



# The Overlook: Affordable Housing in Downtown Troutdale

Fall 2020  
Troutdale

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PPPM 611 Introduction to Planning Practice

PPPM 613 Planning Analysis I

PPPM 617 Human Settlements



# The Overlook: Affordable Housing in Downtown Troutdale

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COLLEGE OF DESIGN

## **Acknowledgments**

The report writers would like to extend their gratitude towards the City of Troutdale for inviting student researchers into their community to explore how to use the city's available land to best support the growth of a vibrant Troutdale. Additionally, the writers and student researchers would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions:

**Marlee Boxler**, Economic Development Coordinator

**Chris Damgen**, Community Development Director

**Arini Farrell**, Associate Planner / Floodplain Manager

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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 the City of Troutdale. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from the University of Oregon.

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## **About SCI**

The Sustainable Cities Institute (SCI) is an applied think tank focusing on sustainability and cities through applied research, teaching, and community partnerships. We work across disciplines that match the complexity of cities to address sustainability challenges, from regional planning to building design and from enhancing engagement of diverse communities to understanding the impacts on municipal budgets from disruptive technologies and many issues in between.

SCI focuses on sustainability-based research and teaching opportunities through two primary efforts:

1. Our Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP), a massively scaled university-community partnership program that matches the resources of the University with one Oregon community each year to help advance that community's sustainability goals; and

2. Our Urbanism Next Center, which focuses on how autonomous vehicles, e-commerce, and the sharing economy will impact the form and function of cities.

In all cases, we share our expertise and experiences with scholars, policymakers, community leaders, and project partners. We further extend our impact via an annual Expert-in-Residence Program, SCI China visiting scholars program, study abroad course on redesigning cities for people on bicycle, and through our co-leadership of the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities Network (EPIC-N), which is transferring SCYP to universities and communities across the globe. Our work connects student passion, 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 that result in on-the-ground impact and expanded conversations for a community ready to transition to a more sustainable and livable future.

## **About City of Troutdale**

Troutdale is a dynamic suburban community in Multnomah County, situated on the eastern edge of the Portland metropolitan region and the western edge of the Columbia River Gorge. Settled in the late 1800s and incorporated in 1907, this “Gateway to the Gorge” is approximately six square miles in size with a population of nearly 17,000 residents. Almost 75 percent of that population is aged 18-64.

Troutdale’s median household income of \$72,188 exceeds the State of Oregon’s \$59,393. Troutdale’s neighbors include Wood Village and Fairview to the west, Gresham to the south, and unincorporated areas of Multnomah County to the east.

For the first part of the 20th century, the city remained a small village serving area farmers and company workers at nearby industrial facilities. Starting around 1970, Troutdale became a bedroom community in the region, with subdivisions and spurts of multi-family residential housing occurring. In the 1990s, efforts were made to improve the aesthetics of the community’s original core, contributing to an award-winning “Main Street” infill project that helped with placemaking. In the 2010s, the City positioned itself as a jobs center as it worked with stakeholders to transform a large superfund area to one of the region’s most attractive industrial centers – the Troutdale-Reynolds Industrial Park.

The principal transportation link between Troutdale and Portland is Interstate 84. The Union Pacific Railroad main line runs just north of Troutdale’s city center. The Troutdale area is the gateway to the famous Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area and Sandy River recreational areas, and its outdoor pursuits. Troutdale’s appealing and

beautiful natural setting, miles of trails, and parkland and conservation areas draw residents and visitors alike. The City’s pride in place is manifested through its monthly gatherings and annual events, ranging from “First Friday” art walks to the city’s long-standing Summerfest celebration each July. A dedicated art scene and an exciting culinary mix have made Troutdale an enviable destination and underscore the community’s quality of life. Troutdale is home to McMenamins Edgefield, one of Portland’s beloved venues for entertainment and hospitality.

In recent years, Troutdale has developed a robust economic development program. The city’s largest employers are Amazon and FedEx Ground, although the city also has numerous local and regional businesses that highlight unique assets within the area. Troutdale’s recent business-related efforts have focused on the City’s Town Center, where 12 “opportunity sites” have been identified for infill development that respects the small-town feel while offering support to the existing retail environment. The next 20 years promise to be an exciting time for a mature community to protect what’s loved and expand opportunities that contribute to Troutdale’s pride in place.

## Course Participants

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## **Executive Summary**

Graduate students in the University of Oregon's Community and Regional Planning program collaborated in three research groups to propose an affordable housing development on a parcel of land close to downtown Troutdale. The parcel is designated as Opportunity Site 7 (referred to as the Overlook Tract) in the City's recent Town Center Plan. Each proposal examined affordable housing from a specific topical lens: climate justice, racial justice, and housing instability. Due to the restrictions in place resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the three teams worked mainly in a virtual environment under the guidance of a faculty advisor.

Students presented three forward-thinking proposals for developing affordable housing on the site. The groups incorporated many similar elements while also distinguishing each proposal by introducing unique recommendations. Using a mixed-use design to support future residents emerged as a predominant theme of each proposal. Commercial space can serve as a place that provides community services and introduces vibrancy to the area when incorporated with housing space. Another similarity among each proposal was to improve Troutdale's downtown transportation network to better accommodate pedestrians and biking.

To conceptualize their proposals, students employed a variety of research methods, including quantitative analysis, content analysis, a literature review, case studies, and participating in a virtual design charette led by faculty at the University of Oregon. This

research period allowed each team to form a comprehensive understanding of Troutdale as a place and community.

Teams envisioned affordable housing with an understanding of the socioeconomic and demographic shifts within the context of local housing markets, with particular emphasis on living spaces for low-income individuals. Efforts were concentrated on the potential of the parcel to provide affordable housing, in addition to residual benefits for the future growth of the downtown area, a vital concern to Troutdale's city officials. Of the key recommendations from each group, notable features also include:

- Utilizing open space within the development for community-supportive activities, such as maintaining a community garden.
- Providing first-floor commercial space to introduce jobs and amenities to the area close to downtown Troutdale.
- Creating connections between existing built infrastructure and the site, in addition to downtown neighborhoods in Troutdale.
- Incorporating placemaking elements, such as public art and community centers, to reflect the cultural diversity of Troutdale's citizenry.

This report briefly presents the central themes, notable highlights, and key recommendations contained within each group's proposal for an affordable housing development on the Overlook Tract.

## Introduction

Troutdale is growing as new employers arrive and bring jobs to the area. The community is often seen as an alternative to the urban and potentially unaffordable housing options found in larger cities like Portland. The primary question for the City is: **how will it keep its city vibrant and economically healthy, while also remaining affordable and desirable for current and future residents seeking a small town feel?**

In 2017, property owner Frank Windust sold a 4.3-acre parcel to Multnomah County. This parcel is adjacent to downtown and borders SW 257th Drive to the east. Within Troutdale's Town Center Plan, the parcel is designated as one of 12 "opportunity sites" in the Town Center District. These opportunity sites exist as significant points of interest within the downtown area that the City wishes to develop within the district, shaping the growth of the Town Center. In partnership with SCYP, Troutdale enlisted the assistance of graduate students in the University of Oregon's Community and Regional Planning program.

Like many communities throughout the Portland metropolitan region, affordable housing in Troutdale is becoming harder to find. In 2019, ECONorthwest conducted a housing needs analysis on behalf of the city, projecting Troutdale's housing needs from 2020 to 2040. Among its primary conclusions were that Troutdale lacked an adequate supply of affordable housing units and diversity of structure

units among its housing stock. At the same time this analysis was performed, a recent regional housing bond measure provided the impetus for Multnomah County to consider affordable housing at the site.

This effort occurs in conjunction with Troutdale's Town Center Plan. The Plan outlines how the city can encourage economic and community development to support growth in the downtown area, and ensure that Troutdale's downtown is a place, "where families thrive, businesses prosper, and visitors return." A completed draft of the Town Center Plan was released in early 2021.

Troutdale sought guidance on how to best develop Opportunity Site 7 in a way that achieved its short-term housing needs and long-term development goals. Making connections between development proposals and the long-term goal of supporting Troutdale's downtown development manifested as a central focus of each student group's research and a core theme of this SCYP project.

## Methodology

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced unique challenges for students. Reduced public interaction limited opportunities for organizing group site visits and actively engaging with public stakeholders in the community. However, students took advantage of powerful mapping applications and utilized new online programs that aided in visually analyzing the site and mapping development concepts. Each of the half dozen methods students employed in their research process is briefly reviewed below.

