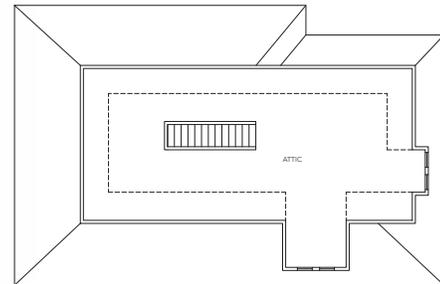
PLAN Basement

1,095 sf



PLAN 1st Level

1,595 sf

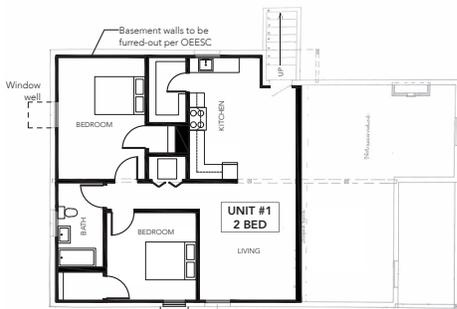


PLAN Attic

950 sf

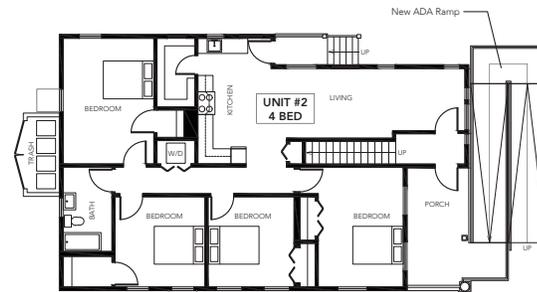
1910s BUNGALOW EXISTING BUILDING

10



PLAN Basement

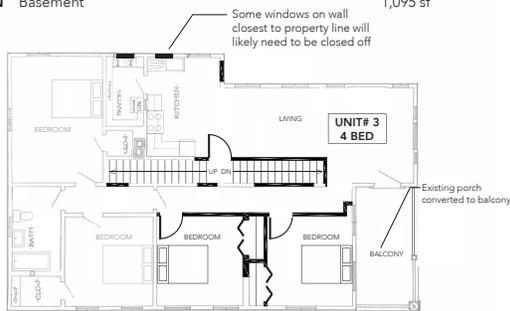
1,095 sf



PLAN 1st Level

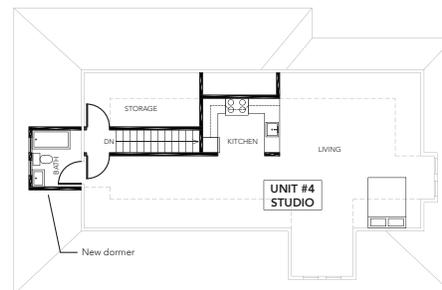
1,595 sf

Note: Existing first level to be elevated, with a new addition story placed below it. New first level is an addition and must meet ADA



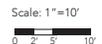
PLAN 2nd Level

1,595 sf



PLAN 3rd Level

1,095 sf



LEGEND  
 Existing construction (grey)  
 New construction (black)

1910s BUNGALOW PROPOSED CONVERSION **OPT A - ADDITION**

11



Figure 5: An example of internal conversion potential for a South Portland building. From the 2017 City of Portland Resettling Infill Project Report.

## Creating “Smart Density” through Internal Conversions

Lair Hill already has and can continue to increase density through internal conversions. This version of “smart density” maintains the character-defining exterior features of the district while changing some of the large single-family dwellings into duplexes, triplexes, and even fourplexes. Internal conversions require less materials, or more inexpensive than new construction, and create affordable housing.



Figure 6: An example of preservation potential for an existing historic building in the Lair Hill Conservation District.

