

RUSSELL STREET IMPROVEMENT PLANNING PROJECT

Final Report



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CITY OF PORTLAND
OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION**

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The Russell Street Improvements Project is one of two project areas that are the focus of the Station Access Street Improvement Project that focuses on planning street improvements in two key opportunity areas along the Interstate MAX light rail line: Russell Street and Killingsworth Street. The project is partially funded by a grant from the Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) Program, a joint program of the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development. This TGM grant is financed, in part, by the Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), local government and the State of Oregon funds.

The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the State of Oregon.

Photos on the cover from left to right:
N Interstate Ave and N Albina Ave, looking north.
Zed-40 Streetlight.
Russell Street and N Kerby Ave, looking northwest.
Russell Street And I-5 overpass, looking east.

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1 INTRODUCTION

PROJECT PURPOSE

Russell Street was the main street of the original City of Albina and connected the Lower Albina industrial area and the river with the commercial hub at the intersection of Russell Street and N Williams Ave. The construction of the Memorial Coliseum, the Minnesota Freeway (I-5), as well as the clearance of the commercial and residential areas to the east of the freeway along Russell Street for the proposed expansion of Emanuel Hospital were all factors in the decline of area. The Interstate MAX (yellow) light rail line (due to open in May 2004) provides an opportunity to enhance the pedestrian connection between the Albina/Mississippi MAX station, the Lower Albina industrial area and Emanuel Hospital and the residential part of the Eliot neighborhood.

The Russell Street Improvements Planning Project outlines a street design concept plan for Russell Street, N Mississippi and N Albina Avenues. MAX will bring increased pedestrian traffic to the Lower Albina industrial area. The project had two major challenges: How to safely accommodate the increased pedestrian traffic without a negative impact on truck traffic. The other major challenge was how to reinforce the east-west connection between the upper and lower parts of Russell Street by changing the perception of the I-5 overpass from a barrier to a gateway destination or focal point. The project has been funded in part by Oregon Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) grant.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Russell Street Improvements Plan is the result of extensive community involvement in the planning process. An objective of the involvement process was to “go through a public process to identify the character of the project area and develop streetscape design concepts to support the identified character.” Meeting this objective in a diverse community required a variety of approaches to make sure the process was accessible to the widest audience possible, including groups traditionally underrepresented in the planning process. The inclusive nature of the process helped to build trust for community members. The outreach methods included:

- Door-to-door surveying
- Focus groups
- Four larger events: a Community Walk, a Design Work Session, an Alternatives Evaluation Workshop and a Preferred Plan Open House
- Community Advisory Committee meetings
- Outreach to groups and individuals

The project team consisted of staff from the City’s Office of Transportation and a design team of consultants.



Albina/Mississippi MAX Station.



Participants at the Alternatives Prioritization Workshop, September 24, 2002.

PREFERRED PLAN SUMMARY

The Russell Street Improvements Planning Project evolved through a series of four community events. A Community Advisory Committee (CAC) reviewed input from the community events and recommended a preferred design concept and themes for street improvements.

The CAC recommended a design concept called “Ribbon with Places.” This concept features the idea of a continuous element, or ‘ribbon,’ that would help to guide people from one end of the project area to the other. Places identified by the community as most important will be given significant attention with special improvements.

The theme selected by the CAC to guide this design is: “Historic, cultural and ethnic identities that have contributed to the area will be expressed artistically all along the street. The unique mix of industrial, commercial and institutional uses would be recognized at the ‘places.’”

The ribbon portion of the plan includes new sidewalks, street trees and streetlights throughout the project area. The most distinct ribbon element is the incorporation of unique markers in the sidewalk. The markers are conceived as bronze diamonds, with a design that reflects a theme chosen by the community, placed every twelve feet in the new concrete sidewalks. New pedestrian-scaled streetlights will be included throughout the project area, giving a unified look.

Specific improvements will be applied to each of the places that have been identified by the community.

The Conservation District – In this section of Russell Street, between Interstate and Albina, the existing historic feeling will be maintained with minimal addition of furniture. A gateway element will be added at N Interstate Ave and Russell Street.