### **PLANNING DOCUMENT REVIEW**

Each group examined a selection of Troutdale's planning documents, all of which were adopted or last revised between 2000 and as recent as 2020 (e.g., Town Center Plan: Executive Summary, 2020). The planning documents were informative of Troutdale's growth and what assets the city can leverage to achieve its growth objectives. Furthermore, researchers gained clarity about the parcel's zoning, intended use, and relationship with the surrounding community through this review process. An influential takeaway from the planning document review was the city's desire to maintain a "small-town" feel as it grappled both with growth pressures within its community and a desire to economically develop its downtown.

### **DATA COLLECTION**

An understanding of affordable housing was established through the identification of the socioeconomic trends reflected in the experience of living in Troutdale. Groups collected data about numerous socioeconomic indicators in Troutdale from the United

States Decennial Census (Census) and the American Community Survey (ACS). These indicators included racial demographics, growth rate of Latinx residents, median household incomes, households living in poverty, housing tenure status, distribution of age, and median gross rent. Each group's quantitative analysis of Troutdale's demographic and socioeconomic data revealed trends in the composition of the city's residents, housing conditions, as well as establishing context to compare Troutdale to other communities in Multnomah County. Students also identified opportunities to gain insight into the community's opinion toward housing and growth in the city. For example, the groups examined official meeting notes of the Troutdale Planning Commission to discover what conversations had occurred surrounding the topic of either housing or the opportunity site. Students also virtually attended planning commission meetings held in October and November of 2020. Remote communication included students interviews with Troutdale planning staff.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Each topical lens required reviews of academic literature. Groups drew from the experience of their advisors to identify influential and relevant contributions to the subject areas to inform members of the core issues surrounding the topic. For example, the Climate Justice group cited a 2011 report published by the Resource Innovation Group's Climate Leadership Initiative about the impacts of changing climate conditions on human migration patterns. The report noted that although the Willamette Valley may not experience severe effects from climate change, it is exactly this stability that makes the region attractive for people displaced due to climate change. For the research team, the key takeaway was that as natural disasters continue to displace people from their homes, municipalities in temperate areas, like the Willamette Valley, should prepare for a potential spike in new residents the city may be unprepared to accommodate.

## CASE STUDIES

Case studies provided examples of successful or ineffective attempts at supplying affordable housing within communities with similar demographics to Troutdale. In addition to identifying municipalities with a comparable population, case studies emphasized areas in need of housing, which resulted in the project progressing forward. Students selected cases both within Oregon and from other states. Analyzing these case studies introduced the research teams to how municipalities have attempted to reduce housing costs for their residents and expand options. Drawing from those examples, students selected lessons that were applicable to Opportunity Site 7.

## SITE ANALYSIS

Although the pandemic prevented organized group visits to Troutdale, some students chose to visit the Overlook Tract at their own discretion in observation of public health requirements. These visits contributed to the groups' knowledge of the built environment surrounding the land, the natural environment in which it resides, and exploration of downtown Troutdale. Many students noted the existing pedestrian infrastructure downtown that connects to the site and the parcel's proximity to the district.

FIG. 1  
Site photo



FIG. 2  
Site adjacencies



In addition to these isolated site visits, research teams utilized several online tools to analyze the parcel's existing opportunities and constraints. These tools included visual mapping applications, such as Google Earth, which allowed the groups to assess the distance between important amenities and the site's location.





FIG. 3  
Group 3 Overhead View of downtown Troutdale via Google Earth

Mining and analyzing GIS data to identify existing infrastructure and natural landforms further enhanced the students' analysis and informed the feasibility of their development concepts.

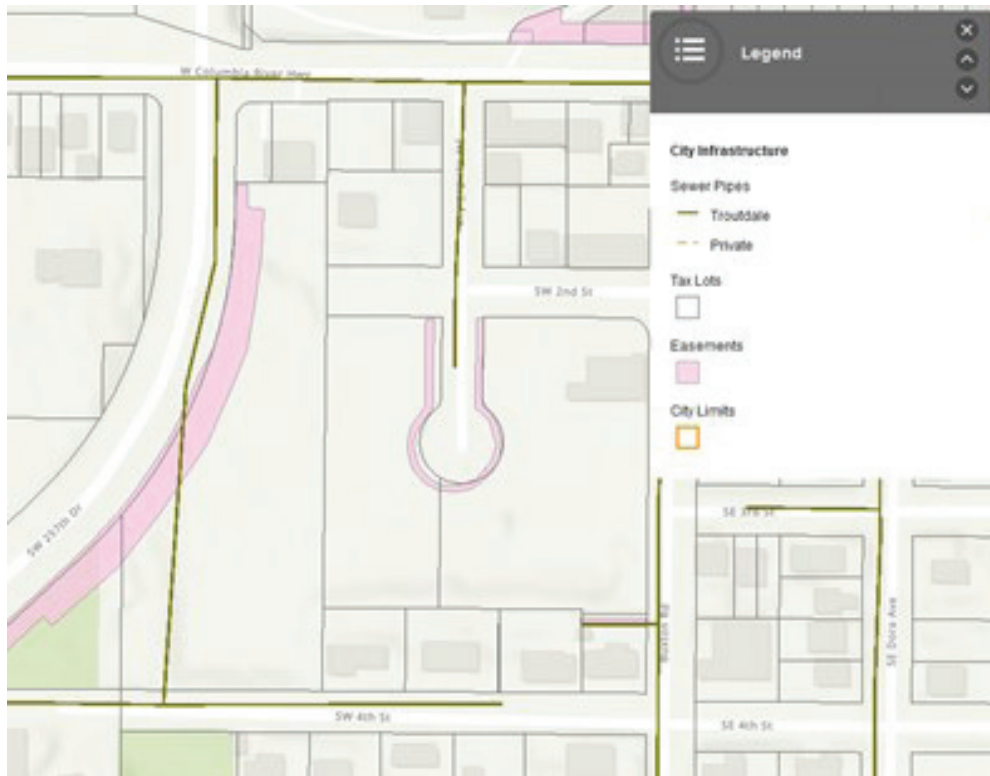


FIG. 4  
Group 2 Site Analysis

### VIRTUAL DESIGN CHARETTE

On November 2, 2020, the research teams participated in a virtual design charrette of the Overlook Tract. Led by University of Oregon instructor Kaarin Knudson, students used the online application Miro to markup initial design

concepts and map the key findings from each group's site analysis on a photographic overhead map of the site. The workshop allowed students to create an initial draft of their site proposal and receive feedback from faculty.