## Compatible Infill and Additional Dwelling Units

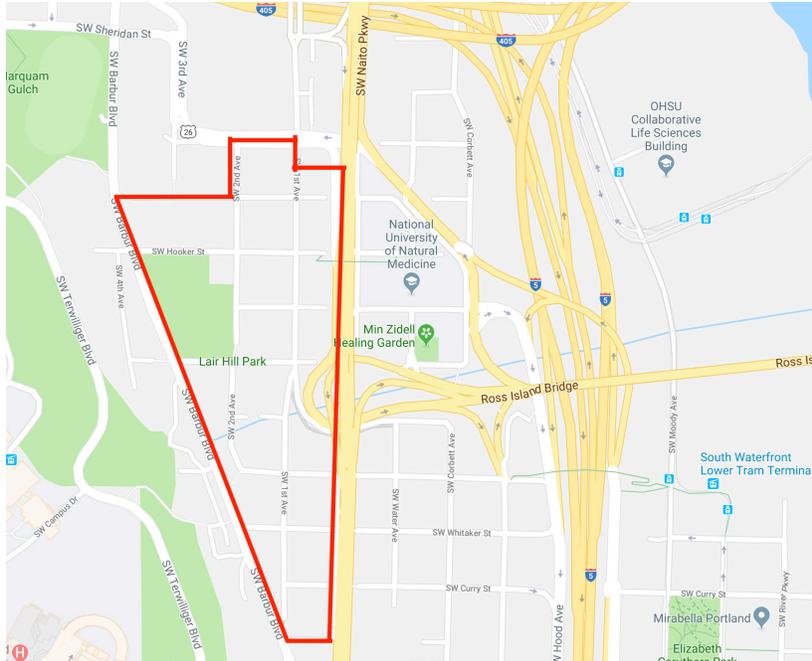
We further emphasized the possibility to increase density in Lair Hill through compatible infill and additional dwelling units on large lots. These examples of new construction would adhere to the updated design guidelines while maximizing open space.

## Inclusion of Climate Change Mitigation Options

The original 1980 Design Guidelines briefly mentioned energy efficiency, but needed to be expanded upon to match new technological developments and standards set by the City of Portland.

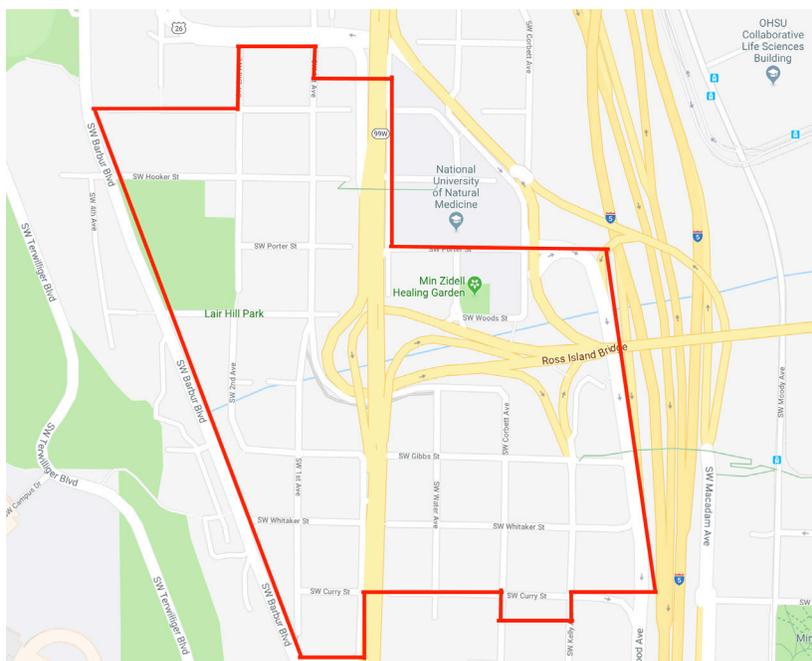
## Expanding the Boundary

The original boundaries of Lair Hill Conservation District do not include the portion of the National Register District east of Naito Parkway. We propose including not only this portion extending to Hood Avenue but also increase the northeastern boundary to Porter Street.



**1980 Conservation District Boundaries**

These boundaries do not include all buildings within the South Portland Historic District located East of Naito Parkway.



**2018 Proposed Conservation District Boundaries**

These boundaries include all buildings within the South Portland Historic District and the freeway connections.

Figure 7: The 1980 boundary and proposed boundary expansion.

## Adaptive Reuse of Ahavath Achim Synagogue



Figure 8: The Ahavath Achim Synagogue.

### Ahavath Achim’s Role in South Portland – A History of Immigrants

In designing an adaptive reuse plan for the Ahavath Achim synagogue, we sought to highlight one of the key themes in the history of South Portland: the importance of immigration and diversity. South Portland was once described as “one third jewish, one third italian, and one third everyone else” by local author Polina Olsen. It was a welcoming community for many of Portland’s early immigrants. Some of the neighborhood’s first immigrants were Jewish Europeans, who created spaces for community growth like the Neighborhood House and religious institutions like Kesser Israel. Italian immigrants soon followed, drawn to the neighborhood by Portland’s nearby growing industrial sector. Other residents of the neighborhood included Sephardic Jews from the Mediterranean, Europeans from numerous countries, and other diverse peoples such as Asian Americans and African Americans. These various groups shaped South Portland into a lively, welcoming, and close-knit community.