The MAX Station – Gateways to the Russell Street area will be added at N Interstate Ave and N Albina Ave as well as at N Interstate Ave and N Mississippi Ave. The installations will include signage or maps that direct people to the upper part of Russell Street.

Preferred Design Concept



I-5 Overpass – Lighting and art will be the main elements used to enliven the scary space under the I-5 overpass. In addition, the upper reaches of the space under the freeway will be blocked off. The new streetlights will continue through the overpass area, and additional flood lighting is added. The art should be of such scale and quality that this area becomes a destination, gateway and focal point rather than a barrier.

Curb extensions and a marked crosswalk will be installed across Russell Street at the vacated N Gantenbein Ave site. A new entrance to Lillis-Albina Park will be constructed opposite the crosswalk. The new entrance area will include seating, drinking fountains, stairs and a ramp into the park.

The sidewalk on the north side of Russell Street between N Gantenbein Ave and N Williams Ave will be widened (with the cooperation of Legacy Emanuel Hospital) to form a ‘promenade’ with benches, planters, trees and historic markers. Gateway elements will be included at the northwest corner of Russell Street and N Williams Ave and the southeast corner of Russell Street and N Vancouver Ave. Special transit shelters with community and historic information will be installed at the northbound transit stop north of Russell Street on N Williams Ave and the southbound stop on N Vancouver Ave south of Russell Street.

Additional Elements

New transit stops – New transit stops will be added for the Line 33 on its proposed Russell Street route, near N Albina Ave.

Crossing improvements – Improved pedestrian crossings with curb extensions and marked crosswalks will be installed across Russell Street at N Albina, N Borthwick and N Ross Aves. Crosswalks will be marked at N Commercial Ave and on the west side of the N Flint Ave intersection. An improved crossing with curb extensions and overhead signs will be installed at N Williams Ave and N Stanton St.

School Safety improvements – Speed bumps will be installed on N Flint Ave. Flashing school beacons will be added to the school zone signs on N Vancouver Ave and N Williams Ave at Page St.

Art

An important component of this design is the art that is still being defined. This project can be realized as a truly community-based effort through the definition, creation and selection of that art. The community itself may wish to take control of that process. The art will provide an opportunity to reflect the theme of historic, cultural and ethnic identities that the community has identified for this project. Different pieces installations or performances may emphasize different themes. Historic photos and documents may be incorporated into the artistic expression.



Russell Street at N Interstate Ave looking east.



Russell Street at I-5 overpass looking west.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The construction of Interstate MAX provides an opportunity to link major employment centers, local businesses and neighborhood residents to light rail. The existing infrastructure is auto oriented and contains barriers to access this new major transit investment. Sidewalks accessing the LRT stations and bus stops are also not fully ADA compliant and need to be redesigned to improve access for those using wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

The Albina Community Plan (1993) prepared a policy framework for development around light rail stations and for providing safe and attractive routes for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Eliot Neighborhood Plan (1993) emphasized Russell Street as a main street within the district. The Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area and Plan supported these goals with principles that included revitalization along mainstreets and optimizing light rail investment.

In 2000/2001 the Interstate MAX Station Area Revitalization Strategy looked at five station areas along the Interstate Avenue Corridor and discussed development strategies for each station area. The project was funded by a state Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) program grant. Although the Albina/Mississippi station area was not included in the revitalization strategy, many community members from the Eliot neighborhood attended the work sessions and the Russell Street/Lower Albina area was identified as a heritage district gateway. Business owners and community members in the Eliot neighborhood (which includes the Lower Albina Industrial Sanctuary) were concerned about the impact that the new light rail station would have in their area and requested a meeting with city and TriMet staff to discuss this and other related issues. This effort led to an application for TGM funding to study and plan street improvements for the Russell Street corridor.

