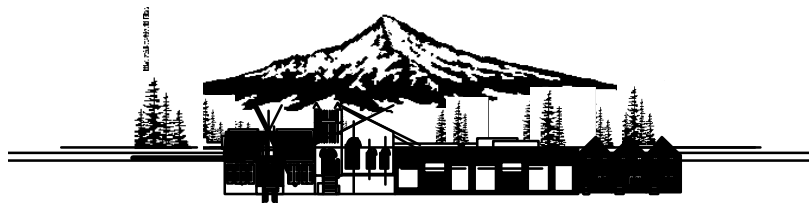
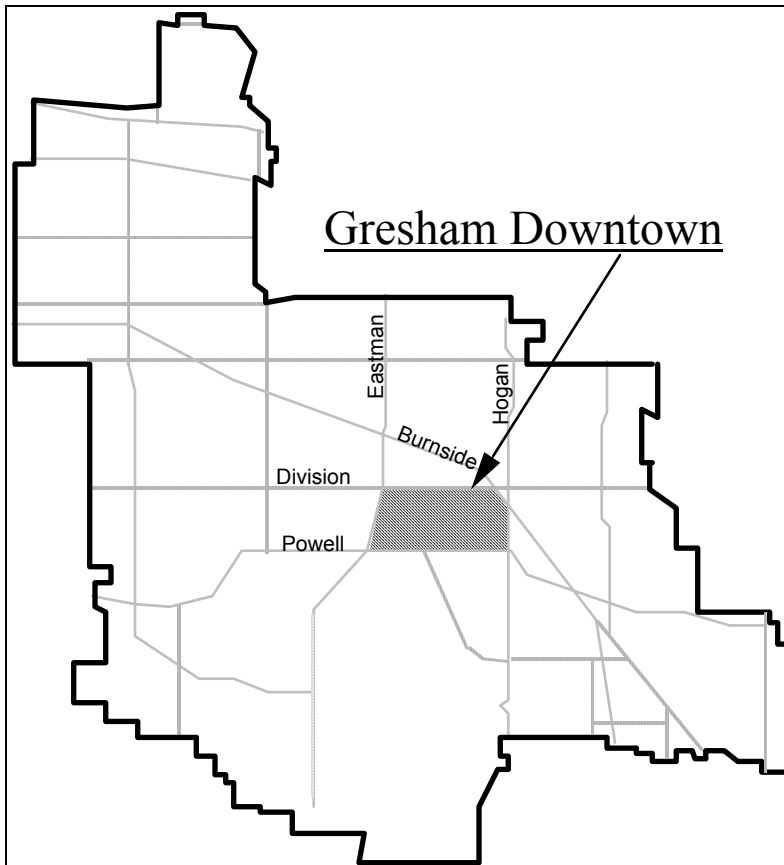


**APPENDIX 37**

(Added by Ord. 1354 adopted April 4, 1995; effective April 4, 1995)

**Gresham Downtown Plan**



City of Gresham  
Community Development Department  
April 1995

# Gresham Downtown Plan

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# Gresham Downtown Plan

## Introduction

In 1993 the Gresham City Council directed staff of the city’s Community Development Department to prepare a plan for the Gresham downtown area. The primary purpose of this plan was to carry out tasks contained in the Final Gresham 2020 Action Plan concerning the downtown area. Among the objectives of the 2020 Action Plan for downtown were the following:

- Provide for mixed-use zoning promoting residential use within commercial buildings;
- Plan for a light rail loop around the historic downtown core;
- Continue street improvements in the downtown core, incorporating undergrounding of utility lines, decorative lamp posts, wider sidewalks, and “bubbles” (curb extensions) at intersections;
- Provide for gateways at significant entrances to the downtown area;
- Acquire land and build parking structures to serve the downtown core;
- Establish architectural design guidelines and a design review committee for the downtown core;
- Improve pedestrian circulation throughout the downtown area, and connecting the core area with Main City Park;

Overall, the purpose of the 2020 Action Plan for the central Gresham area was to restore this area’s role as the heart and focus of activity for the entire community, visualized as follows:

By 2020 Gresham will have strengthened the downtown core by encouraging multi-story office buildings and off-street parking. Increased densities in the downtown area create a compact commercial core that supports expanded transit services, utilizes the area’s land base and services more efficiently, reduces the environmental impacts of development, and protects the surrounding neighborhoods from sprawl and conflicting uses. The area attracts shoppers and visitors from throughout the region, many of whom arrive and leave by convenient public transit.

In considering the directives of the Final Gresham 2020 Action Plan, and existing provisions of the city’s Community Development Plan for central Gresham, it became clear that an integrated, long-term land use plan would need to be prepared for downtown. This plan would deal primarily with issues raised in the 2020 Action Plan, but would also address related matters with the objective of laying the groundwork for

the successful conversion of the area from a district of outstanding potential to the vibrant, prosperous heart of the city envisioned in the 2020 Action Plan. Accordingly, the Gresham Downtown Plan includes proposals for new land use districts, new development standards, and a variety of new or upgraded public facilities. This plan also seeks to remove obstacles which may have discouraged or prevented the kind of growth which builds on the recent revival of the downtown core and takes advantage of the many unique attributes of this area. Implementation of the plan over the next 25 - 30 years will require the continuing involvement of the city, downtown-area property owners and residents, developers, interest groups such as the Gresham Downtown Development Association, other public agencies, and the entire citizenry of Gresham. This plan serves as evidence that the necessary involvement and commitment of these parties exist to bring about a lively, multi-faceted downtown which will be a valuable asset not only to Gresham, but will also serve as center of economic and cultural activity for the east side of the metropolitan region.

## **Process and Public Involvement**

The Gresham Downtown Plan evolved over an 18-month period beginning in the fall of 1993. Throughout that period, public involvement and comment on the plan was solicited through workshops, open houses, mailers, task force meetings, and periodic updates with the Planning Commission and the City Council.

This project began with a Downtown Design Charrette on August 31, 1993. This event was attended by downtown business owners, representatives of the City Council and the Planning Commission, several interested citizens, staff from Tri-Met, and representatives of the Gresham Downtown Development Association (GDDA). This charrette produced three alternative visions for the future of the downtown area which served as the basis for the initial phase of the project.

During the rest of that year city staff met monthly with the Planning Commission to discuss existing conditions within the downtown area and approaches for developing the plan. In late 1993 Metro began work on a Regional Design Images project, in which Peter Calthorpe Assoc. prepared prospective designs for mixed-use, transit-oriented districts in several locations around the region. One of these locations was central Gresham. City staff worked with Calthorpe Assoc. on this project, and adapted a number of elements from the Regional Design Images project for the Gresham Downtown Plan.

By January 1994 staff had prepared two alternative concept plans for the downtown area which were discussed and evaluated during a workshop meeting of the Planning Commission. These alternative concept plans were refined, and then presented to the public during an open house held in the Gresham Branch Library in February 1994. Approximately 700 downtown property owners were invited to this open house through a mass mailing. Input received from citizens at that open house resulted in development of a preferred concept plan the following month. The preferred plan was also accompanied by a draft set of development standards to be applied within the various sub-districts of the downtown area. These were initially discussed with the Planning Commission in April 1994. In order to ensure that the preferred concept plan and the draft development standards would be appropriate and workable, the Planning Commission appointed a task force to discuss and shape the details needed to prepare a final draft plan which would achieve the objectives set out at the beginning of this project. The Downtown Task Force included two Planning Commissioners and four representatives of GDDA. The task force met weekly with city staff through the summer of 1994. Meetings frequently included developers and real estate professionals from Gresham and around the region who discussed their own upcoming downtown projects, and offered suggestions for refining the preferred plan and standards.

By the end of August 1994 a final draft concept plan for the downtown was complete. It was presented to the public at another open house event in the Gresham Branch Library on September 1, 1994. As with the previous open house, this event was preceded by the mailing of some 700 notices to affected property owners within the downtown area. Both the draft plan and input received from the September 1 open house were presented and discussed with the Planning Commission and the City Council during a joint workshop held later that month. At the conclusion of that workshop the Council and the Commission directed staff to prepare the necessary language amending the Community Development Plan to adopt and implement the Gresham Downtown Plan. Prior to its adoption, the complete, draft Gresham Downtown Plan was considered formally by the Planning Commission and the City Council in public hearings.