### Existing Fabric of Ahavath Achim Synagogue

#### The Dome and Acoustics

The character-defining feature, both externally and internally, is the dome. From the street, it is impossible to miss the red-tile dome in the shape of a beehive. It is a landmark on Barbur

# SOUTH PORTLAND: A DIVERSE HISTORY

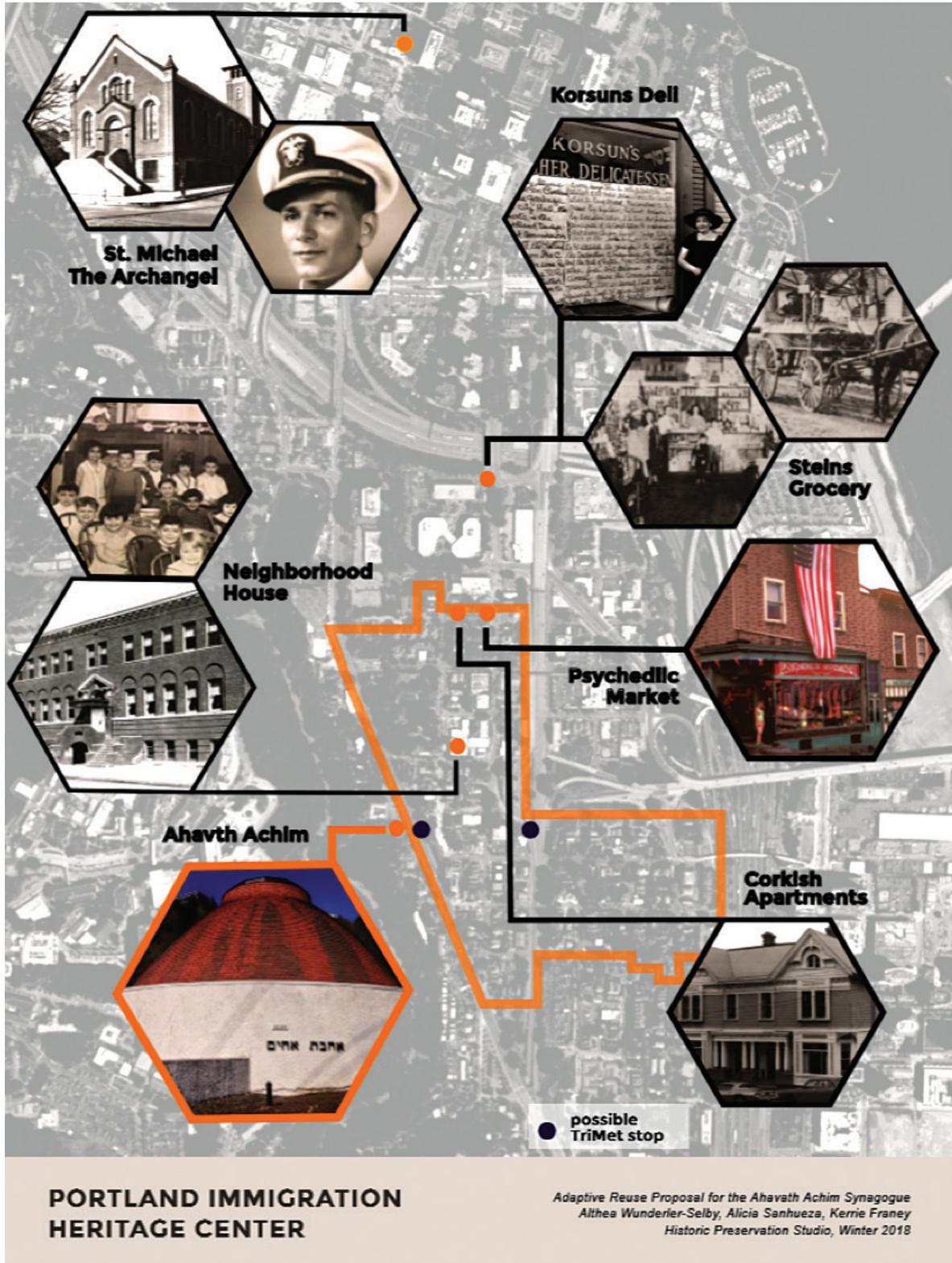


Figure 9: Examples of Jewish heritage in South Portland.

Boulevard. Inside the synagogue, this dome creates remarkable acoustics. When one speaks in the space, the entire room can hear clearly. Designed for spoken religious services, this feature makes the space unique and our main reason for maintaining the integrity of the existing building.