Project Area

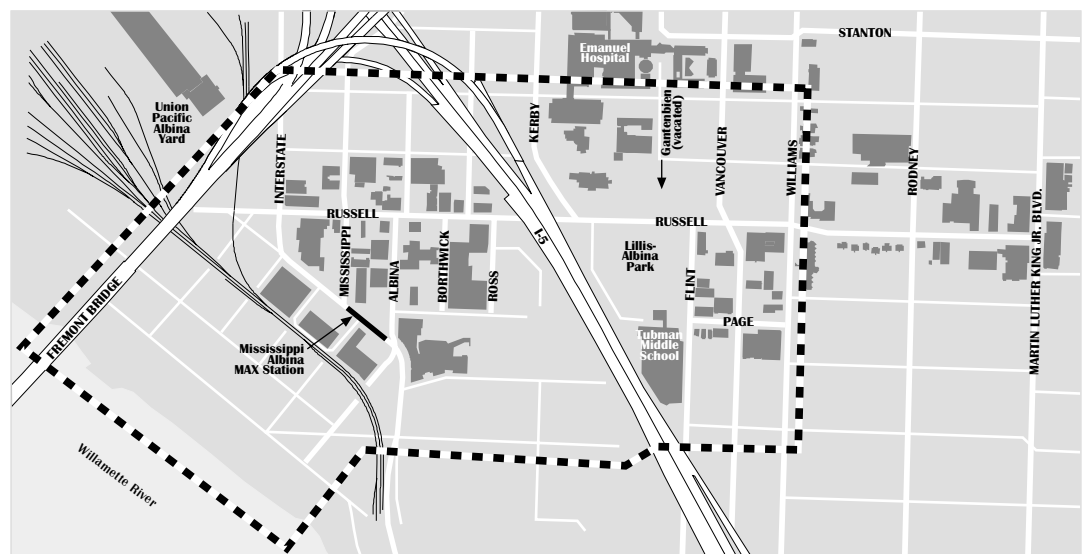
The Project Area focuses on the specific street sidewalks and roadways (rights of way or ROW) that will be included in the detailed street design concept. The Russell Project Area is the ROW of Russell Street between N Interstate Ave and N Williams Ave and of N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave between N Interstate Ave and Russell Street. Russell Street is the main east-west corridor in the Lower Albina area and provides a connection from the Mississippi/Albina light rail station and the Lower Albina industrial area to the major employment center at Legacy Emanuel Hospital and the residential part of the Eliot neighborhood.

Russell Study Area

Using a larger study area allows the project to look at Russell Street in the context of its relationship to the surrounding neighborhood, especially in terms of land use and urban design. The study area also allows the project to develop solutions to pedestrian and traffic issues on streets connected to the project area. The study area is shown on the map below. It includes Emanuel Hospital, Harriet Tubman Middle School and the Lower Albina Industrial Sanctuary. As a major employer, Emanuel Hospital is an institution that could benefit from improved access to the light rail station. Pedestrian access, however, is unattractive and the freeway overpass is perceived as a divide and a disincentive to many people who would otherwise use light rail. Russell Street provides important east-west access across the I-5 Freeway but is not considered safe or comfortable for pedestrians and bicyclists due to its auto orientation.

The Russell Street Improvements Planning Project shall:

- Identify barriers to pedestrian and bicycle access to light rail stations.
- Define priority access routes for pedestrian and bicycle travel, and any needed improvements along those routes.
- Create a streetscape design plan for N Mississippi and N Albina Avenues from N Interstate Ave to Russell Street and Russell Street from N Interstate Ave to N Williams Ave.
- Identify streetscape improvements to create attractive, safe, convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to light rail and to support planned land uses.
- Provide connections to the residential part of the Eliot neighborhood and Emanuel Hospital via Russell Street.
- Enhance the pedestrian environment around light rail station.



RUSSELL STUDY AREA

HISTORY OF THE STREET

Russell Street was once the main street of the City of Albina, which was platted in 1872 and became part of the City of Portland in 1891. The street is named after Edwin Russell, a prominent local banker. Today's Eliot neighborhood occupies the area of the original City of Albina.