## **Guiding Principles**

Early in the downtown planning process, the objectives and purposes of the 2020 Action Plan were supplemented by additional principles to guide the design of mixed-use, neo-traditional neighborhoods and transit-oriented developments. These additional guiding principles were refined as drafts of the Downtown Plan were prepared, circulated for review, and revised. They are summarized below:

1. Mix residential and employment use with shopping and public facilities.
2. Encourage the most intensive uses close to transit stations:
  - High-density housing (up to 60 dwelling units per acre)
  - Moderate-density housing (e. g. 30 dwelling units per acre)
  - Retail Commercial
  - Office/Employment
3. Provide multiple, direct street connections to transit stops and shopping.
4. Design for pedestrians, without excluding the car.
5. Develop design guidelines for important streets and buildings.
6. Permit and encourage the mixing of residential and commercial uses in all areas.
7. Intensify development within walking distance (one-quarter mile) of MAX stations, especially around Central Station and a proposed new station on Main. Allow for reduced densities in areas more remote from MAX stations.
8. Encourage a wide variety of moderate- and high-density housing types, including row houses, garden apartments, condominiums, carriage houses, and podium apartments.
9. Seek an average density of at least 15 dwelling units per acre in new residential developments to support economic transit usage.

10. Where possible, encourage similar land use types and building scales to face each other across streets.
11. Preserve and promote the existing historic core, its notable design characteristics, and its commercial mix, dominated by small-scale, specialty retail and offices. Allow for enlargement of this traditional store-front environment throughout the central core area.
12. Except for auto-oriented commercial uses around the perimeter of the downtown area, seek a general inward orientation for the remainder of the downtown, with the following sub-areas maintaining distinctive, complementary characteristics:
  - The historic downtown core.
  - The Central Station area.
  - The Cleveland Station area.
  - A new MAX station at N. Main
  - The Ava Avenue neighborhood
13. Acknowledge existing development patterns around the perimeter of the downtown area. Existing auto-oriented commercial uses on the perimeter will continue to serve passing traffic on adjacent arterials. Through re-development, encourage existing and new businesses on the perimeter to move closer to streets, and to also open to adjacent residential neighborhoods.
14. Encourage re-development for more intensive commercial, residential, and mixed-use development throughout the downtown area, while preserving the traditional store-front character of the historic core.
15. Create a "pedestrian-friendly" environment throughout the downtown by:
  - Encouraging all new buildings to be placed close to abutting sidewalks and streets, with parking placed behind, under, or to the side of buildings. The primary orientation of buildings should be to the street, rather than to parking lots.
  - Prohibiting blank walls where buildings abut public streets, and requiring door and window openings or other features to enhance attractiveness and pedestrian interest at ground level.
  - Regulating the size, placement, and appearance of parking lots.
16. Extend key streets to enhance pedestrian and vehicular circulation, to break up over-sized blocks, to increase street frontage, and to extend the existing small-block grid beyond the historic core area.
17. Include a "town square" public space to serve as a focal point for the downtown area. Design this space to be suitable for community-scale and regional events, such as a farmers market, and outdoor performances, promotional events, and displays. The town square should be convenient to MAX and close to the historic core.

18. Provide for gateway treatments at various entrances to the downtown area to define the boundaries of downtown and to provide a greater sense of identity.
19. Provide for neighborhood or pocket parks to serve downtown residents. These parks should be roughly .5-1 acre in size, and be located within easy walking distance of all residential units.

## **Downtown Plan Area**

The boundaries of the Gresham Downtown Plan area are shown in Figure 1. This area encompasses all of the Historic Downtown and the “High-Density Core,” as identified in the 2020 Action Plan. It also includes additional territory to the east, taking in a total of 333 acres.

Among the factors which led to this delineation of the downtown area, two were paramount. First, there are four major and principal arterial streets which border this area: Eastman Parkway on the west, Division St. on the north, Hogan Rd. on the east, and Powell Blvd. on the south. These are all five-lane arterials, with widths of 80 - 90 feet, carrying high volumes of traffic. Overall, they form effective visual and functional barriers between the downtown area and adjacent neighborhoods. They also define an area within which pedestrian movement is convenient and safe, with the possibility of being further enhanced in the future. Properties along the south side of Powell Blvd. have been included in the plan area boundaries because of Powell’s strong relationship to the historic downtown core, and because of the existing pattern of mostly small to medium-scale commercial uses already in place on both sides of Powell Blvd. between Eastman Parkway and Hogan Rd.

The second factor which led to this delineation of the downtown plan area is the presence of the two existing, central area light rail transit stations - Central Station and Cleveland Station. There is also the potential for a future third station, on the MAX line adjacent to N. Main Ave. These stations present very important opportunities for future development which is more oriented to transit than to streets and the automobile. Access to transit is a crucial element of any attempt to create a thriving mixed-use district where pedestrian movement is encouraged as an alternative to reliance on the automobile. Virtually all of the downtown plan area lies within convenient walking distance (one-quarter mile) of these light rail stations and the City Hall Station, which lies just outside the boundaries of this area.

Given these boundaries, there is adequate space to encourage the enlargement of assets such as the downtown core, and abundant opportunity for the conversion of vacant and under-utilized properties near the light rail stations into more intensive uses which more fully fulfill the potential of the district.

## **Context of Downtown**

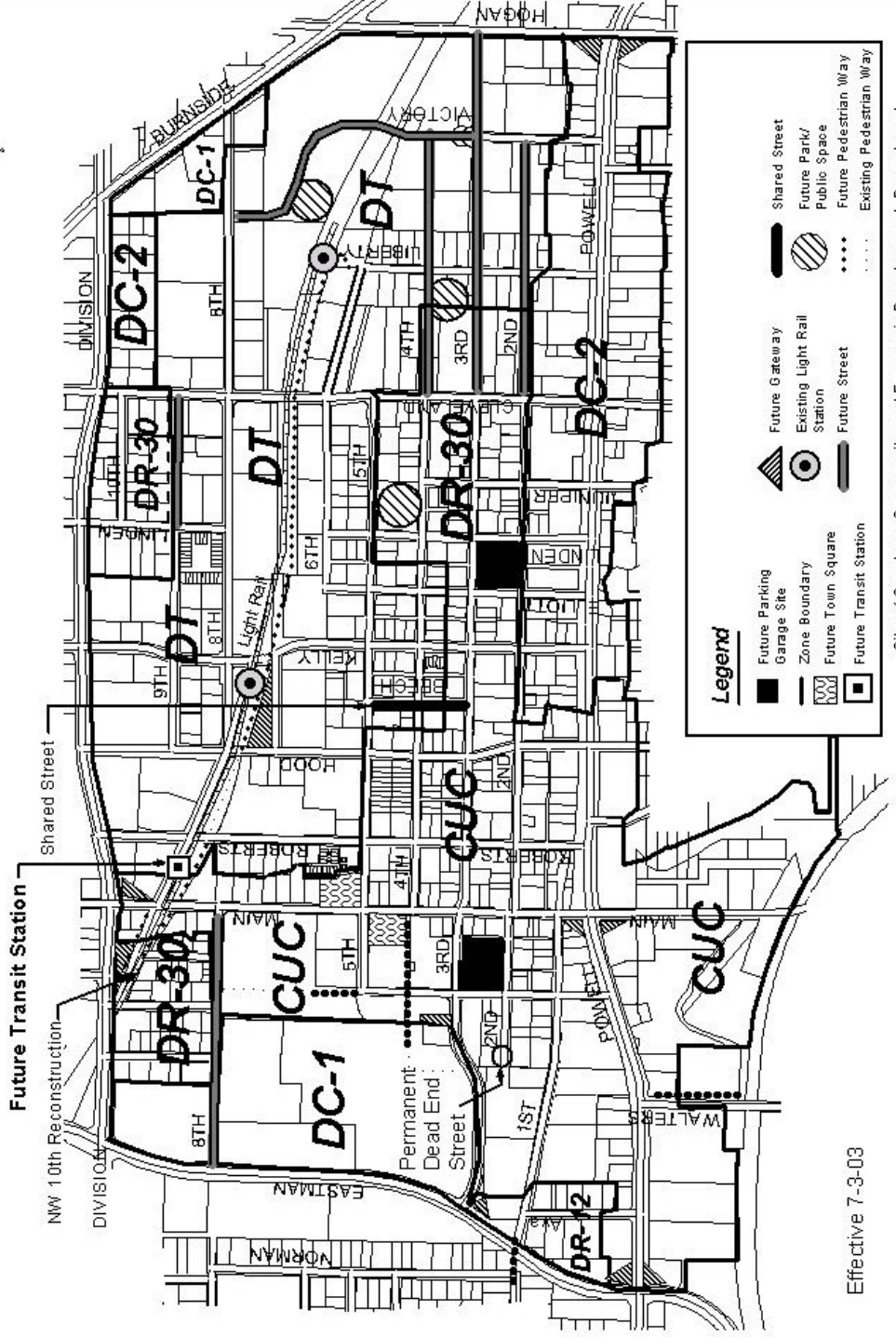
This Gresham Downtown Plan is the latest in a series of planning efforts for this area, going back many years. Each plan has started with conditions as they existed at that time, and attempted to build on strengths to assure the future of this unique district within the city. Previous plans have focused on the downtown core, where the oldest and most dense concentrations of retail have been found.