### NATURAL FEATURES TOPOGRAPHY, HYDROLOGY, VEGETATION

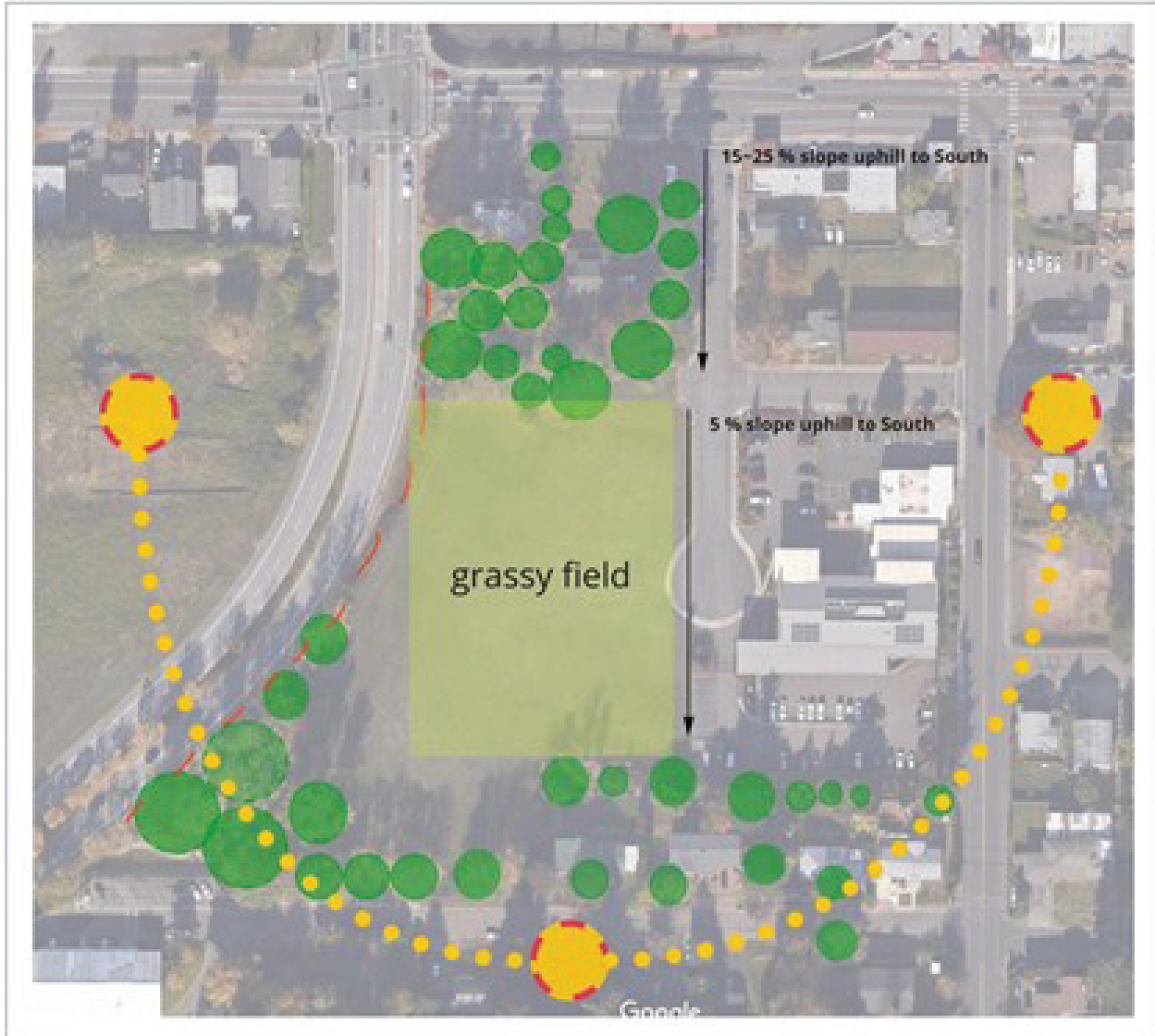


FIG. 5  
Design charrette natural features map



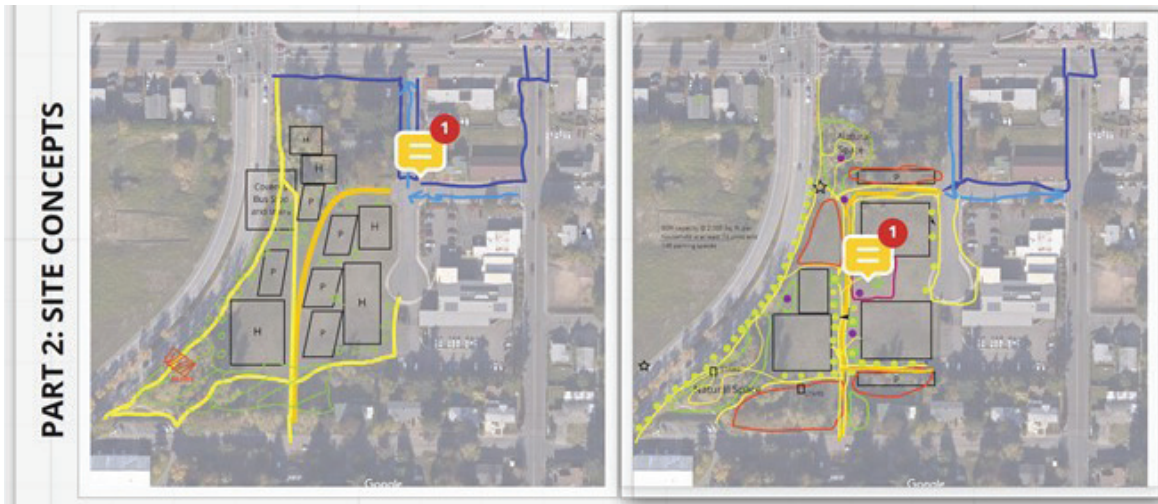


FIG. 6

Design charette site concepts map

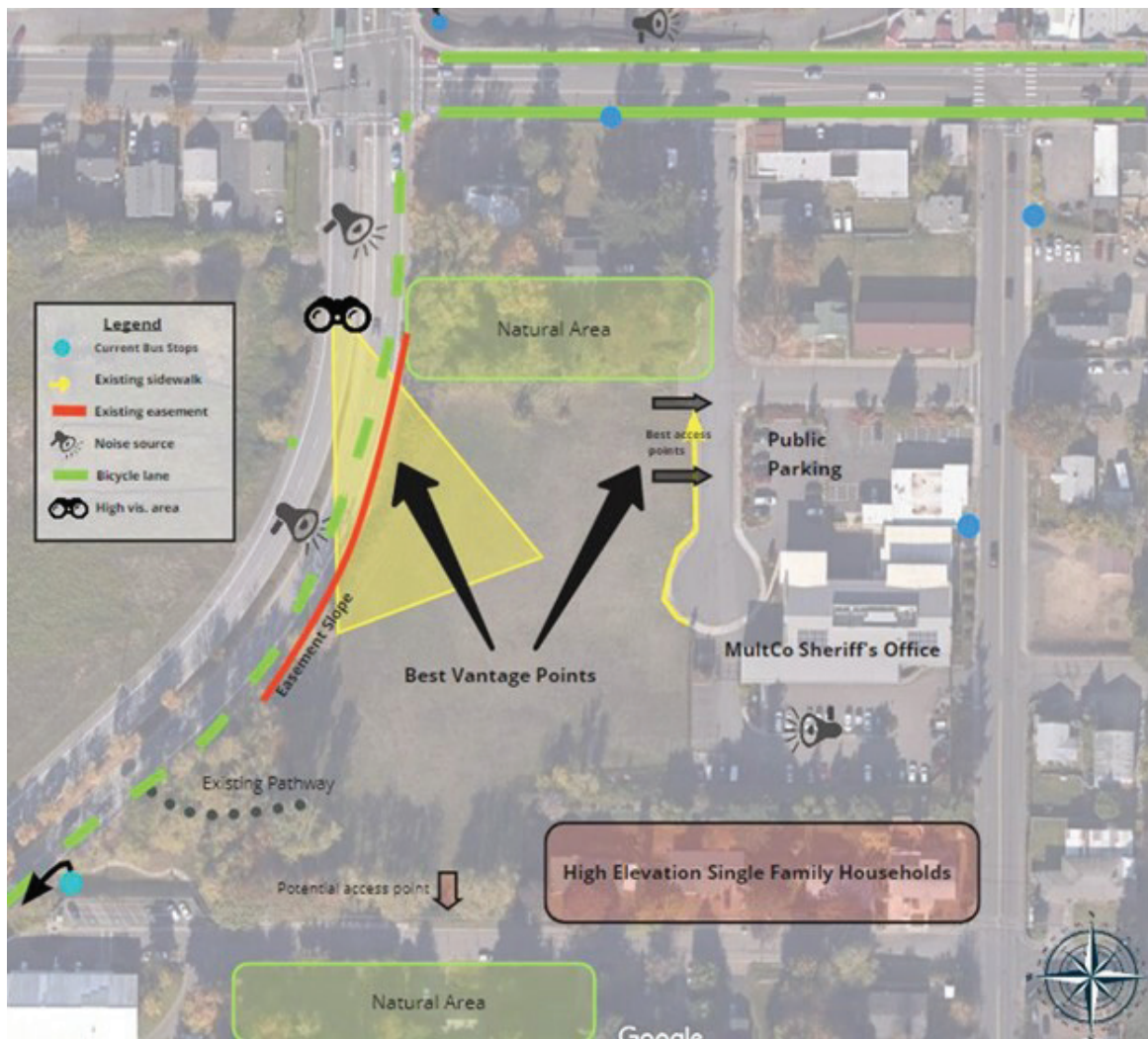


FIG. 7

Design charette site analysis



## The Overlook: Affordable Housing with a Climate Justice Lens in Troutdale

FIG. 8  
Group 1 Report Cover



Prepared By: Ariana Buchanan, Anisha Govindankutty, Jun Kim, Alli Langley, Steve Neumaier, and Anton Wilkins

### **OVERVIEW**

The group addressed affordable housing through a climate justice lens by proposing a mixed-use development characterized by permanent supportive housing. Given Troutdale's growing racial diversity, exploring the linkages between communities of color and climate justice drove the concepts presented in this proposal.