The City of Albina grew rapidly in the 1880s as a result of railways coming to the area; Russell Street's proximity to the river and the railyard gave it prominence as Albina's main street. The street provided a connection from the river and railyard to the west to the residential area to the east. The Union Pacific yard remains as a source of employment and traffic today.

Streetcar Commercial Development

Much of the commercial development of Russell Street is tied to the spread of the streetcar lines serving Portland and Albina. The coming of the streetcar lines on N Williams Ave and Russell Street led to the development of Russell Street as the main commercial corridor of the City of Albina. Russell Street remained a commercial hub after the consolidation of the cities of Albina and East Portland with Portland in 1891. The intersection of N Williams Ave and Russell Street became a focal point as it lay at the intersection of two streetcar lines. The Hill Block building was located at the northwest corner of the Russell/Williams intersection; this landmark building was famous for its onion dome. The dome itself was saved and has been preserved as the gazebo in nearby Dawson Park after the Hill Block was demolished in 1969. N Mississippi Ave also carried a streetcar line, and its intersection with Russell Street formed another commercial node. This intersection is now at the center of the Russell Street Conservation Area.



Oregon Historical Society, #OrHi 51709
N Williams Ave at Russell Street, 1910.

Immigration and Ethnic Groups

The Albina area served as a gateway for newly arrived ethnic groups in Portland, from the 1880s onward it continued to gain an increasing number of immigrants compared to the rest of Portland. At first, immigrants from Italy, Greece, Hungary, Poland and Russia joined the established immigrants from Germany and Ireland in the area. Lower Russell Street served as the main commercial area for the Scandinavian community. Polish immigrants established the White Eagle saloon on Russell Street in the early part of the 20th century. Many of these immigrants had jobs at the railyard and at the grain elevators, mills and shipyards located along the river. The area around the intersection of Russell Street and N Mississippi Ave has been designated a conservation district.



N Interstate Ave and N Albina Ave looking north, 1945.

The early 1900s also saw the beginning of the second wave of ethnic migration as Portland's African-American population began moving to Albina from the area near Union Station on the west side of the river. New waves of African-Americans moved to Portland during and following WWII. Most were accommodated in Vanport. When 5000 African-Americans were displaced by the Vanport Flood in 1948, most were forced to come to Albina because of restrictive (redlining) practices by realtors in other parts of the city. The relative concentration of the African-American population in the area led to a number of businesses being located in the area of the Russell/Williams intersection.

Decline

The decline of Russell Street as a commercial corridor began with the construction of the Memorial Coliseum in the late 1950s. This project displaced a largely African-American community. This was followed by the construction and opening of the Minnesota Freeway (I-5) in 1964. The freeway led to further displacement throughout north Portland and also had the effect of dividing the neighborhood and creating the barrier that divides Russell Street into the lower and upper portions that this planning project addresses.

In the late 1960's, Emanuel Hospital planned to build a 19-acre health campus around the existing hospital. Clearing the land for this project removed the last remaining sections of Russell Street's commercial area as well as further displacing many residents from the area. The health campus was never built. At this time city policy was that the area west of Union Avenue (now Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard) would be rezoned to commercial and industrial uses.

I-5 construction also had the effect of isolating the Lower Albina district from nearby residential areas, this isolation has been reinforced by the vacant land left over from the proposed Emanuel Hospital expansion and the Fremont Bridge ramp construction.

Russell Street Today

The I-5 overpass still forms a barrier that divides Russell Street into two distinct halves. West of I-5, the street has an industrial character during the day and has become an entertainment district during the evening hours. N Mississippi and N Albina Aves also have a light industrial character. Recent years have seen signs of a revival as new restaurants and other businesses have moved into the area. East of the freeway, the street is wider and has open space on either side, much of it resulting from clearance of the land for the proposed expansion of Emanuel Hospital in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As in the past, transportation improvements will provide an opportunity for Russell Street to regain some of its former use and importance.



Oregon Historical Society, #OrHi 25043
N Williams Ave at Russell Street, 1962.



Russell Street and N Mississippi Ave. looking east.



Participants prepare for the community walk, June 11, 2002.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The public process for the North Russell Street Improvement Planning Project included a wide range of involvement opportunities for residents, business owners, workers and others who use the street regularly.