**Necessary Repair Work**

From a reconnaissance level survey we ascertained major repairs. The stucco on the exterior of the building is deteriorating and crumbling off, possibly affecting the stability of the building. The tiled dome needs to be cleaned and repaired in places where tiles have become loose or fallen off. The stained-glass skylight needs to be cleaned. A full condition assessment report should be conducted by a professional to determine structural damage or any other necessary repairs.

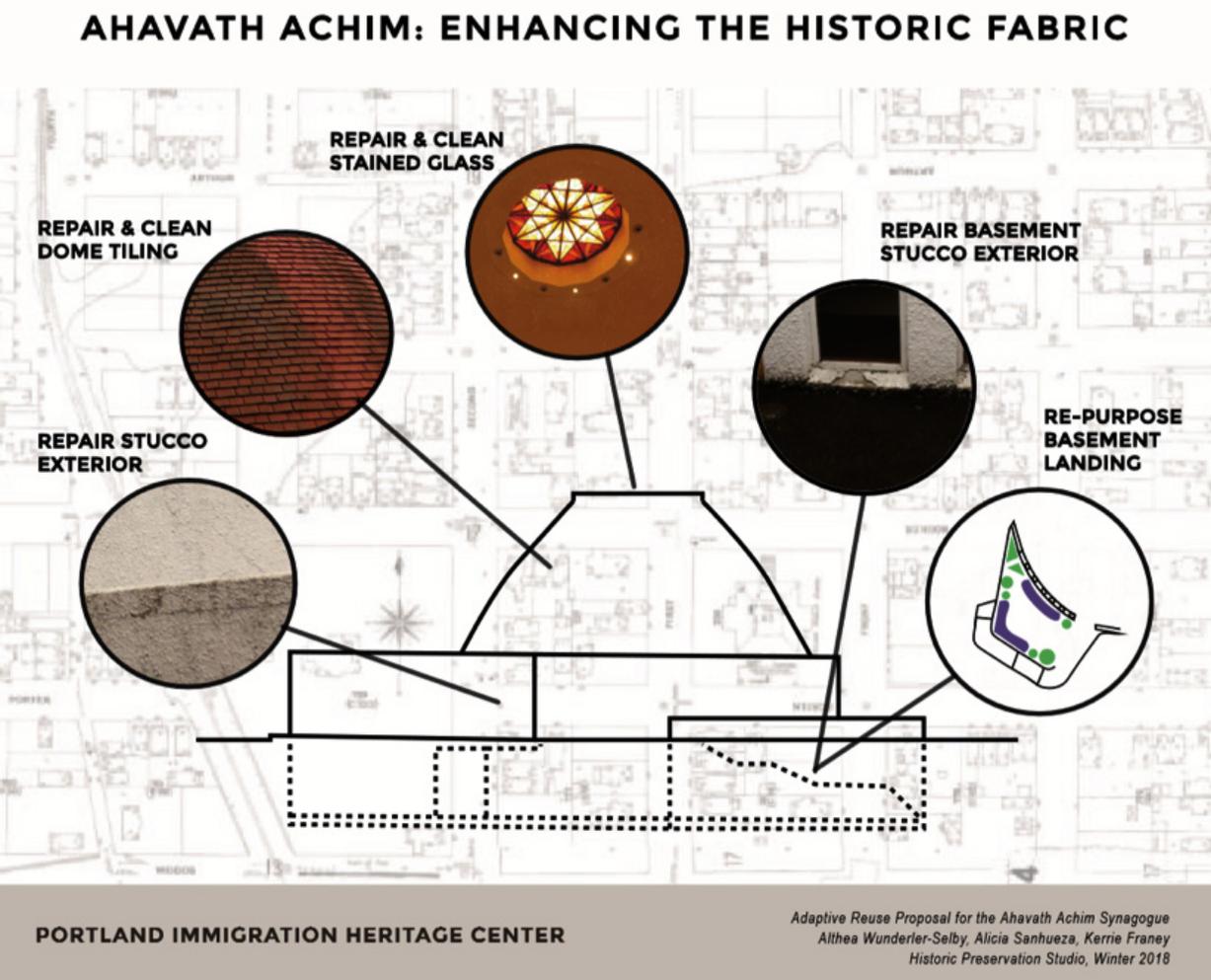
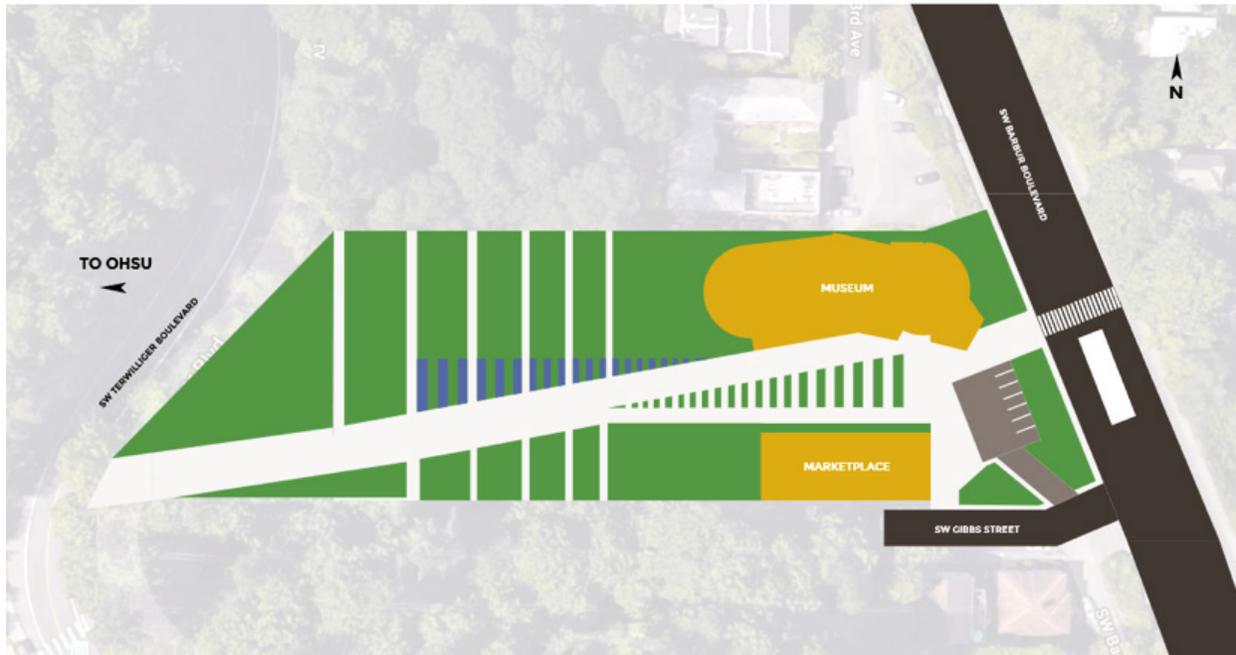