A 1966 plan prepared for the city envisioned the Gresham Town Fair shopping center (built in 1987) in its actual location, and proposed the extension of a number of downtown streets to improve both pedestrian and vehicular circulation. Reflecting the times, this plan also placed a heavy emphasis on abundant off-



Figure 1

# The Gresham Downtown Plan



**Legend**

- Future Parking Garage Site
- Zone Boundary
- Future Town Square
- Future Transit Station
- Future Gateway
- Existing Light Rail Station
- Future Street
- Shared Street
- Future Park/Public Space
- Future Pedestrian Way
- Existing Pedestrian Way

Effective 7-3-03

City of Gresham Community and Economic Development Department



street parking and other improvements assuming the continued dominance of the automobile as a means of arriving at, and traveling within, the downtown. Residential uses were to be segregated from commercial uses, although higher residential densities were proposed to the east and north of the historic core.

More recently, an Urban Renewal Plan was prepared for the downtown area in 1987. This was primarily an economic development plan which would have provided a detailed program, with funding sources, to carry out the plan. The boundaries of this plan area extended eastward beyond the historic core to include land adjacent to the light rail tracks all the way to Hogan Rd. It did not include Powell Blvd. frontage east of NE Kelly Ave. or the largely residential blocks to the north of Powell in that area. The 1987 Urban Renewal Plan did take into account the new light rail transit stations. It also included among its objectives providing for a mix of uses and more intense land utilization, with better pedestrian linkages and street amenities, such as street trees, wider sidewalks, and benches. Because it would have created an urban renewal district, designating certain property tax revenues to fund downtown improvements, this plan was referred to the voters of Gresham before being enacted. It was defeated in an election held during the spring of 1987.

The comprehensive plan for the entire city was updated through the periodic review process in 1988. Although this planning project brought about significant changes in zoning and future development planning elsewhere in the city, it included very few changes to the pattern of districts and permitted uses already existing in the downtown area. This pattern included commercial zoning in the core area, in the Gresham Town Fair area, and along Powell Blvd. It also called for transit-oriented development along the light rail line, and maintained the low-density zoning of several residential neighborhoods in the downtown area. Except for the Central Urban Core (CUC) and Transit Development (TD) districts, the 1988 update of the comprehensive plan preserved in the downtown area the traditional segregation of commercial, high-density residential, and low-density residential uses. Mixed-use developments (residential and commercial) have been permitted in the CUC and TD districts, but in the other zones of the downtown area these types of developments have not been permitted, or have been permitted only at a very modest scale.

Although the 1987 Urban Renewal Plan for the downtown was never implemented, it did lead to several significant improvements which have helped to revitalize the core area and brought about increased interest both in the downtown area and in preparing a new plan for the area. In 1990, the city carried out a \$1 million project to reconstruct N. Main Ave. from Powell Blvd. to 5th St. Among other features, this project included undergrounding of overhead utility lines, construction of wider sidewalks, with curb extensions at the intersections, and placement of street trees, benches, and pedestrian-scale street lamps. This project was followed in 1993-94 with reconstruction of N. Roberts Ave. from Powell Blvd. to NE 5th St., as well as NE 3rd, 4th, and 5th Streets between Main Ave. and Roberts Ave. These improvements have reinforced the image of the downtown core as an urban village, making it a more attractive area for business and shoppers, and increasing pedestrian comfort in the area.

## **Existing Land Uses**

The area encompassed by the Gresham Downtown Plan comprises a total of 333 acres. The net acreage, i. e. the amount of land available for development, amounts to 273 acres. The difference between these two figures consists of public right-of-way for streets and the light rail line. As a proportion of total city acreage, the downtown plan area accounts for 2.3%. It is located very near the geographic center of Gresham.

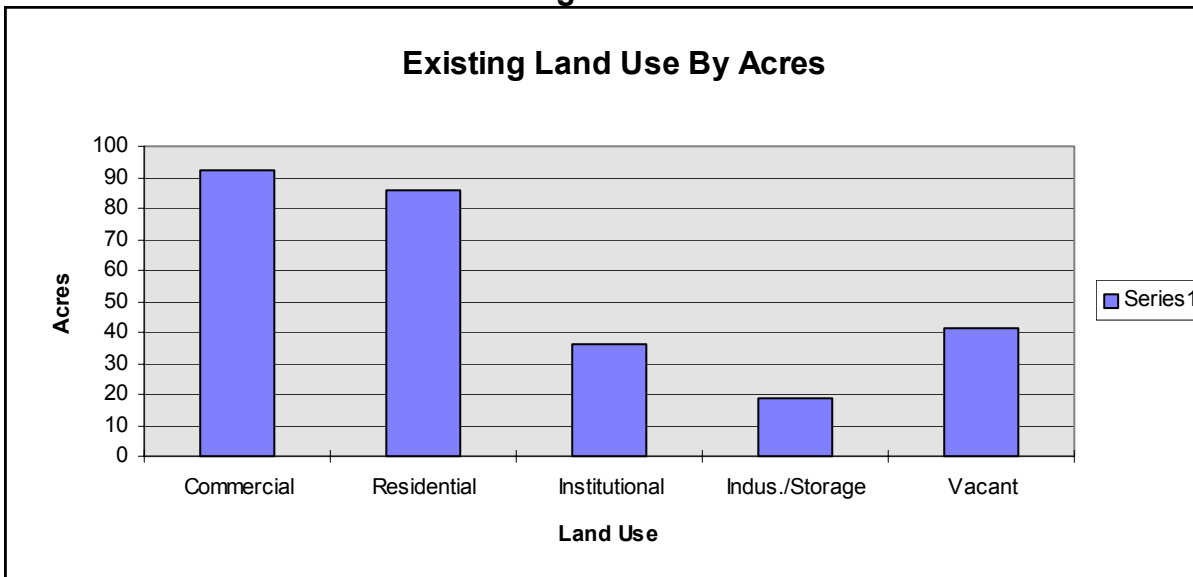
Figure 2  
Current Land Use

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There is a wide variety of land uses existing within the plan area, including, retail and service commercial, multi-family residential, single-family residential, warehousing, light industry, and public/institutional uses. (See Figure 2.) About 40 acres (15%) of the area are considered vacant. There are additional properties which can be considered under-utilized, i. e. a structure is present, but one-half acre or more of the site is undeveloped. Land area in commercial use is approximately 95 acres, or 35% of the total. Most of this acreage is concentrated in the core area, centered on N. Main Ave., and on downtown perimeter sites, such as the Gresham Town Fair on Eastman Parkway, and much of the Powell Blvd. frontage from Miller Ave. to Hogan Rd. Residential land use makes up about 85 acres, or 33% of the total. Most of the existing residential inventory in the downtown area is made up of attached moderate-density units, in the range of 12 - 18 units per acre. There is also a significant element of low-density, single-family detached housing. The current ratio of single-family dwellings to multi-family dwellings in the downtown area is 33:67, which is very nearly the reverse of the city-wide ratio of single-family to multi-family dwellings. Of the nearly 600 existing, downtown-area dwelling units, about 200 are single-family units.

A mixture of institutional and light industrial/storage uses make up the remaining 17% of existing land uses in the downtown area. Major institutional uses include East Hill Church, the Gresham Branch Library, St. Henry Catholic Church, the Cleveland Station park and ride lot, and the PGE maintenance yard and substation at the north end of NE Victory Ave. Some of the remaining industrial/storage uses are remnants of the food processing and packing plants which occupied the now mostly-vacant properties along NE 8th St. and the light rail line through the 1960s. More recently, a mini-storage development was built on a 2.8-acre site on the north side of Powell Blvd., near NE Liberty Ave.

**Figure 3**



Several prominent patterns begin to emerge when the distribution of these land use types is considered. Perhaps most apparent is the position of the historic downtown core. The origins of this traditional commercial core go back to the 1880s, when a log store was built at the intersection of what is now the intersection of Main Ave. and Powell Blvd. Other businesses and a post office appeared in subsequent years. By the 1930s the string of commercial buildings (intermingled with houses) which now runs along Main Ave. from Powell Blvd. to 5th St. was in place. By the 1950s, when Gresham's population was still

only 3,500, the core had enlarged to nearly its current size, extending from NW Miller Ave. to NE Hood Ave., and from Powell Blvd. to 5th St. There also were commercial uses lining both sides of Powell, from NW Miller Ave. to NE Cleveland Ave. Many of these businesses on the south side of Powell Blvd. were removed when the state widened Powell to its current size in the early 1970s.

Due to its long history, the core is distinctive in its appearance and function. It is still characterized by traditional “storefront” buildings placed close to the sidewalk. These buildings are occupied by a wide variety of small retail shops, restaurants, and service businesses. A number of the more recent buildings in the core, such as the First Interstate Bank Building, at NE 2nd St. and Roberts Ave., and the Bank of America building at E. Powell Blvd. and NE Roberts Ave., have reinforced the village downtown appearance of the core. The scale and placement of these buildings, along with street furniture, wide sidewalks, and relatively narrow streets, combine to create an environment which is attractive, interesting, safe, and pedestrian-friendly. These attributes have contributed significantly to the recent revival of the historic downtown core.