Much like economic inequality, the team framed their proposal recognizing how non-White residents were less likely to have access to areas with clean air, parks, preserved open space, and secure sources of healthy foods. Furthermore, environmental disasters such as wildfires continue to displace people from their homes and cause them to migrate to other communities, placing additional pressures on growth.

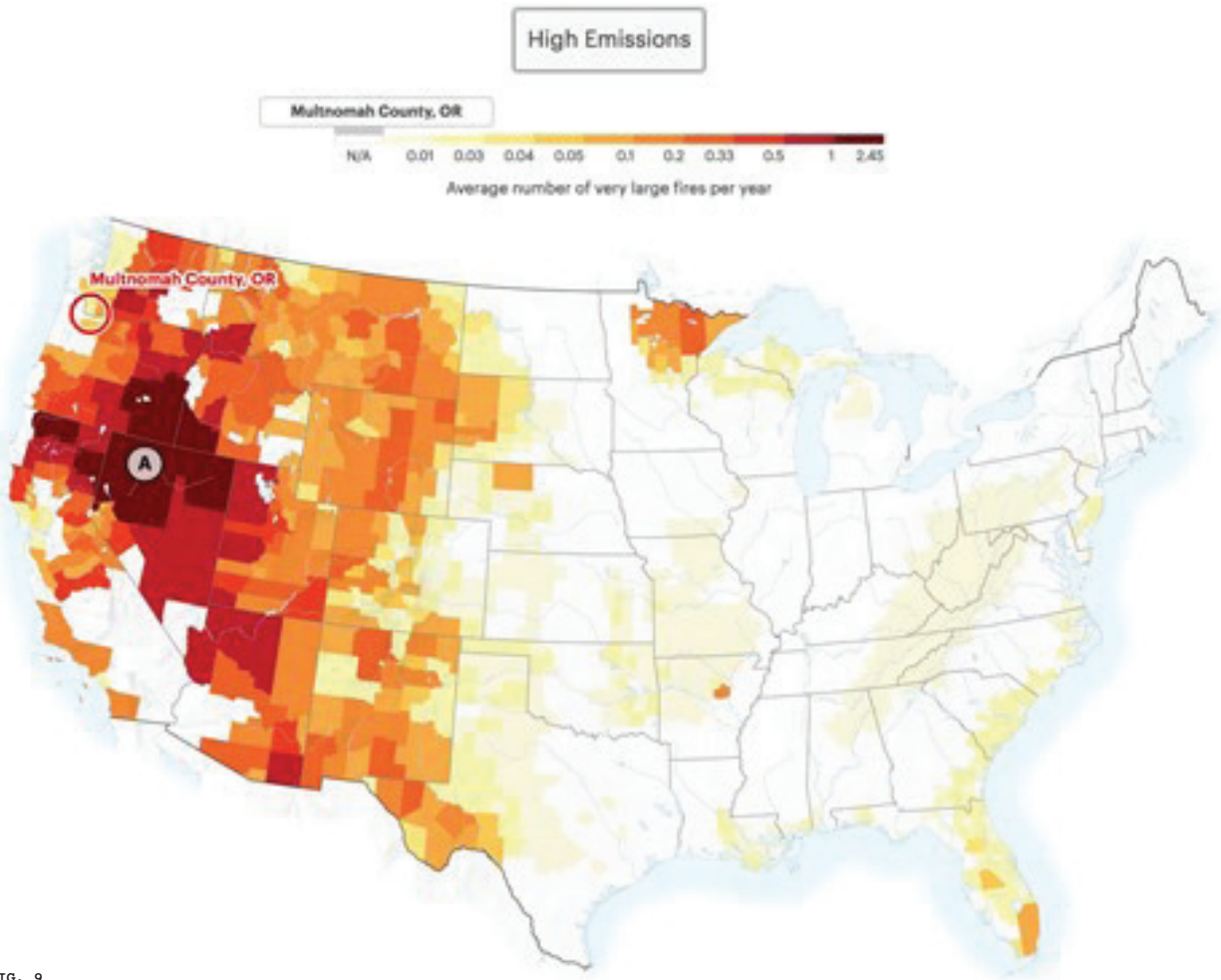


FIG. 9  
Projected Wildfires for Century Map

For the Overlook to be a successful affordable housing development that addresses climate justice, the student team framed their proposal around three central themes: community-centered, commercial mixed-use, and connected.

**THEMES**

**Community Centered**

The group’s proposal highlights how designing an affordable housing development with community-center needs in mind can create clusters of economic and social activity. The team’s proposal centered on achieving this objective in its proposal design, presenting this option as sparking development interest in

downtown. The Overlook proposal addresses community amenities that are challenging to reach from downtown without a vehicle, such as “a grocery store, employment center, and a college extension...”. As noted in the group’s report, “The Overlook’s indoor and outdoor community spaces integrate health and wellness, social support, economic development, and educational opportunities.”



FIG. 10  
Site Plan

### Commercial Mixed-Use

Opportunity Site 7's proximity to downtown makes it a prime candidate for improving mobility but reducing travel. Dependence on automobiles is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and directly influences climate change. To combat increasing reliance on automobiles that coincides with a housing development, cities must reduce the distance between its residents and their needs. The climate justice team capitalized on the opportunity to push a commercial mixed-use development that addressed affordable housing and incorporated amenities that filled gaps in what residents could find in downtown Troutdale. The proposal sought to bring business activity, jobs, and goods to the residents of the Overlook that was just a short walk or bike away.

### Connected

Climate justice requires that community organization and empowerment must fundamentally coincide with lessening its reliance on fossil fuels. Infrastructure must be built to accommodate alternative methods of transit such as walking, or biking. The team recognized that their affordable housing proposal must promote connectivity within the development while also enhancing the broader connectivity of spaces in downtown Troutdale. Incorporating design elements that promote greater pedestrian and bike spaces is a core principle reducing automotive use and environmental pollutants.





FIG. 11  
Reduce the Carbon Footprint

**PROPOSAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**Spaces for Community Use**

A notable element of the proposal includes the utilization of the development’s space for community use with respect to environmental issues. Outdoor gardens, a community center, and green, park areas throughout the development extend the benefits of residence beyond the costs of housing. These strategies

aim to close gaps that place pressure on affordable living in the city, notably nearby access to food. The development’s capacity for open areas and food-centered use of outdoor space can invite further activity from the downtown area, as the group notes, micro-food vendors would identify a potential market in the development as both a supplier and consumer.



FIG. 12  
Community Gardens Sketch

Deliberate reservation of space for community use yields environmental benefits. Open spaces allow residents to establish farm stands for selling produce grown onsite or market events that reflect a traditional “farmers market.” Providing a means for selling produce can reduce carbon emissions by offering a closer alternative source for residents closer to downtown compared to the city’s existing grocery stores. The group further emphasized that utilizing space in this fashion justifies the preservation of natural spaces within developments, protecting the health of the natural ecosystem integrated with the city.

### **Ground Floor Grocery Store and Other Businesses**

The team’s proposal calls for development of ground floor space for commercial firms, particularly with public serving activities in mind. This will help reduce the city’s carbon-footprint by decreasing the distance between residents and amenities. Of the preferred uses, the group cited filling the commercial spaces with a grocer, childcare provider, and small café. Adding these amenities as part of a mixed-use development brings services, needs, and jobs close to the residents on site, as well as reducing the travel time for residents of nearby neighborhoods.

FIG. 13  
Community Mixed-Use  
Sketch



Including a grocer as part of the development is especially critical from the climate justice perspective. It functions as a direct distributor of produce grown locally on site from the community gardens (mentioned in the previous section) as well as for local Troutdale agriculturalists. Decentralizing food providers throughout the city aims to reduce vehicle miles traveled and provides a local anchor business within walking distance of downtown.

**Pedestrianizing Space and Creating Bike Linkages**

Promoting walkable streets throughout neighborhoods and downtown is one method for building environmental resilience in a community. Supporting other modes of transport, especially bikes, further strengthens this resilience. Both elements are central in the team’s proposals for developing affordable housing with climate justice in mind.