Figure 10: Potential sites of repair.

**A New Design: Portland Immigration Heritage Center**

Through our adaptive reuse program we strive to transform the site of the Ahavath Achim Synagogue into the Portland Immigration Heritage Center (PIHC). The PIHC can serve as an educational and interactive site highlighting the importance of immigrants in Portland’s history and encouraging the embrace of modern diversity. To achieve this the Center will incorporate the synagogue into a newly constructed museum and a separate international market, both situated within a larger park setting.

## PORTLAND IMMIGRATION HERITAGE CENTER: SITE PLAN



### PORTLAND IMMIGRATION HERITAGE CENTER

Adaptive Reuse Proposal for the Ahavath Achim Synagogue  
Althea Wunderler-Selby, Alicia Sanhueza, Kerrie Franey  
Historic Preservation Studio, Winter 2018

Figure 11: The proposed site plan showing the existing Ahavath Achim Synagogue with its addition, the new construction of a marketplace, a tiered green space with some sort of connection to Terwilliger Boulevard, parking, a crosswalk across Barbur Boulevard, and the proposed TriMet stop.

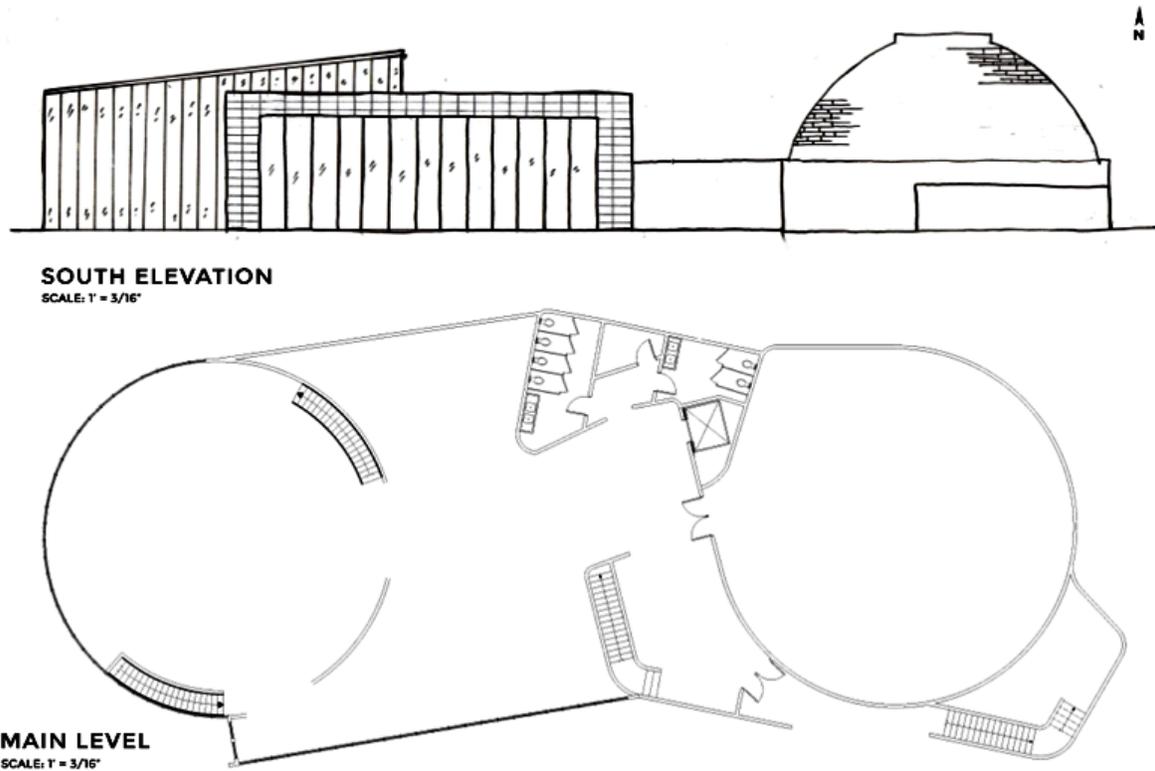
### Conversion of Ahavath Achim Synagogue to Flexible Museum Space

Integral to our proposal is the retention of the majority of the historic fabric of the Ahavath Achim Synagogue. The synagogue's individual history, its place in the larger history of South Portland, and its recognizable appearance make preservation a more suitable option than demolition or significant alteration. We have found the most important characteristics of the synagogue to preserve to be the building's iconic red tiled dome, interior acoustics, and stained glass skylight. The only alterations we recommend are the removal of the kitchen in the basement to make the space more flexible, the removal of the northern exterior wall of the foyer to connect the building to the new construction, and the removal of the chairs and carpeting within the main sanctuary to create a more flexible space. Further, elevators will need to be added to the building to meet ADA requirements. We recommend repurposing the exterior basement landing into a more functional space through the addition of a small garden and benches. For the adaptive reuse plan of the synagogue to be implemented, a historic building assessment would need to be completed to analyze needed repairs.

We suggest using the upper space as a rotating exhibit space with optional programming. The congregants of Ahavath Achim expressed interest in using the space for High Holidays and we would like to respect their wishes and maintain the potential for the space to be used for a religious ceremony. Because of the acoustics, we also view this space as a wonderful lecture

hall or small performance center and could view various community partners such as Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU), National University of Natural Medicine (NUNM), or residents of South Portland utilizing the space for that purpose. The basement will be kept as a flexible space for the museum to use.

## AHAVATH ACHIM ADAPTIVE REUSE



### PORTLAND IMMIGRATION HERITAGE CENTER

*Adaptive Reuse Proposal for the Ahavath Achim Synagogue*  
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 Historic Preservation Studio, Winter 2018