Contrasting with the compact pedestrian-orientation of the core, a pattern of auto-oriented commercial uses can be found along much of the perimeter of the downtown area. These uses are especially dominant along the Eastman Parkway frontage (Gresham Town Fair), along much of Powell Blvd. between Hood Ave. and Hogan Rd., and along Hogan Rd. and Burnside Rd. from Powell Blvd. to Division St.. Most businesses in these parts of the downtown perimeter rely heavily on direct, convenient access by car from the abutting arterial street. Each of these businesses has its own parking lot, often located in front of the building, which may be placed far back from the edge of the street. There is relatively little interaction between these auto-oriented commercial uses and other segments of the downtown area, such as the historic core.

Along much of the light rail line, which cuts diagonally through the downtown area, the dominant pattern is one of storage buildings, light industrial uses, vacant property, and utility yards (for example, GTE and PGE maintenance yards). Much of this part of the downtown area was developed originally in food processing and cold storage plants, which took in berries from the countryside and shipped them out by the rail corridor which now accommodates MAX. Over the last thirty years these uses have declined, and many of the buildings have been torn down or converted to other storage or low-intensity uses. The presence of light rail transit, and the existing Central and Cleveland stations, have recently sparked interest in redevelopment of these under-utilized properties.

Much of the interior of the downtown area is developed for residential use. The blocks bounded by NE Kelly Ave., NE Cleveland Ave., NE 2nd St. and NE 6th St. were platted for single-family residential use, as was the neighborhood west of Main Ave. and north of NE 8th St. This area also includes a large number of vacant lots ranging in size from 5,000 to roughly one-half acre. Other pockets of low-density residential uses are found on NE 10th St. between NE Linden Ave. and NE Cleveland Ave., along NE Liberty St. north of Powell Blvd., and on NW Ava Ave. north of Powell. Many of the lots in these areas are still occupied by single-family dwellings, ranging in age from 50 - 80 years. In the last 25 years, however some apartment and duplex dwellings have infiltrated most of these neighborhoods.

## **Current Land Use Districts and Development Standards**

Existing land use district designations applying within the boundaries of the Gresham Downtown Plan include the following:

CUC	-Central Urban Core
TD	-Transit Development
HDR-60	-High-Density Residential
MDR-24	-Moderate-Density Residential
GC	-General Commercial
EC	-Extensive Commercial
OFR	-Office/Residential
LDR-7	-Low-Density Residential

The locations of these land use districts are shown on Figure 4. Of these existing districts, only the CUC and TD districts are considered mixed-use districts. The HDR-60 and OFR districts allow for very limited combinations of residential and commercial uses. The other districts permit either residential or commercial uses, but not both. These limitations conflict with the objective of converting the entire downtown area into a mixed-use district. In addition, several of the existing districts permit and encourage uses which are incompatible with pedestrian-friendly, transit-supportive areas. The LDR-7 district, for example, permits detached single-family dwellings at a maximum density of less than 5 units per acre. Residential neighborhoods with densities of less than 15 units per acre are generally not considered transit-supportive, since transit service becomes economically infeasible at very low densities. Similarly, the EC district permits storage and warehousing uses, plus a wide variety of land-extensive commercial uses where unlimited site areas may be dedicated to outdoor storage or display of merchandise. These are uses which detract from the creation of pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive neighborhoods; they are typically auto-oriented and result in large site areas which neither stimulate pedestrian interest nor generate pedestrian activity.

Although the existing CUC and TD districts do permit mixed-use developments, as proposed in the Gresham Downtown Plan, there are standards applying within these districts which may work to discourage mixed-use projects and a greater variety of commercial uses. Examples of such standards are a minimum lot size requirement of 5,000 sq. ft. in TD, and a minimum lot size requirement of 1,600 sq. ft. in the CUC district. Minimum lot size requirements restrict flexibility in designing and developing uses which may be suitable in the downtown area. In addition, both the CUC and TD districts set a nominal maximum floor area ratio of 1 to 1. The intensive scale of development envisioned in the Gresham Downtown Plan will require that floor area ratios greater than 1 to 1 be permitted, with or without particular site amenities.

On the basis of these findings, existing land use districts and development standards applying in the downtown area are considered to be inadequate to achieve the goals and strategies of the Gresham Downtown Plan.

Figure 4  
Current Land Use Districts – 1994

(Image unavailable electronically. Contact 503-618-2780 for a hard copy.)

## Downtown Historic Landmarks

A 1987 survey of potentially significant historic sites in Gresham found 45 such buildings within the downtown area. In 1988, the City Council adopted the Gresham Inventory of Historic and Cultural Landmarks, which included ten of the most significant of these downtown-area buildings. They are:

<u>Site Name</u>	<u>Address</u>
Old Library/Museum	410 N. Main
Post Office	103 W. Powell
Ashley's	436 N. Main
Franz Bakery	331 N. Main
Freeman House	307 NE Kelly
Ely Building	112 N. Main
Trufflehunter	225 W. Powell
Gresham Lodge Building	58 W. Powell
Shattuck House	417 NE Hood
Darnielle (Congdon) Bldg.	101-117 N. Main

These buildings, and other older buildings which are not listed in the Inventory, contribute greatly to the appealing character of the downtown area. In addition to providing an important sense of history, they also combine to establish the dominant design themes for the core area in particular. The scale, proportions, materials, ornamentation, and placement on the site of these historic buildings provide the basis for the design of new buildings which seek to be in harmony with the visual character of downtown.

The ten buildings listed above have some protection under the Gresham City Code against inappropriate alteration and untimely demolition, due to their status as designated landmarks. The history and characteristics of other downtown buildings which have potential historic value are also being investigated as a basis for possible nomination as landmarks. Beyond the designation of individual landmarks, portions of the downtown area have potential for designation as a historic district or districts. This action could be useful in drawing greater attention to the heritage of the downtown, and in strengthening the degree of protection available to designated landmark buildings.

## Future Land Use Patterns

An understanding of the existing context of the downtown area and its land use patterns provides the basis for a land use plan which is consistent with the guiding principles for the Gresham Downtown Plan.

Two of the primary guiding principles for this plan call for encouraging mixed-use development and placing the most intensive developments adjacent to the light rail. The intensity of land uses would diminish as distance from the stations increases, so that beyond roughly one-quarter mile from a station the dominant pattern might be one of low-density residential and open space uses. This typical approach to designing a transit-oriented district must be modified to account for the existing pattern of land uses in the downtown area, and to address other guiding principles. These modifications lead to the following observations which begin to articulate the desired future for the various parts of the downtown plan area.

The historic core area and the existing pattern of arterial-oriented commercial uses along Eastman Parkway, E. Powell Blvd., Hogan Rd., and Burnside Rd. are the most firmly established of the downtown sub-areas. The characteristics of the historic core make it an easily identifiable entity which contributes greatly to the image of the downtown area. Likewise, the more auto-oriented uses along much of the perimeter of the plan area are likely to remain and be supplemented by additional businesses for as long as the abutting arterial streets continue to provide easy access and high volumes of passing traffic. Much of the rest of the downtown area, however, is comprised of lower-intensity uses and substantial amounts of vacant property. As interest in the central Gresham area mounts, these parts of the downtown will become more attractive candidates for redevelopment. These areas have the greatest potential for intensive new commercial and residential uses which can complement the historic core and perimeter commercial strips, while also having convenient pedestrian access to light rail transit. Therefore, a long-range land use plan for the downtown area should direct larger-scale and more intensive uses to properties adjacent to the light rail line. Smaller-scale developments which are compatible with a traditional storefront commercial environment should be encouraged to locate in and adjacent to the historic core. And, those portions of the downtown perimeter which are already strongly committed to auto-oriented development should continue to accommodate uses of this type, in ways which do not detract from the interior of the downtown area.

Where properties fronting arterial streets have not already become commercial strip zones, there are opportunities to establish uses which are more oriented toward the interior of the downtown area and less dependent on arterial access. These opportunities exist along most of the south side of Division St. between NE Roberts Ave. and Burnside Rd. There are several residential blocks lying between the commercial frontage along E. Powell Blvd. and the light rail line. This area should be encouraged to convert gradually from its low-density residential character into a neighborhood of moderate-density housing and small commercial uses. As such, it would serve as a buffer between the auto-oriented commercial uses fronting Powell Blvd. and the more intensive transit-oriented projects closer to light rail. Such a neighborhood could also accommodate more innovative forms of housing, such as row houses, tuck-under apartments, and garden apartments. Finally, the Ava Ave. neighborhood north of W. Powell Blvd. has historic value, not only to the downtown area but for the community as a whole. This small area includes a number of well-preserved bungalows dating from the 1920s and 1930s, resulting in a consistent design theme which is unusual in Gresham for this period. Future land uses in this neighborhood should respect its existing character. Developments and conversions of existing houses which are consistent with this character should be permitted, but significant non-residential uses should be discouraged.