The team recognized other growth areas in Troutdale ideal for pedestrian and bike-safe pathways, such as future

park development along the Sandy River via a proposed greenway on Second Street. To promote bike usage, part of the development would include secure bike storage facilities available for residents. The proposal also calls for extending sidewalks from the development south to connect to the pedestrian crosswalk across SW Fourth Street leading to the trail network in Helen Althaus City Park. This provides further linkages within Troutdale that promotes less carbon intensive modes of transport.



FIG. 14  
Bike Shop Repair

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Increase Bus Services**

The team researched how bus services could aid Troutdale’s efforts for securing affordable housing and promoting sustainability. To reduce the need for automotive ownership, the team first recommended increasing the frequency of routes for buses. Reviewing the options available for

riders, the team noted limited bus service on the weekend. Line 77 has multiple weekend options but Line 81 is more limited. Increasing bus services to account for these gaps would accommodate site residents whom lack access to a car. In support of increased service, the team recommended installing a new bus stop along SW 257 Drive.



FIG. 15  
Bus Route, Stop

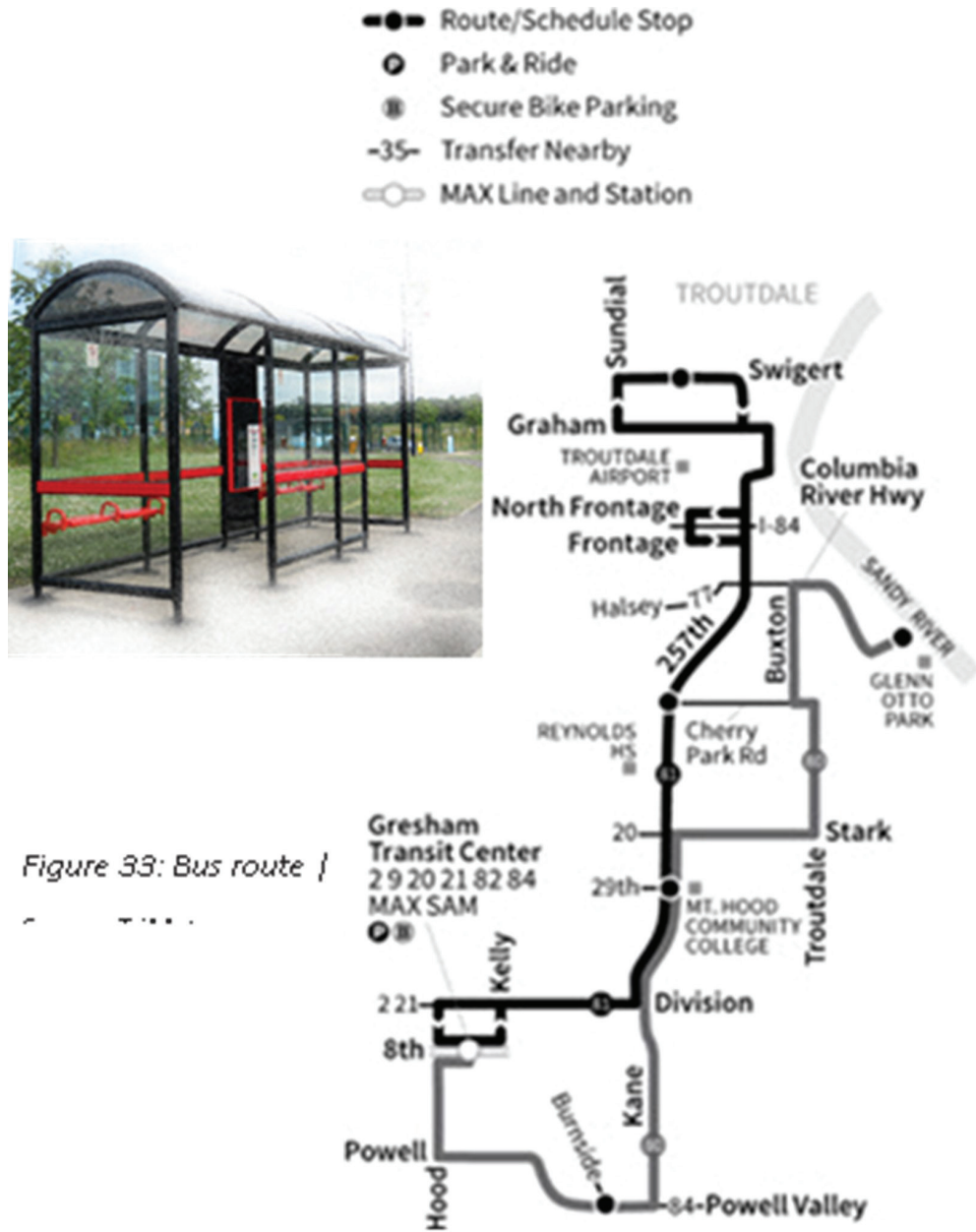


Figure 33: Bus route /

Furthermore, the team called for improvements to current bus stops. One tactic is to install coverings for each of Troutdale’s bus stops downtown. Citing a study conducted in Utah on bus ridership, the team noted how the study showed a doubling of ridership after bus stop shelter became available. This includes the existing two stops in downtown, as well as the proposed new stop along SW 257 Drive.

**Pursue Variance for Parking Requirements**

The students noted that the Troutdale zoning code requires two parking spaces for every dwelling unit, as well as an additional space for every three dwelling units. With a target of 110 affordable housing units, the zoning code would require installing 231 parking spaces on the site. This would reduce the amount of developable land

for housing and community spaces (the team estimated parking would consume 30 percent of the parcel's acreage), and incur added costs to development. These costs make securing affordable rents or prices for the units even more difficult.

The team noted that one strategy for reducing the development's required parking would be to provide public transit improvements as part of the development. Nevertheless, the students still felt utilizing the code alone would fail to adequately reduce the total number of parking spaces needed to preserve residential and communal space on the site. Therefore, the team recommended pursuing a variance for the parking requirements.

To justify this action, the team highlighted the underutilization of available parking adjacent to the parcel's east and north. Parking is available downtown and the team also suggested that an adjacent parcel across SW 257 Drive, Opportunity Site 6, could be developed in part or whole to provide more parking close to downtown. The development can benefit from fewer spaces by making land more communal, adding open spaces, preserving natural spaces, and reducing the overall cost of development.

### **Strategic and Deliberate Actions**

To implement the proposal and further climate justice in Troutdale, the team noted three strategic and deliberate actions the city could take.

First, the city should develop community engagement strategies related to climate justice issues,

both in the virtual and post-COVID environments. Highlighting the 2020 publication of a draft of the Oregon Climate Equity Blueprint, students pointed to the best practices presented in the report for deciding how to effectively allocate public resources and build trust with traditionally marginalized communities. The city should take a proactive approach to this effort, but also in partnership with community organizations that historically work with underrepresented communities.

Exploring such partnerships is a second strategic action the city can pursue. The team recognized the benefits Troutdale enjoys being connected to the larger Portland metropolitan region. Community organizations possess strong relationships to neighborhoods and districts throughout the region. Troutdale can leverage these community ties by engaging in partnerships with service organizations to support residents' needs at the Overlook.

Lastly, the team underscored several funding sources Troutdale can pursue to further support environmentally sustainable housing developments. Public sources of funding existed at all levels of government. For example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) collection of environmental justice (EJ) grants exists as one funding stream while partnering with Energy Trust of Oregon, a nonprofit utility serving the state and southwest Washington, could support renewable energy production while lowering utility costs for residents at the Overlook.



## The Overlook Tract: A Racial Equity Opportunity

FIG. 16  
Racial Justice Group  
Report Cover



FIG. 17  
Troutdale logo older version

Prepared By: Bobby Janowiak, Brittany Banna, Calvin Hoff, Jesse Noone, & Tu Tran

### OVERVIEW

The group addressed affordable housing through a racial justice lens by proposing a mixed-use development that reflected the culture of a racially diversifying community and the need for addressing clear racial inequities related to poverty and housing burden. Acknowledging the deep connection between Indigenous individuals and the Columbia River Valley and the unique contributions of non-White individuals over the region's development, the team introduces a diverse cultural history for the city to draw upon and recommends how this can be displayed in the built environment.