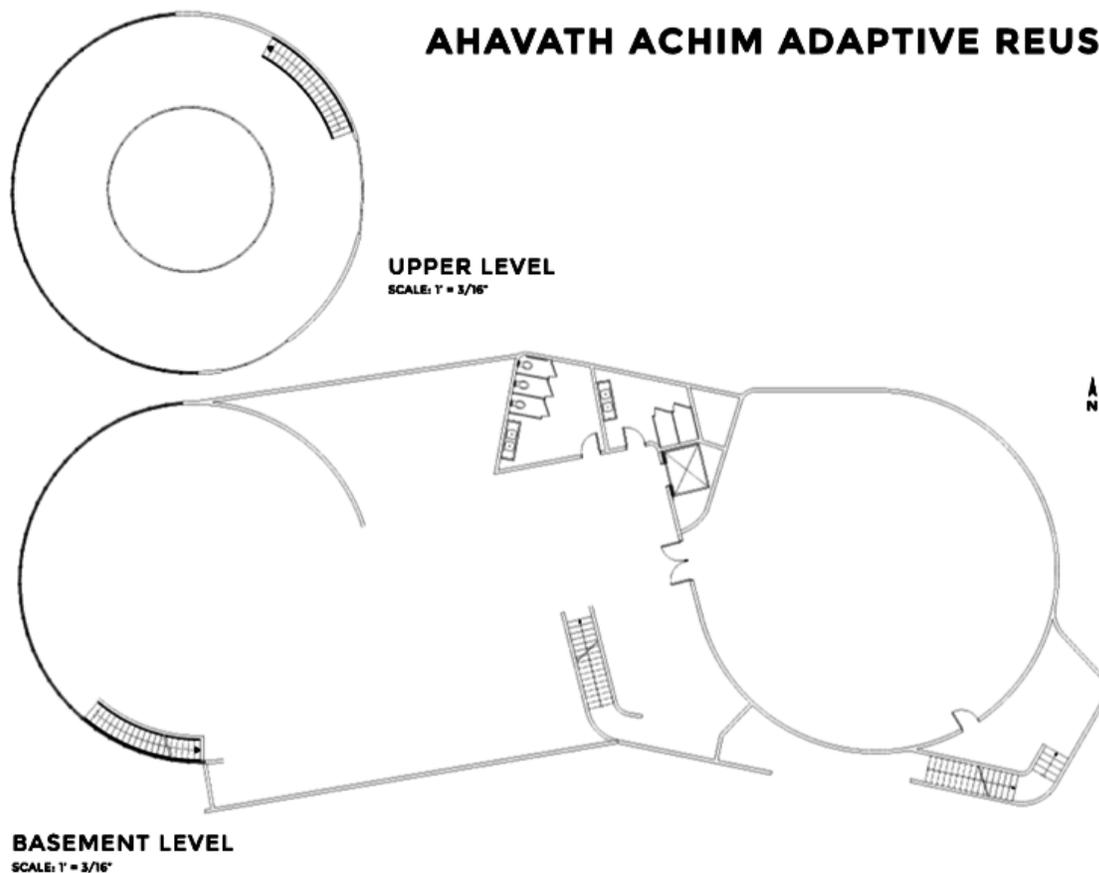
Figure 12: The elevation of the Ahavath Achim Synagogue and its new addition along with the floor plan of the main level.

### Ahavath Achim Synagogue Addition and Programmatic Use

The proposed museum will be connected to the synagogue through its existing foyer. This new construction will consist of a one-story rectangular structure with a basement, and a two-story cylindrical structure with a basement. The rectangular area will house rotating exhibits while the cylindrical area will represent the journey of immigration. The rectangular construction will feature large glass windows and red tiling similar to that on the synagogues dome while the cylindrical construction will be composed entirely of glass. This design draws inspiration from the synagogue but is different enough so as not to be confused as historically connected to the synagogue. To the south of the new museum will be the newly constructed international market hall featuring two completely glass walls, a green roof, and exterior wood beams. This design will differ visually from the synagogue to again highlight that it is not a historic structure.

The new addition will house a permanent thematic exhibit about an immigrant's experience in America. This section of the museum will focus on interaction and experience through the use of various senses: listening, touching, and seeing.

## AHAVATH ACHIM ADAPTIVE REUSE



### PORTLAND IMMIGRATION HERITAGE CENTER

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Figure 13: The floor plans of the Ahavath Achim Synagogue and its new addition for the basement and upper levels.

Visitors will begin the experience in the basement of the cylindrical new construction in the first step of the immigrant's experience, the journey. This space will be dark, cold, claustrophobic, and uncomfortable to visitors. An immigrant's journey is rarely comfortable and this will be experienced by visitors in this space. Sounds of transportation will play quietly in the background such as waves, trains, car horns, etc. The space will feature pictures, art work, and mixed-media installations describing the journey as well as emotions felt through the process. Visitors will then ascend to the ground level to experience the second step in the journey, the arrival. This space will be liberating, lighter, and feel more like a traditional gallery space. Loud conversations in various languages will play through speakers. The space will feel overwhelming, chaotic, and slightly disorienting in comparison to the basement space and will feature art portraying the transition to life in the U.S. Much of this space is about the struggle to find one's place or identity in a new environment. The words "melting pot" and "assimilation" are often discussed when the topic of immigration arises, but we do not believe these are accurate representations of how an immigrant settles in America. Instead, the third portion of the museum offers an alternative storyline.

In the last step of the experience the visitors will ascend to the upper level where the diversity of the United States is celebrated through the theme of thriving. The space will feel welcoming, inclusive, open, and fun. Art pieces will honor and acknowledge the creation of new cultures and

new identities through the blending of an immigrant's homeland and new home. This space will be more flexible with rotating and permanent pieces as more immigrants voice their stories. This area will also feature an interactive space for visitors to share their own journeys. The interactive space may be a white board to write on or a place for visitors to hang up items or notecards and could include a digital screen for submissions after visitation. By encouraging audience participation we create a universal story and demonstrate Portland's commitment to inclusion.