Although future land use patterns will create distinctive sub-areas within the downtown area, it will be important for these sub-areas to relate well to each other, in terms of their visual, functional, and economic characteristics. Therefore, while intensive development should be encouraged along the light rail line, the scale of buildings should be limited to three or four stories in order to avoid overwhelming the historic core. Similarly, perimeter commercial uses along the arterial streets, which may be primarily auto-oriented, should also be of a size which relates well to the pedestrian, and invites increased access by non-auto transportation modes.

In order for the downtown area to develop in a manner which is truly transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly, several site design characteristics must be present. These characteristics should be present throughout the downtown area, whether the dominant land use type is residential, commercial, or mixed-use. One of the most important of these characteristics calls for new buildings to be placed close to abutting streets and public spaces. Related to building placement, on-site parking should be placed behind or under buildings, wherever possible. Where parking must be placed adjacent to a street, it should be located to the sides of buildings, and should be designed with a "street edge." A street edge consists of a vertical feature, such as a hedge or wall, which separates the parking area from an abutting street and sidewalk. This feature helps to minimize the disruption to the visual continuity of the streetscape where

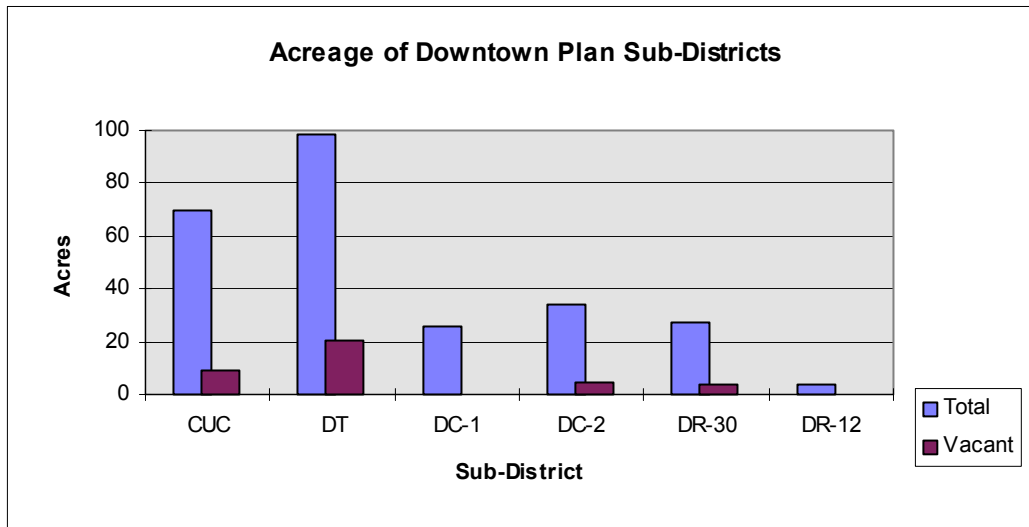


large gaps (e. g. parking lots) are present between buildings placed close to the street. Those building facades which abut a street or public space should also include openings, such as doors, windows, and display areas at the ground floor to prevent the appearance of blank walls. These openings improve the overall appearance of the building and are important to create an increased sense of visual interest, involvement, and safety for pedestrians.

### Downtown Plan Sub-Districts

In order to bring about the future pattern of land uses outlined above for the downtown area, new plan sub-district designations are proposed, as shown on Figure 1. These sub-districts have characteristics which differ significantly from land use districts already designated throughout other areas of Gresham, in order to respond to the unique conditions of the downtown area. All downtown sub-districts, for example, should permit commercial, residential, and mixed-use developments as a means of supporting a pedestrian environment in which shopping, housing, and employment are in convenient proximity to one another. Likewise, downtown sub-districts should all provide for future development at a scale which facilitates pedestrian comfort and safety, as well as being aesthetically pleasing. Since the intermingling of commercial and residential uses is to be encouraged throughout the downtown area, sub-district boundaries should be thought of as transition areas rather than the more rigid conventional zoning boundaries. Thus, the primary function of a sub-district is to emphasize a certain land use type, but not to the exclusion of all other types. To take maximum advantage of the ongoing public investment in light rail transit, minimum intensities of development should be established in all downtown sub-districts. As discussed above, the intensity of future development should be highest near the light rail tracks. New single-family dwellings should not be permitted. However, parcels with existing single-family houses should be permitted and encouraged to add an ancillary dwelling, where feasible, as a short-term means of increasing density for as long as these existing houses remain.

**Figure 5**



### **Central Urban Core (CUC)**

The CUC sub-district encompasses the existing historic core, centered on N. Main Ave. This sub-district has also been drawn to take in additional land to the southwest and to the north and east, in order to allow for expansion of this traditional, village downtown environment. Overall, 69.6 net acres of the downtown area lie within the CUC sub-district. By extending the CUC northward along Main Ave. to Division St., the opportunity is created for continuing this primary commercial corridor from Powell Blvd. to Division St. This continuity would enhance the position of N. Main Ave. between these two arterials, and would eventually enable the entrance to downtown from Division St. to have a prominence matching that of the Powell Blvd. entrance to downtown. The CUC should continue to accommodate a broad mix of smaller-scale retail and service businesses. Institutional uses, such as the Gresham Branch Library, the Gresham Historical Society Museum, and a number of churches, are also important to the CUC, bringing people and increased activity to the core. Housing should also be encouraged to be combined with commercial uses. In general, ground floor space in the CUC should be occupied by commercial uses, although row houses at a density of at least 17 units per acre should be permitted. On-site parking for commercial uses should be minimized in order to achieve greater activity and efficiency of land use. For this same reason, a minimum floor area ratio of .35 should be maintained in the CUC.

The history and visual character of the CUC make it very important that the design of future improvements in this area be carefully and sensitively carried out. New commercial and residential buildings should be at least two stories in height, and placed close to the street in order to frame the streetscape from the perspective of the pedestrian. Contemporary designs for new buildings should not be discouraged, but compatibility with the scale, fenestration, and proportions of existing nearby buildings is important. For these reasons, proposals for new construction or for major alterations in the CUC should be reviewed not only for site design and building code compliance, but also for architectural compatibility.

### **Downtown Transit (DT)**

This sub-district designation occupies more land area than any other in the Gresham Downtown Plan, encompassing nearly 100 net acres. The DT sub-district also includes over half of the currently vacant and under-utilized land in the downtown area (20 acres), with additional properties where the land value equals or exceeds the value of existing improvements. As such, there is great potential for intensive new development and redevelopment in this area. Also, as discussed above, the close proximity of this central portion of the downtown area to light rail transit suggests that this area is suitable for high residential densities and floor area ratios. To encourage this intensive level of development, a minimum floor area ratio of .6 should apply generally to new development in the DT sub-district. New residential developments should range between 24 - 60 units per acre. Larger-scale employment centers are encouraged in the DT sub-district. The convenient access to light rail transit allows for office developments where employees might arrive from various parts of the metropolitan region. As in the CUC, on-site parking requirements should be reduced or eliminated in this sub-district to encourage alternative travel modes and greater efficiencies of land use.

### **Downtown Moderate-Density Residential (DR-30)**

Three separate neighborhoods within the downtown area are designated DR-30. These total 27 net acres, of which about 4 acres are vacant or under-utilized. In general, the DR-30 sub-districts are more remote from the existing light rail stations, and occupy properties where the dominant use is residential on relatively small parcels. However, these areas are still well within the quarter-mile walking radius of light

rail transit. Opportunities exist in these areas to retain the existing residential emphasis, but at higher densities than at present. While the DT sub-district might accommodate multi-family residential projects containing a hundred dwelling units or more, the DR-30 neighborhoods are programmed for residential developments of between 17 - 30 units per acre. This is a density range within which rowhouses could easily be built, along with such housing types as tuck-under or podium apartments and more conventional garden apartments. Thus, the DR-30 sub-districts serve as small transition areas, between the higher-intensity uses of the Downtown Transit sub-district, and the less-intensive CUC and downtown perimeter properties. The DR-30 neighborhoods will offer future residents the opportunity to live in more innovative, moderate-density housing types, as an alternative to the high-density projects expected to develop in the DT sub-district. As with all of the downtown area, commercial and mixed-use developments should be permitted in the DR-30 sub-district. Small-scale commercial uses which provide primarily neighborhood-oriented goods and services should be encouraged. However, in order to emphasize the residential character of these areas, those commercial uses which are not part of a mixed-use project should be limited in size. New single-family detached housing should not be permitted, since low-density residential uses are not supportive of the substantial investments which have been made in nearby light rail transit. However, existing single-family houses in the downtown area will continue to provide relatively inexpensive housing for some time, and ancillary dwellings should be permitted on lots occupied by single-family dwellings in order to maximize land use efficiency for as long as those dwellings exist.