To expand the opportunity for pursuing racial equity in an affordable housing development, the student team presented a series of design recommendations, such as reserving ground space of one building as commercial space for resident artists. These recommendations address how to overcome barriers to improve quality of life, such as language or job training, so that the development is truly supportive of its residents. Ultimately, the team believes such a development can help ethnic and racial minority residents feel more integrated within the community and foster a stronger connection with modern Troutdale.



FIG. 18  
Site Concept Visual

**THEMES**

**Addressing Inequitable Poverty**

A core element of the group’s proposal is attracting the services that support residents in need of affordable housing. The group explored barriers in economic opportunity and

secure housing, noting that the city’s population is racially diversifying. Evident from students’ socioeconomic analysis is that poverty rates are noticeably higher among Troutdale’s non-White residents.

Race	% of Residents Below Poverty Level in Troutdale
Asian	11.9%
Black	45.6%
Hispanic/Latinx (White and non-White)	18.1%
Indigenous	41.6%
White (not Hispanic/Latinx)	8.9%

FIG. 19  
Poverty Rate Table for Troutdale  
Source: American Community Survey, 2018:5-Year Estimate Tables (student-generated calculation)

For example, the team displayed in its report that the poverty rate for Black residents was approximately 45 percent while approximately 41 percent among Indigenous individuals. Among Troutdale’s fastest growing non-White demographic, Latinx residents, the poverty rate in 2018 was approximately 18 percent. A central theme to the team’s proposal is the need for intervention to reduce this prevailing poverty rate among Troutdale’s non-White residents.

### **Cultural Expressions**

The group sought to incorporate elements that would contribute to the Overlook tract’s “sense of place.” Integrating cultural expressions into built environments is one method for achieving this outcome. To reflect Troutdale’s growing racial diversity, the team imagined how a vibrant cultural area would be look and feel.

Equally important to the team’s concept was establishing a connection between the Overlook tract and broader Troutdale community. The conceptualization of several of this group’s design elements related to buildings and purposes that could invite cultural exchanges between residents and their city neighbors.

FIG. 20  
York with Lewis and  
Clark Statue





### **Strategic Partnerships**

The idea that community issues require community solutions is a guiding principle in the team's emphasis for Troutdale to seek partnerships with local and regional organizations to bring supportive services to such a housing community. Allocating office or meeting space that community organizations require to provide their services to residents is a direct strategy the city can employ to promote racial equity within the community.

Several regional partners are identified within the report that engage specifically with minority communities. These organizations can be invaluable given their experience in serving the unique needs of racially diverse communities. The interactions between the organization's staff, volunteers, residents of the site, and of the wider Troutdale community adds vibrancy to the downtown area.

## **PROPOSAL HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Larger Units for Equitable Quality of Life**

A characteristic of the group's concept is to reserve 40 percent of the total housing units to be built as 3-to-5-bedroom units. Creating these units offers choices for larger families, a consistent demographic element of minority and low-income families the team noted in their analysis of ACS data. Furthermore, the orientation of these units expands the available

living space for each person, reducing the potential for overcrowding in the development. As the team notes, these spaces can accommodate various home uses, such as centralizing common living areas and kitchen spaces.

### **Expressions in Public Art and Open Space**

Like the climate justice research team, the racial justice student team emphasized incorporating public art into the built environment of the Overlook Tract's development. Citing the growing Latinx population in the city, the team highlighted multiple visual art forms, such as murals and sculptures, to express the diverse cultural legacies of Troutdale's communities.

In addition to permanent art, the spaces created by the development can also provide an area where local artists can market and sell their work. The exchange of cultural expression inherent in the selling of artist work, from creator to the public, opens another avenue for strengthening Troutdale's sense of community. As an example, the team chose the Artspace development in Minot, North Dakota. Designed as a live/work project, Artspace combines affordable housing for artists with real estate strategies to support the resident-artists' commercial success.

FIG. 21  
ARTSPACE in Minot, ND



As noted, providing a space for artists to display their work is valuable to facilitate cultural exchanges. Organizing a commercial space for artists to operate further advances racial equity through the benefits derived from employing the team's mixed-use design. Studies argue that strong artistic clusters (e.g., buildings, people, and art that support artistic engagement) can improve a community's economic resilience. Including a ground-floor community space for artists could also develop a small cultural and economic activity center within walking distance of downtown and the neighborhoods south of Helen Althaus City Park.

### **Leveraging Partnerships to Provide Public Services**

Taking a proactive role to form partnerships with community-serving organizations is a key element of the group's proposal. The team envisions

Troutdale leveraging these relationships to bring social services to the Overlook development to support its residents. These services include job training, access to bilingual translators, adult education, assistance with finances, and facilitating the formation of mutual aid groups.

Advancing racial justice and equity would benefit from partnerships formed with specific organizations that integrate this mission within their core values. The team identified potential partners that would promote racial equity in an affordable housing development. One organization includes the Portland-based Native American Youth & Family Center (NAYA), which is committed to growing cultural wealth and sustaining the traditions of Indigenous communities in Multnomah County by offering a collection of services that includes support for affordable housing development and preservation.



FIG. 22  
Housing Development  
PDX

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### Phased Implementation

In identifying the rent burdened conditions and disproportionate rates of poverty amongst various Troutdale households, the team calls for prioritizing time and resources on the construction of the buildings. The first phase targets completion of construction while coordinating with TriMet to upgrade transportation infrastructure surrounding the site. At the same time, engaging community service organizations and forming partnerships builds consensus for how to advance racial equity objectives.

Following this initial phase, the development would finalize the installation of housing infrastructure so that the units are resident-ready during a second phase. The community spaces occupying ground floor space would begin to be outfitted for use by community members and residents.

Once these operations take root, the development enters a final phase. Tenets of the final phase include residents, community groups, and the developers working cooperatively to plan the installation of permanent art on the property. In addition, Troutdale can look to acquire additional parcels of land to expand the total area of

the site and construct a community center. This incremental phasing guides development away from alleviating the housing burden. Instead, development is guided toward strengthening the sense of community near downtown, while also advancing racial equity.

### Seek a Variance for Parking Requirements

The team also recommended that a parking variance be issued for the development to reduce the number of parking spaces required by the Code. Installing sidewalks and bike lanes promotes the site's connectivity internally and supports residents that do not own a vehicle. Furthermore, reducing the need for parking translates into more available land the group proposes be used for community amenity buildings. Given the proximity of the development to downtown, and the surrounding street network, it is in the city's best interest to mitigate the increased traffic that constructing a housing subdivision on Opportunity Site 7 would generate. Promoting alternative, non-automotive forms of transport demonstrates the accessibility of downtown from this development.

**Natural Preservation and Property Acquisition**

Since there is a clear connection between Troutdale’s community identity and the natural environment, the team believed committing resources toward natural preservation goals is important for the city to support affordable housing near downtown. Identifying explicit goals in the city’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan, students advocated for advancing natural preservation efforts within the

city, promoting pedestrian and biking linkages through downtown.

Furthermore, the team recommended Troutdale seek to expand the parcel’s land area by acquiring a vacant commercial lot north of Opportunity Site 7. Ideally, this space could accommodate the community center included in the team’s development proposal as well as frame the natural green space existing between the center and residential buildings.

# Overlooking Troutdale: Stable and Affordable Housing for Opportunity Site 7

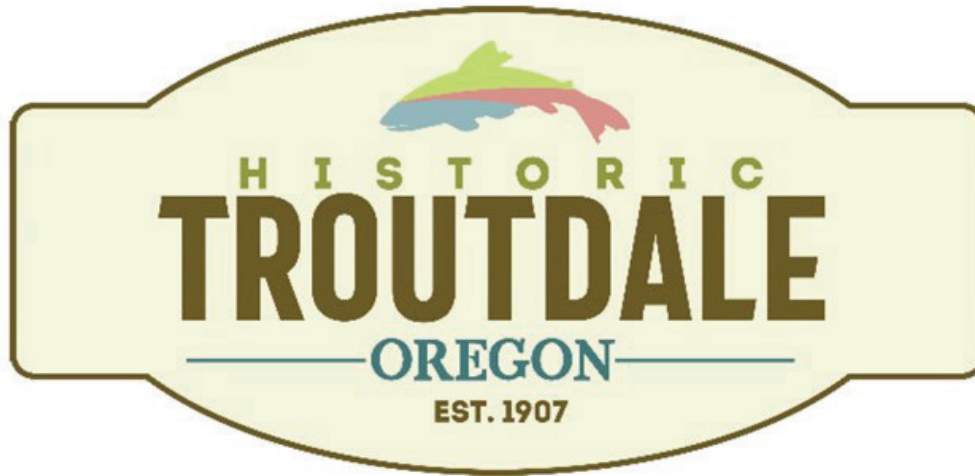


FIG. 23  
Group 2 Report Cover



Prepared By: Tanner Brereton, Brendan Irsfeld, Jeff Jorgenson, & Rick Zlystra

## OVERVIEW

The group’s proposal addressed housing instability by proposing a mixed-use development that accomplished two goals: expanding the number of available rental units in Troutdale and providing a housing development designed to keep rents affordable for residents. Based on Troutdale’s changing demographics, including working families with lower wage jobs and seniors who are becoming a growing portion of the city’s population, the group identified a need to provide more affordable choices. Creating more rental units also became an explicit goal of the proposal given the prevalence of rent-burdened households in Troutdale.