The goal of the community involvement process was to build the capacity of diverse community members to make informed recommendations by respectfully listening, promoting dialogue, and providing technical support and information in accessible, understandable, and creative formats.

The stated objective of the involvement process was to “go through a public process to identify the character of the project area and develop streetscape design concepts to support the identified character.”

To involve a diverse community requires a variety of approaches, though much of our success in involving diverse peoples had to do with the relationship building that the project team has been establishing for the past three years. The relationships have been built on a track record that has reflected the consistent commitment to fully informed, constructive participation that has stressed the importance of inclusiveness, the encouragement of expression, and the desire to bring conflicting perspectives to the table to negotiate the best plan possible.

The community involvement process was about listening and promoting dialogue. As recommendations and plans were being developed, project staff made themselves readily available to research and respond to inquiries that could assist the community in making better-informed decisions. This process served to build further trust, as participation has been more inclusive of traditionally underrepresented peoples and community members have seen evidence of being heard reflected in the planning. There is now a collective memory of why and how decisions have been made, and a collective investment in creating the best project possible.

Written Materials

An important part of making the planning process accessible was to produce materials that were clear and understandable to a variety of people. Flyers and posters listing project objectives and timelines were created to advertise the project, and the schedule for the Community Walk, the Design Work Session, the Alternatives Prioritization Workshop and the Preferred Plan Open House was publicized at the beginning to give community members advance notice of the process.

Written materials were provided in Spanish, Cantonese, Korean, and Vietnamese, as well as English.

During the door-to-door survey flyers, posters and postcards were distributed to residents within a two-block radius of the project area and to businesses within the broader study area and beyond.

Community Survey

A community survey was developed to identify how the street was being utilized and what improvements were needed. The survey effort was aimed at residents and businesses located within a two-block radius of the project area. Approximately 140 surveys were completed.

Survey forms were printed in the above mentioned five languages, plus Mandarin. During the survey, interpreters were made available via cell phone in the above mentioned six languages, plus Somali.

Community-Based Groups and One-On-One Outreach

Community-based racial/ethnic identified groups, environmental and social service organizations, government agencies, churches; and neighborhood and business associations were briefed on a regular basis. The briefings served to inform community members about the Project, to encourage thinking about the various ramifications of the Project decisions, to build organizational representative capacity and to sustain community involvement.

One-on-one meetings and phone calls were made to community stakeholders, as 'regular folks' need to be kept apprised of the decisions being made and how those decisions might affect their specific interests. Staff would often strategize with community members, alerting them to important junctures/times/meetings wherein they might most effectively access pertinent decision making and authority.

Media

The Public Service Announcements for the community meetings were distributed to print, radio, and television media for each of the four community meetings. Media representatives serving underrepresented populations received personalized phone calls explaining the significance of each meeting. Articles that we know of appeared in: The Portland Observer, The Asian Reporter, Noticias Latinas, El Hispanic News, The Scanner, The Oregonian, The Portland Tribune, Eliot Neighborhood Association Newsletter, Boise Neighborhood Association Newsletter and the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area Bulletin. Announcements were also broadcast on Portland Cable Access Community Calendar and KBOO radio.

Public Events/Community Meetings

This project provided a number of opportunities for the community to get involved. Community members were given an opportunity to provide input at each key phase of the planning process, from the identification of issues at the beginning of the process to the final location of street furniture and the type of streetlights.

The project team wanted to welcome to the meetings as many community members as possible, and they made a number of special provisions, these included:

- Holding meetings in the evening.
- Providing meals from local vendors.
- Providing certified child care.
- Offering language interpretation and translation.
- Providing bus service information with meeting notices and individualized transportation when requested.

Community meetings were preceded by direct contact that described what would be discussed and why community members should be involved. These included over 350 phone calls and more than 1,000 e-mails per meeting. Over 5000 postal mailers were sent the first and last meetings and went out to the other two meetings.