#### **Downtown General Commercial (DC-1)**

This sub-district designation applies to those perimeter properties which are already firmly committed to auto-oriented commercial uses. While developments on these properties might be modified over time to relate more effectively to the interior of the downtown area (including the CUC and DT sub-districts), they are unlikely to redevelop substantially in the foreseeable future, or to reduce their dependence on easy access by automobile from abutting arterials. Nevertheless, there is some potential for housing in these areas, most likely in the form of mixed-use developments as existing commercial buildings are retro-fitted over time. In addition, although the developed DC-1 properties lack many of the elements needed for a pedestrian-friendly environment, they do effectively attract large numbers of people from throughout Gresham and beyond. Over time, as pedestrian and visual linkages between the perimeter and the interior of the downtown area improve, these people may also be drawn to, and contribute to, the vitality of the CUC and DT portions of the downtown.

#### **Downtown Moderate Commercial (DC-2)**

The DC-2 sub-district is intended to accommodate commercial uses which rely to some extent on easy auto access provided by abutting arterial streets, but which are moderately sized and also accessible by residents of adjacent neighborhoods. The fact that most DC-2 properties have frontage on either E. Powell Blvd. or NE Division St., and are already mostly developed with businesses, suggests that continued commercial use should be prevalent in these areas. However, mixed-use developments with housing above or behind commercial buildings would also be appropriate. New commercial buildings should be limited in size to be compatible with the scale of existing buildings in the DC-2 sub-district. These areas would also be appropriate for the operation of limited outdoor commercial uses, where a substantial portion of site area is used for storage or display of merchandise. Some outdoor commercial uses, such as retail nurseries and moderately-sized home improvement centers, could provide needed goods to future residents of the downtown area, as well as drawing customers from elsewhere. Those types of outdoor commercial uses which draw from very large market areas, and which allocate all, or nearly all, of the site for storage and display of merchandise, would not be appropriate in the DC-2 sub-district.

The Hogan Rd. alignment for the proposed Mt. Hood Parkway would run north-south along the existing alignment of Hogan, at the east edge of the downtown area. Northbound traffic on the parkway would be able to exit at E. Powell Blvd. and head west into the downtown. Likewise, traffic bound for the parkway at Hogan Rd. would travel east on Powell Blvd., through the DC-2 sub-district, to reach the parkway and travel south and east. In addition, a draft Street Tree Master Plan prepared for the city in 1994 proposes a boulevard treatment for Powell Blvd. eastward from Eastman Parkway, in which street trees and a landscaped median would be provided, along with widened sidewalks. If carried out, the Mt. Hood Parkway and the boulevard treatment of Powell Blvd. would cause it to function as an important gateway to the downtown area, while also becoming more attractive for pedestrians. For these reasons, in the DC-2 sub-district new buildings should be placed up close to the street, with most parking placed to the side or behind the buildings. These measures, in addition to controls on building size and the extent of outdoor commercial uses, will allow E. Powell Blvd. to gradually take on the attributes of a strong, attractive corridor entrance to downtown, extending the pedestrian environment from the CUC and the downtown interior neighborhoods to Hogan Rd.

### **Downtown Low-Density Residential (DR-12)**

The DR-12 designation applies only to a small neighborhood (four acres) centered on NW Ava Ave., in the southwest corner of the downtown area. As noted above, this neighborhood is distinctive because of the presence of eight single-family houses which were all built during the 1920s and 1930s, and which have largely retained the integrity of their original design. Due to topographical constraints and the remoteness of this neighborhood from other commercially developed districts of the downtown and from light rail transit, there are very limited prospects for new commercial activity in this DR-12 sub-district. For this reason, as well as to encourage preservation of the existing character of the neighborhood, this district should permit only modestly-scaled new residential development and very small commercial uses. Mixed-use developments and attached housing at up to 12 units per acre would be appropriate. In addition, existing houses in this area should be permitted to convert to professional offices and small-scale commercial businesses which are compatible with the neighborhood's existing character.

### **Downtown Area Growth Potential**

The current population of the downtown area is estimated at 1,440. Current employment in the downtown area is estimated at 3,500. Taken together, the total number of persons per acre is roughly 18.

In its Region 2040 planning program, Metro has designated the downtown area as one of nine "regional centers." Central Gresham is the only regional center designated for East Multnomah County. Metro envisions each of the regional centers in the year 2040 as follows:

These regional centers would become the focus of compact development, redevelopment, and transit and highway improvements. The recommended alternative accommodates three percent of new household growth and eleven percent of new employment growth [region-wide] in these regional centers. From the current 24 people per acre, the recommended alternative would accommodate about 60 people per acre.

Transit improvements for regional centers would include light-rail connecting all regional centers to the central city. Highway improvements also would focus on ensuring that these centers are accessible as places to conduct business. Eventually, these centers would grow to the density of downtown Vancouver, Wash. - about one-third of downtown Portland's density, but three times denser than these areas today.

Although the horizon year for the Gresham Downtown Plan is 2020 rather than 2040, the downtown area appears to have adequate vacant and redevelopable land to achieve an overall density of 60 persons per acre. Table 1, attached to this document, contains estimates of potential new residents and employees in the downtown area. These estimates are based on the land use designations of the Gresham Downtown Plan and estimates of the amount of acreage in each sub-district expected to become available for redevelopment over the plan period. The data in Table 1 indicate that with development of existing vacant acreage, and redevelopment of an additional 57 acres, at average floor area ratios ranging from .4 in the DR-12 sub-district to 1.5 in the DT sub-district, the total new gross floor area in the downtown would be nearly 4.9 million square feet. Given further assumptions about the proportions of this floor area which would be occupied by residential uses and that which would be leased for commercial/employment uses, 2,111 new residential units and 6,736 new jobs could result in the downtown area at full build-out. These estimates can be converted into a combined total of new employees and residents amounting to over 11,400. This figure results in an estimate of 44 new persons per acre. When combined with the existing 18 persons per acre in the downtown area the total of 62 persons per acre exceeds Metro's Region 2040 target density for a regional center such as downtown Gresham.

The validity of the estimates contained in Table 1 depends heavily on assumptions as to how much acreage in each downtown sub-district can be considered a candidate for redevelopment over the next 25 - 45 years. The redevelopment estimates of Table 1 (ranging from 10% of total DC-1 acreage to 50% of total DR-30 and DT acreage) appear reasonable, given the availability of vacant land and the existing ratios of building value to land value in the downtown area.

## **Market and Economic Conditions**

As part of the Gresham Downtown Plan, E. D. Hovee & Co. was engaged to analyze recent and current economic conditions in the downtown area, and to prepare an outlook for future growth and development activity. The result was the Economic and Market Report for Downtown Gresham (July 1994).

The report found that population growth in Gresham as a whole, and in the downtown area, has been strong in recent years, and that continued growth can be expected through the year 2015 and beyond. Likewise, both retail and non-retail employment were projected to increase in the downtown area at an average annual rate of nearly 2%. This is a faster rate of employment growth than is projected for Multnomah County, and matches the projected growth rate for the Portland region as a whole. Even so, this forecast may be considered conservative, due to Metro's more recent designation of central Gresham as one of nine "regional centers" in its recently adopted Region 2040 Concept Plan. As a regional center, much of the energy for future growth in the eastern portion of the region will be directed to downtown Gresham. The result could be growth rates, in population and employment, well beyond the previously forecast rate of 2% per year.

After finding that the downtown area would continue to experience healthy growth for the foreseeable future, the economic and market report considered prospects for the specific types of development which are expected to drive that growth -- residential, office, retail, and mixed-use. Following are summaries of

the report's findings regarding the economic feasibility for each of these development types in the downtown area.