A combination of specific design element recommendations, improvements to Troutdale’s downtown transportation network, and promoting the need for public amenities are addressed in the proposal. Opportunity Site 7 can be developed to secure a high quality of life for hundreds of people based on the aforementioned tasks. Furthermore, the specific elements within the proposal account for the influence development could have on attracting businesses to downtown Troutdale. Drawing on the broad goals outlined in Troutdale’s Town Center Plan, Executive Summary, the group envisioned how an affordable housing solution could also spur residential and business growth downtown.



## THEMES

FIG. 24  
Wide View of the  
Housing Development  
Concept



### Housing Diversity

Students discovered that most homes in Troutdale’s housing stock are detached single-family residence structures. Yet, the percentage of households that owned their homes has declined. More city residents are renting their homes. Coupled with the changing age demographics within the population, new housing developments in the city must consider how to diversify options for residents.

This has important implications for existing Troutdale residents who seek to reduce their housing costs by moving to a more affordable unit and

for those looking to move into the city. Recent openings by large employers, including Amazon and FedEx, along with a city’s interest in the economic development of its downtown area will likely attract new residents as part of its growth. Those of lower income positions who wish to settle in Troutdale to reduce their commute will need affordable housing options. No matter their housing need, whether a simple one-bedroom for an individual or a two to three-bedroom unit for a family, this proposal strove to ensure there were options for every specific housing need.

### Community Presence

The parcel's proximity to downtown provides the city with an opportunity for enhancing its "small-town" community fabric while meeting its affordable housing needs. Drawing on the objectives of the Town Center Plan, the proposal, similar to the other groups, provides several amenities that support affordable living and promote interactions between residents

of the development and those living elsewhere in Troutdale.

Including land uses that complement housing strengthens the community on the site but also invites visitors from outside the neighborhood. Creating a small destination of community serving buildings within a residential community, occupied by working families and seniors, can jumpstart local and business activity downtown.



FIG. 25

Education Center from  
Bay Terrace Case Study

### Affordability

The group's proposal evaluated different ways to bring costs down for residents such as features that help reduce utility costs and incorporating services that further relieve financial pressures (e.g., daycare service on the property). Employing innovative rent structures can provide affordability on a monthly, and cash-flow sensitive, basis but can also function to build ownership opportunities for long-time residents. Lastly, the proposal calls for modifications that reduce auto-dependency, and therefore, each households' transportation costs.

### Mobility

The site's location between SW 257 Drive and streets near downtown Troutdale presents an opportunity to bring greater connectivity between the two spaces. From the group's analysis, several amenities were lacking from the immediate area, most notably a grocery option. The proximity of such essential amenities affects household spending on transportation, both for motorists and non-motorists. Therefore, students identified the need to enhance the pedestrian and biking environment surrounding the site and provide low-cost transportation options.

## **PROPOSAL HIGHLIGHTS**

### **Housing Options**

Using standard quantitative methods to analyze Troutdale's population, the group highlighted two faster growing age groups in the city: persons over 65 and persons between the ages of 25 and 44. Numerous housing market studies note how consumer preferences change as they progress through different life stages. The group projected the two fastest growing age groups are seniors and working-age residents based on current growth trends.

Troutdale's housing stock is predominantly single-family detached homes, a majority of which were built in the 1970s and beyond. As the city's age demographics become more balanced, a greater variety of housing types will be needed to accommodate for the range of incomes among those age groups. The solution to the group's development proposal was to include a diverse housing stock at Opportunity Site 7.

Of the 112 proposed units proposed, more than half provide 2 and 3-bedroom units while over 40 percent of the units are available as 1-bedroom units. This diversity provides housing choices for seniors, working families and individuals, and students. The group also believed that by providing a mixture of housing options within the development, this would encourage a mixture of resident types that would create vibrancy close to downtown.

### **Community Amenities**

The proposal incorporates a mixed-used approach to attract community services. A community center offers support for site's residents and Troutdale residents as a whole. One of its functions is as a meeting place between downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods. Adjacent to the community center, the group called for building a daycare that can provide childcare services for working families. Childcare service is expensive and further compromises housing stability for families.



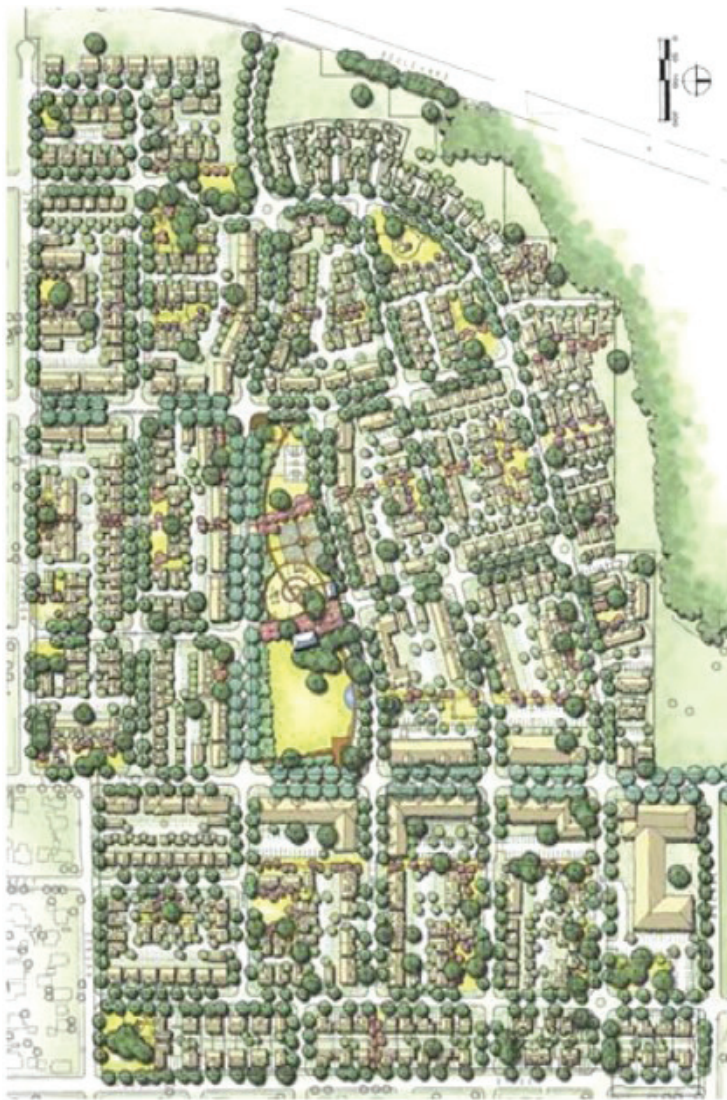


FIG. 26  
New Columbia  
Development, Portland

Building entrances and first-floor units face toward each other creating a communal space that facilitates encounters between residents.

Throughout the design, green space invites outdoor activity, both on the ground level and atop larger building rooftops.

Walkways and bike lanes contribute to a flow of movement for residents within the complex, leading downtown, or south into Helen Althaus Park. The complex can function as a destination for residents of the neighborhoods surrounding the Town Center to pass through on their way to visit downtown. Two, on-site bicycle storage units

provide residents with a secure place for their property and support residents who want the option of living without a car.