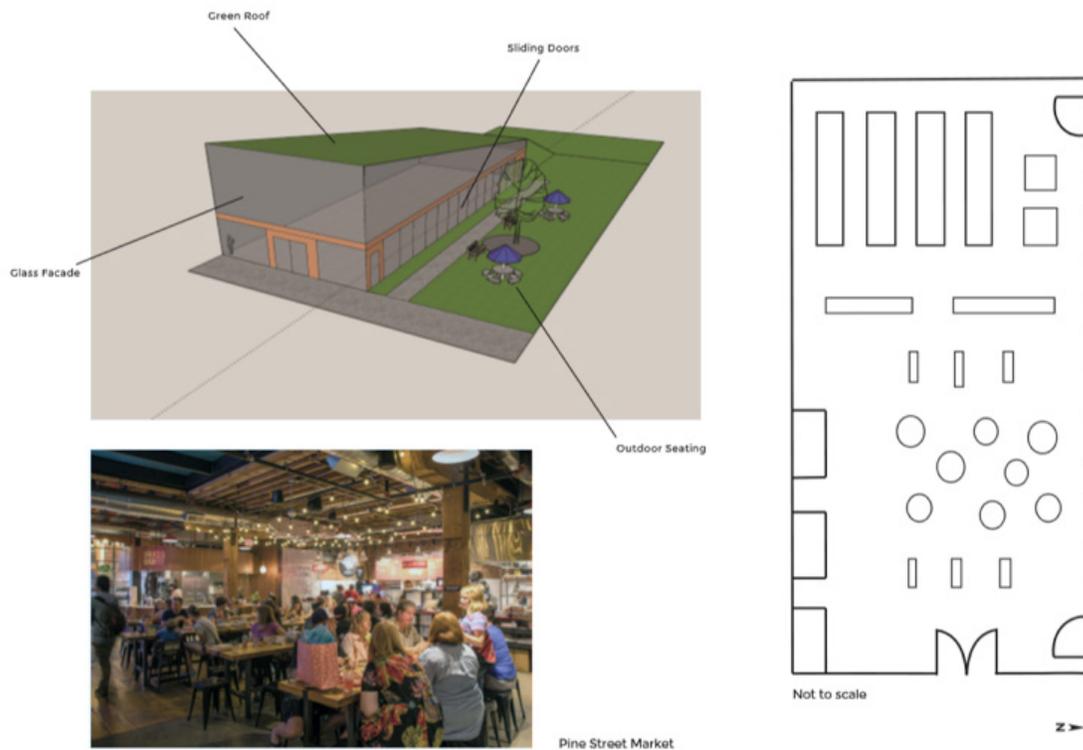


Figure 14: A visualization of the thematic museum.

## International Market Hall New Construction

The international market hall, the second new construction on the site, will encourage continued foot traffic to the center to experience the story of immigration through another sense: tasting. The market hall will feature vendors with various foods from countries around the world and will provide a place for public transit commuters, OHSU employees, neighborhood residents, or museum visitors to purchase food or pass time. Not only is the international marketplace a tangible representation of South Portland's diverse history but a needed community hub for South Portland. There will also be a small international grocery in the market hall for grab-and-go food items and meal preparation. The market hall will have a green roof and on-site gardens to source food in an effort to promote sustainability.

### NEW BUILD: INTERNATIONAL MARKETPLACE



## PORTLAND IMMIGRATION HERITAGE CENTER

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Historic Preservation Studio, Winter 2018

Figure 15: The elevation and floor plan of the International Marketplace. It is conceptually modeled after the Pine Street located in Downtown Portland.

### Creation of Open Space

The overall site will feature terraced gardens and seating to provide an enjoyable outdoor experience for both visitors and commuters. The proposed plan includes the removal of part of the current parking lot to create a green space between the synagogue and proposed international market hall with outside eating areas and grass. Beyond the synagogue addition and market hall will be terracing mimicking the topography of the hillside up to Terwilliger Park. This area will have open green space like an amphitheatre and a water feature reminiscent of the stream that used to run through the site.

# Conclusion

South Portland offers a unique opportunity for Portland’s history to converge with its future. The existing fabric of the neighborhood retains integrity and possesses distinct character-defining features to be preserved. Residents are ready to adapt to a new TriMet corridor and all the changes that come along with a public transit expansion in a neighborhood. There is potential to creatively reuse existing community fabric such as the Ahavath Achim Synagogue and build bridges between the various stakeholders in the region. Continued communication and coordination across all involved members will be critical to ensuring a smooth transformation of South Portland.