## **Residential**

Within the Portland region, there is growing consensus that housing rather than office or retail is becoming the economic driver of the next twenty years. This is for several reasons:

- Slowing of labor force growth (as the baby boom generation is now of work age and the baby bust generation coming behind is much smaller in number).
- Aging of baby boomers. The number of persons age 46-64 in the Portland metro area will virtually double from 1990-2010, while the number of 25-44 year olds remains essentially flat. This generates potential demand for different housing types as more boomers become empty-nesters.
- Combined with an increase in non-traditional (and smaller) households, it is increasingly apparent that housing needs of major segments of the population are entering a period of transition.
- The challenge of the mid to late 1990s is to develop and test new housing prototypes for this aging boomer market -- including urban living that is consistent with values of urban containment, environmental sensitivity, a high level of on-site and area amenities, and transit accessibility.
- If emerging prototypes achieve market acceptance, much greater potential will exist after the turn of the century to market urban living to an even larger market. However, if this market window is missed and boomers do not buy into a more urban lifestyle en masse (rather than as a small niche), it is unlikely they will do so later after retirement.
- Due to existing equity build-up of boomers and appreciation of tax advantages, it is important to emphasize ownership products (both condominium and fee simple). It is quite possible that the primary market for higher density urban living in the next 15-20 years will shift from a traditional renter market to home ownership.
- To stimulate downtown retail and office, housing should be developed to appeal to a diversity of incomes and lifestyle preferences. The majority of housing development should be market-rate -- with enough upscale units to create the image that downtown is the place to be -- to see and be seen.
- ...A perception of public safety is absolutely essential -- both in the home and on the street.
- Housing needs to be developed with high amenity value -- both in the unit and the surrounding area. Because downtown Gresham does not offer views or water proximity, the chief external amenity becomes the ambiance of the entire downtown experience. -- pedestrian-friendly, close to shops and services, close to transit, with access to recreation such as bike trails, parks, fitness centers, etc.

- For at least the immediate future, residential development is most financially feasible if developed at densities that do not require elevators, steel-frame construction, or platform/underground parking -- all of which can increase cost per square foot substantially without a corresponding increase in achievable rents or values. This places greater emphasis on rowhouse/townhouse and garden apartment concepts as being more financially feasible for at least the near term.
- As the market matures (and if metro area UGB boundaries are not expanded significantly), a stronger market for mid and high rise units may yet materialize. Currently, virtually all of the mid-high rise units developed in Portland's Central City area, for example, have involved public subsidy of roughly \$10,000 - \$20,000 per unit.
- Parking should be encouraged to be placed behind or to the side of housing so that streetside frontage retains an urban, pedestrian character.

## **Office**

Our view remains that Gresham will continue to attract smaller office users, primarily service businesses oriented to the local market for at least the immediate future. However, it may be important to also create incentives for more significant development -- making Gresham a stronger contender in the region's office market for corporate and business service firms. Some perspectives of note:

- Encourage small scale, fine-grained infill development of owner-occupant office spaces that are compatible with the character, located in proximity to the Main Street retail core; for developments in high traffic areas that have future potential for conversion to ground floor retail, provide design standards consistent with future retail use.
- Continue to attract local professional and service firms to locate in downtown Gresham; consider expanding marketing to draw footloose small offices that could be located anywhere in the region and need some but not constant interaction with other businesses in downtown Portland (via MAX).
- Consider a more aggressive program to target large corporate users (e. g. back office) as build-to-suits that draw heavily on an eastside labor force and can be sold (in cooperation with Tri-Met) on benefits of MAX/transit accessibility.

## **Retail**

The re-emergence of downtown Gresham as a specialty retail district is perhaps the most visible and exciting development that has transpired since 1986. The chief obstacle to further expansion may be a lack of additional leasable space; reportedly, Main Street is virtually full and retail activity is spilling over to Roberts Ave., Hood Ave., and nearby side streets.

Opportunities and challenges for the future are severalfold:

- While some downtown retailers (e. g. Glass Butterfly, Main Street Grocery) are clearly well established, other smaller retail tenants in Gresham as well as other communities

have a tendency to come and go. Some are not in business for purely financial reasons; they bring diversity but benefit from smaller and lower cost space. Part of the charm of this type of district depends on the ability to continuously pursue an eclectic specialty mix while also increasing the base of profitable, well recognized anchors.

- Smaller businesses typically cannot afford to buy and develop; so development of additional multi-tenant space for small retail tenants should be a priority. Buildings should be flexible (to accommodate tenants of as little as less than 1,000 square feet), with entrances oriented to the street; often these spaces can be developed as shell space with the option for in-store improvements to be made either by the tenant or negotiated with the owner.
- Attracting patient investors willing to tie their financial success to that of their tenants and the entire district (rather than an immediate return) should be a top priority. Incentives targeted specifically to encourage such development should be considered for implementation of the plan.
- Entrances to the downtown retail core (i. e. Main Ave. and Roberts Ave.) from Powell Blvd. and Division St. need to be more prominent and identifiable. This could be accomplished with a combination of signage, entry features, banners, etc.
- Signage and display standards to deter exterior signage that is auto rather than pedestrian oriented and to discourage window clutter might also be considered -- perhaps as a subsequent implementation measure, if the need arises.
- To date MAX has achieved unexpectedly high weekend patronage, from individuals and families on recreational or shopping outings. As momentum in downtown Gresham builds towards a specialty retail district, more attention could be paid to drawing customers via MAX -- especially from the east county MAX corridor.

### **Mixed Use**

The [Gresham Downtown Plan] ... implicitly and explicitly encourages mixed use development. Mixed use could be defined on the basis of two uses in one building, or encouraging different uses side-by-side on adjoining properties. The concept plan appears to emphasize mixing uses in a single building, e. g. retail on ground floor, residential above.

- Several comments on the economic viability of obtaining mixed use development in each building are noted;
- To date, concepts of retail down and residential or even office up in a two or three story building have been difficult to accomplish in a manner that both achieves market acceptance and is financially feasible -- at least in the Portland metro area. ...



- Condominium ownership may support higher cost of developing second floor housing, but market acceptance remains unproven. One issue is noise generated from commercial activity penetrating to the residents above.
- Providing parking adequate for both commercial and residential components of a mixed use project can be particularly challenging. ...
- Need for elevator access is of increased importance, particularly for office users due to ADA requirements. However, elevators add significant cost to the development of a smaller two-story building
- Perhaps the most viable approach for Gresham is to encourage mixed use retail residential for smaller (e. g. less than 4,000 square foot) buildings... This approach also reinforces the existing fine-grained building character of downtown Gresham.

### **Conclusions of Market and Economic Report**

The analysis of both current and forecast market and economic conditions in the downtown area suggests that the overall approach of the Gresham Downtown Plan is consistent with these realities. The report concludes with these observations:

The downtown is currently showing signs of economic revitalization which appear to be due to a combination of public and private initiatives over the past 10 - 15 years.

Future prospects for continued revitalization appear strong, albeit with a more prominent role for urban housing as a new driving force for development. Small scale independent retailers are carving a niche for downtown as a specialty retail district -- distinct from the planned shopping centers and strip developments prevalent throughout most of east Multnomah County. Developing additional retail space represents both a major challenge and opportunity for the next few years.

Office activity will continue to be dominated by small service firms catering to the local market for at least the near term. Longer term opportunities exist for footloose small firms and large back office users serving more regional and national markets -- driven by proximity to MAX and local transit.

We believe the Draft Concept Plan is supportive of these market trends and opportunities.

### **Public Facilities**

The primary objective of creating a successful mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented downtown district will be achieved mainly through the actions of developers and business owners over the next 25 years. However, the Gresham Downtown Plan also proposes a number of public facilities improvements which will be needed to support new private development projects, and to stimulate greater interest and activity in the downtown. It is anticipated that most of these improvements will be provided by the city as funding sources are identified and allocated through the capital improvements program. These proposed public facilities are described below.

## **Streets**

A central characteristic of successful pedestrian districts is a network of streets and pedestrian ways which provide numerous, direct connections between the various sub-areas of the district. Whether going to a workplace, a business, or a transit station, pedestrians face a strong disincentive when they are forced to walk long distances around large blocks to reach their destination. If convenient connections are not available, pedestrians quickly resort to the automobile, even when traveling relatively short distances. Likewise, large numbers of visitors to the downtown area will continue to arrive by car for many years; these visitors and others will require a circulation system which not only facilitates easy pedestrian movement, but which also enables the drivers of automobiles to reach destinations conveniently. For these reasons, the Gresham Downtown Plan proposes the construction or extension of streets in a future street plan, as shown on the plan map (Figure 1). All of the proposed streets would be dedicated and improved to local street standards, with rights-of-way of 50 - 60 ft. in width.

Much of the central portion of the downtown area, south of 5th St., is made up of blocks which are roughly 200 feet square. This pattern results from the platting of Gresham's first subdivisions one hundred years ago. These dimensions are ideal for easy pedestrian movement, as well as offering drivers of cars multiple route options. Beyond this central area, however, the downtown area is made up of much larger, irregularly shaped blocks with numerous ownerships, and ranging in size up to more than 25 acres. Extension of the grid pattern based on 200 foot blocks into these large tracts would not be feasible, since many of them are extensively developed. However, the gradual extension of key streets as shown on the plan map would greatly enhance both pedestrian and vehicular circulation. An additional advantage of these proposed street extensions is the creation of new street frontage for parcels which are deep and have little street frontage at present. Improved street access would make these parcels more attractive for new development.

Dedication and construction of the proposed street extensions will be complicated by the fact that buildings and other improvements are located within and near many of these future rights-of-way. As larger-scale development projects take place, it may be necessary to require some future streets to be provided in connection with those projects, in order to provide adequate access to the development, and to minimize traffic impacts to existing streets. Apart from occasional, development-related dedications of future streets, it will be necessary for the city to develop a program to identify funding sources, prioritize future street extensions, acquire the necessary rights-of-way, and construct these streets.