However, for many lower income residents, improving pedestrian and biking spaces alone will not overcome the amenities lacking in Troutdale's downtown. Installing a new bus stop, enhancing the frequency of bus services, and including a vanpool service are among the proposal elements aimed to increase the frequency for low-cost and reliable transport for residents that have alternative transit needs.

**Urban Design Elements**

One of the key components of the proposal is reducing maintenance costs for the development through strategic design elements. Given the site’s exposure to sunlight, installing rooftop solar panels can provide low-cost energy directly to the development’s residents. Open rooftop gardens provide opportunities for community engagement and cultivating a modest amount of local produce, which can be sold or distributed within the

development. Given the lack of a grocery stores in the downtown area, this is especially beneficial.

The layout of sidewalks and connections to bike lanes downtown add options for movement that also reduce automobile reliance. Developing the parcel with the necessary built infrastructure to support pedestrian and bike modes contributes to the creation of a corridor from 257th Drive, through the Overlook community, and into the vibrant downtown district.

FIG. 27  
 Concept Map for  
 Pedestrian Walkways;  
 Parking



**Transportation Modifications**

Troutdale’s pedestrian friendly downtown would benefit from bike friendly additions as another method of travel. The group’s proposal sought to incorporate bike friendly elements within the development to align with improvements for bike lanes laid out in Troutdale’s Transportation System Plan (TSP). Residents that can bike to

their job (e.g., the nearby McMenamins Edgefield) would benefit from the infrastructure improvements that make biking safer on the streets along with encouraging more residents to commute via bike. Students also proposed installing two bike storage facilities on-site for resident use. Transport solutions must also exist for residents who are unable to drive, bike,



or walk. In addition to Troutdale’s bus service, transportation can be made easier by bringing services directly to the development. To this end, students proposed including a vanpool service on-site that could provide low-cost transportation for residents that face accessibility challenges.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Expand Bus Service and Access**

In addition to improving biking downtown, a key recommendation of the group’s proposal was to improve the sidewalk along SW 257 Drive and install a covered bus stop serviced by the existing 81 Line. Coordinating with TriMet, the regional public transit provider, installing a bus stop accomplishes two goals.

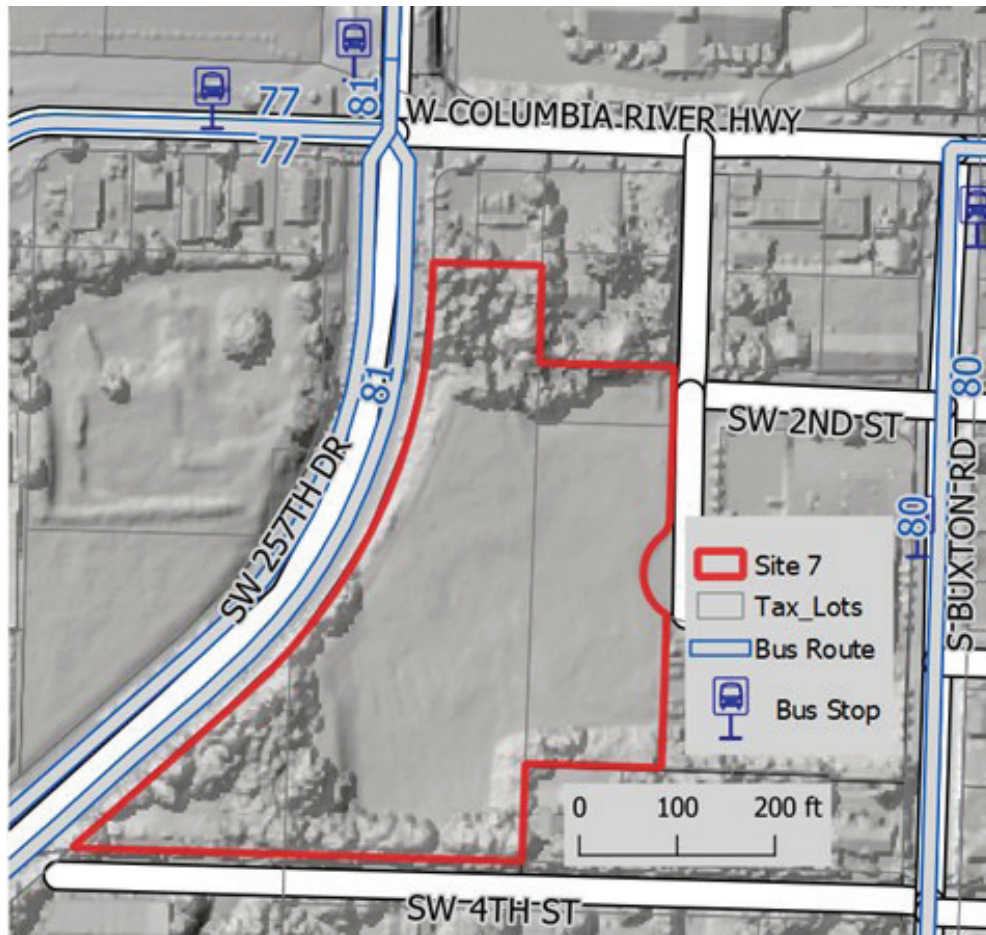


FIG. 28  
Calling Out Bus Lane  
Traffic, Appendix Image

First, the bus station provides another point of entry from other neighborhoods into downtown. The development includes stairs that link the road to the community above the graded slope. This benefits people seeking to travel downtown for shopping or entertainment as well as workers living at the residences.

Secondly, the bus stop serves to reduce the number of required parking spaces for the proposed total number of housing units. Students noted how Troutdale’s Development Code could allow for reductions in parking spaces if specific public transit actions were taken as part of development.

**Explore Rent to Own Programs**

As a percentage of total households, approximately 36 percent of residents in Troutdale rented according to 2018 ACS data. The recent trend shows fewer homeowners and a greater number of renters. While maximizing the number of homeownership households is not necessarily the goal, renters tend to be more vulnerable to economic downturns. Keeping housing affordable for these units represented a critical goal for providing a short-term and resilient solution.

One challenge with affordable housing is that, as a household’s economic situation improves, they can be disqualified for reduced rent. An increase in earnings from 60 percent to 63 percent of the area median income does not necessarily guarantee greater economic security. Thus, the mechanism used to provide affordable housing also serves as a disincentive for growing income.

Therefore, the group recommended the development explore programs that allow renters to transition toward homeownership. A portion of the units included in the development would provide this option. The group cited

two examples, used in Cleveland, Ohio, and Milwaukee, WI, as models for how such programs would function. In addition to providing one safeguard for renters to secure their housing and grow their wealth, it can also serve as an economic development strategy for the city to reduce its poverty, especially among its racial minority groups, where poverty rates noticeably exceed those of White residents.

**Use As A Catalyst for Downtown**

The group felt that an affordable housing development for Troutdale residents close to downtown would be the catalyst to spur the district’s development. The team advised viewing Opportunity Site 7 as a source for placing housing near downtown in relation to the uses of the other opportunity sites. This allows for reduced housing cost burden for residents and potential reinvestment in businesses located near the site. The Overlook Tract can advance the long-term aspect of the Town Center Plan to develop a vibrant city district that enjoys a strong connection to the residential community.

FIG. 29  
Visual Graphic of  
Troutdale Town Center  
Mind Map



## **Conclusion**

Taking into consideration Troutdale's current environment, each group stressed that the Overlook Tract was a great opportunity for the city to meet its housing needs. Developing new units on the parcel must be done strategically to ensure that costs are affordable, whether sold or rented. Troutdale should consider prioritizing the design of this development to provide for its residents most in need: a growing community of rent-burdened households, its communities of color, working families, and a growing population of seniors.

The groups concluded that meeting resident needs can be best achieved by employing a mixed-use design. Community centers support job training, support groups, language services, and childcare. These elements are often overlooked and can affect affordable living. Jobs can be created with the addition of a grocery store or local art center, which also provide space for commercial activity. This economic cluster of activity can then support the residents and the city.

Inviting more activity to both the development and downtown requires accessible space and freedom of movement. Within each proposal,

students called for transportation modifications to support pedestrian and bike safety downtown. A future mixed-use housing community can bridge neighborhoods south of the site with downtown via linked pathways to sidewalks and bike lanes within the development, and by joining the Overlook Tract with Helen Althaus City Park.

As a result of the groups' efforts, students believe that Troutdale can use the three lenses to consider Opportunity Site 7 as a space for more housing, with an emphasis on communities.



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