## **Parks, Gateways and Town Square**

Three types of public spaces are shown on the Gresham Downtown Plan map: parks, gateways, and a "town square." Each of these public spaces would serve a different function in making the downtown attractive for intensive, mixed-use development.

Four new parks are proposed to the east of the historic core area. Each of these is proposed to function as a small neighborhood or "pocket" park, ranging in size from roughly .5 to 1.5 acres. These parks should be sited to serve an area with a radius of 500 - 600 ft. The emphasis in each of these parks should be on providing for the day-to-day recreational needs of nearby residents and workers. Proposed locations for these parks as indicated on the Downtown Plan map, are conceptual. However, preferred locations for these parks are in those sub-districts (DT and DR-30) where the greatest concentrations of new housing and mixed-use developments are expected to occur. The availability of these parks is especially critical to

balance the intensive levels of development which will be encouraged in the downtown area. To maximize development potential, new housing and commercial uses are expected to provide only minimal on-site open space. The needs of downtown residents for larger-scale recreational facilities, such as community parks, can be met conveniently by Main City Park, located adjacent to the downtown area, south of Powell Blvd. Main City Park also serves as a link between the downtown and the Springwater Trail.

In addition to the four neighborhood parks, a park/plaza is proposed adjacent to the south side of the MAX Central Station Platform. This plaza is envisioned as a “hard surface” open space which would serve as an attractive destination point for light rail passengers arriving at downtown Gresham, and could begin to draw them toward the downtown core. A coffee shop or similar small-scale retail or service business would also be appropriate in this space.

Gateway entrances to the downtown are proposed at five locations, as shown on the Downtown Plan map. In each case, an intersection serves as the focal point for the gateway. Gateway entrances were proposed by the Envision Downtown Task Force for the historic core area as part of the Envision Gresham 2020 process in 1992. Their function would be to provide a strong sense of identity, as well as invitation and direction to those arriving in the downtown area. Typical features at each gateway could include a thematic sign structure and landscaping.

The gateway shown at the intersection of Main Ave. and Powell Blvd. is proposed to be combined with pedestrian improvements to strengthen the connection between the downtown core and Main City Park. This connection is also important to bicyclists, as it links the downtown area and the park with the Springwater Trail corridor. At present, pedestrians moving between the downtown core and Main City Park at this location cross five lanes of traffic on Powell Blvd. at a signalized intersection. The distance of this crossing is approximately 75 ft. By eliminating on-street parking on Powell at this intersection, curb extensions could be constructed which would reduce the crossing distance significantly. These and similar measures which could increase pedestrian safety and comfort at this intersection should be pursued with the Oregon Department of Transportation.

A “town square” public space is proposed in the vicinity of the intersection of N. Main Ave. and 5th St. The function of this town square would be to provide a focal point for community events in the downtown area. The proposed size of the square would be roughly one acre. This size would enable it to accommodate mid-size to large-scale events such as a farmers market, outdoor concerts, festivals, exhibits, and promotional events. The conceptual siting of the town square shown on the Downtown Plan map allows it to serve as a link between the historic core and the light rail stations. In this general area, the square would be within convenient walking distance of Central Station and a future light rail station at N. Main Ave.

### **Parking Garages**

Three future parking garages are proposed in the Gresham Downtown Plan. Two of these flank the core area, on the east and west sides. The third is a park-and-ride garage to be constructed on NE 8th St. and NE Kelly Ave., near Central Station. As with the downtown transit loop, these facilities also were first proposed as part of the Envision Gresham 2020 Action Plan. The Central Station park-and-ride garage is now being designed, and will be complete by the end of 1996. Locations for the other two garages are conceptual. The sizes and actual sites for these garages will need to be determined on the basis of parking demand studies as the core area continues to grow. Structured parking will be important to the downtown as an efficient alternative to surface parking lots. Surface lots are an inefficient use of land, they frequently conflict with the movements of pedestrians, and a number of large parking lots in close proximity create

"dead zones" in what should be an area of strong pedestrian interest and activity. Parking garages become an even more valuable component of a pedestrian-friendly downtown area when they contain commercial space in their ground floor street frontage.

## **Transit Improvements**

The Gresham Downtown Plan proposes two major transit improvements: A new light rail station on the MAX line at N. Main Ave., and a transit loop through the core area.

The N. Main transit station would provide the clearest, most direct connection between light rail and the core. In this location, such a station could also be instrumental in stimulating new commercial development along Main Ave. between 5th St. and Division St. Riders arriving at the N. Main Station would also have easy access to a future town square and the events which that facility would host. This proposed station would most likely function as a "kiss and ride" station, with no adjacent parking. It would be located roughly mid-way between City Hall Station and Central Station, separated from either of these stations by only about 1,500 ft. This spacing is not consistent with Tri-Met's current service standards, although spacing may be less of a factor as the surrounding downtown area becomes more urban in coming years. Design of this station would also have to take into account complex traffic and pedestrian movements on N. Main Ave. and Division St. Nevertheless, placement of a station in this location would bring a number of clear advantages to the downtown area. Further study of this facility is warranted, recognizing that actual financing and construction are not likely over the short term, and that the project would ultimately would have to be authorized and carried out by Tri-Met.

The suggestion of a transit loop through the core area originated in the Final Gresham 2020 Action Plan. This was envisioned as a light rail facility, with MAX cars traveling this circuit from the main transit line. While this facility would also have clear benefits for the core area, its expense and the lack of right-of-way make it unlikely through the turn of the century. However, this proposal, like the N. Main transit station, deserves additional study. Over the short term, a rubber-tired trolley or similar vehicle running on streets between the light rail line and the core may be feasible, and could provide a level of support to the core which would approximate that of a light rail loop.

## **Nonconformities Within the Downtown Area**

The Gresham Downtown Plan affects properties which are both developed and undeveloped. Many of the developed parcels are occupied by uses and features which do not conform with the overall objectives of the downtown plan or with the sub-districts described herein. Among the nonconforming uses are several light manufacturing and assembly businesses, storage warehouses, auto-dependent uses, and approximately 180 single-family detached dwellings. In addition, there are numerous properties occupied by buildings, parking lots, and other forms of development which do not conform with the site and building design objectives contained in this plan. Because the Gresham Downtown Plan is based on a vision of the downtown area in 2020, these nonconformities will exist for years. This plan anticipates the gradual conversion of nonconforming uses and developments over the 25-year planning period. While these uses exist, they are expected to continue in use and operation for as long as their owners find it economically feasible to do so. It is also anticipated that existing nonconforming uses may undergo alterations and even modest expansions in ways which do not result in a substantially greater degree of nonconformity.

## **Conclusion**

In order to implement the Gresham Downtown Plan, new land use districts and development standards are required. The most effective means of accomplishing the objectives of the plan is the establishment of a Plan District encompassing the downtown area as shown in Figure 1. Within the Gresham Downtown Plan District, sub-districts should be designated, also as indicated in Figure 1. The uses permitted and the development standards to be applied in these sub-districts should be as described in this plan, and consistent with revised policies and implementation standards of Volume 2 of the Community Development Plan for Downtown Area Development.

**Table 1**

**Downtown Population and Employment Potential**

Sub-District	Total Acres	Acres Avail. For Redevel.	Average FAR*	Total New GFA**	New Commercial GFA	New Residential GFA	New Employment	New Residential Units	Total New Persons
CUC	69.60	20.88 (30% of total acreage)	1.0	909,533	682,150 (75% of GFA)	227,383 (25% of GFA)	1,364	253	1,928
DT	98.80	49.40 (50% of total acreage)	1.5	3,227,796	1,936,678 (60% of GFA)	1,291,118 (40% of GFA)	4,942	1,435	8,031
DC-2	34.00	10.20 (30% of total acreage)	0.5	222,156	177,725 (80% of GFA)	44,431 (20% of GFA)	296	49	406
DC-1	25.90	2.59 (10% of total acreage)	0.4	45,128	45,128 (100% of GFA)	0	90	0	90
DR-30	27.00	13.50 (50% of total acreage)	0.8	470,448	70,567 (15% of GFA)	399,881 (85% of GFA)	141	364	946
DR-12	4.10	0.62 (15% of total acreage)	0.4	10,716	1,072 (10% of GFA)	9,644 (90% of GFA)	2	11	26
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>259.40</b>	<b>97.19</b>		<b>4,885,777</b>	<b>2,913,320</b>	<b>1,972,457</b>	<b>6,735</b>	<b>2,112</b>	<b>11,425</b>
								<b>New Persons/Acre =</b>	<b>44.04</b>

\* FAR = Floor area ratio    \*\* GFA = Gross floor area