The project meeting schedule is shown below:

EVENTS	DATES												
Existing Conditions Community Walk	◆	June 11, 2002											
Design Work Session		◆	July 23, 2002										
Alternatives Prioritization Workshop				◆	Sept. 24, 2002								
Community Advisory Committee Meeting					◆	Oct. 8, 2002							
Preferred Plan Open House						◆	Oct. 22, 2002						
Community Advisory Committee Meeting							◆	Nov 14, 2002					
City Council Hearing Adoption												◆	Fall, 2003

Community Advisory Committee Meetings

A 19-member Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was appointed to advise the project team on the design process, evaluate the public comment, and represent the varying perspectives in each project area. CAC members were recruited to bring diverse backgrounds and interests to the table to formulate a fully considered final recommendation.

The first CAC meeting was held as a focus group. The focus group gave the CAC members a chance to meet and talk about the big issues and to learn each other's perspectives. Two of the CAC meetings were held in conjunction with the community meetings: The Community Walk and the Design Work Session. Combining the public events with the CAC meetings served two purposes; it gave the public a chance to attend the CAC meetings and encourage CAC members to attend the public events. There were six CAC meetings for the Russell Street Improvements Community Advisory Committee.

The CAC made decisions based on the consensus of the group, and the meetings were operated based on meeting principles that all CAC members agreed to before the process began.

Community Focus Group

A post survey/pre-Community Walk focus group convened to explore potential issues and ideas, to help frame the future community meeting discussions. Focus Group members were selected because of their diverse interests, backgrounds, and relationships to the street. The facilitated Focus Group lasted 2-hours and was audio taped in addition to having note takers. Notes were documented in the 'Summary of Community Input'. (Appendix B)

Community Walk

Forty two community members took the opportunity to walk through the project area and talk with each other and project staff about specific issues and ideas. At the beginning of the walk, a history of the area was given by historians Cathy Galbraith of the Bosco Milligan Foundation and Tim Hill of McMenamins. To provide some context for the discussion, community members were encouraged to contribute their knowledge and memories. Participants were given note pads and were divided into groups. Each group included a facilitator and an architect. The facilitator moved the groups along, took written notes, architects sketched participant's ideas. Notes and drawings were documented in the 'Summary of Community Input'. (Appendix B)





Design Work Session

Fifty eight community members attended a design work session that was held to establish ideas for alternatives. The design team presented a “toolbox” of design items. Community Advisory Committee (CAC) and project team members performed a short play that demonstrated what was going to happen during the small group discussions. The participants then broke into small groups, each of which included at least one CAC member, a facilitator, a designer, and a policy expert. The groups spent most of the evening hovering over a large table map of the project area, discussing and deciding how to apply the design tools (stickers depicting each tool were distributed, as well as pens, which community members applied directly to the maps). Groups identified unifying themes for the project area. The final half-hour of the night was reserved for a report back by a CAC member from each small group. The input from the design workshop was used to create different alternatives.



Alternatives Prioritization Workshop

The Alternatives Prioritization Workshop was designed to narrow the alternatives down to a preferred alternative. The project team started the workshop with a brief power-point visual description of each of the design issues to be discussed. Participants then broke into small groups around a large map (which they were encouraged to draw on) depicting the project area and pictorially articulating some of the issues raised previously. An assigned facilitator used a pre-written discussion guide as a mechanism to advance discussion toward addressing identified issues and choices (so as to encourage collective decision making about what solutions the groups’ community members preferred). The second part of the workshop was a discussion of broader area organizing concepts that, when applied to a design and identified themes, served to unify the details of the design throughout the project area. The discussions were summarized by the facilitators and given to the design team to produce a preferred alternative.

Preferred Plan Open House

The 47 community members who attended the open house had the opportunity to comment on the Community Advisory Committee's preferred alternative for the Russell Street Improvement Plan. The Open House included three separate and progressive station areas separated by curtains. The first station was a slide presentation on the history of the project and the process, along with an opportunity for initial questions and answers. Upon entering the next station, there was a display of the actual maps and produced documents from the previous community workshops. Central to the second station was the large map and picture display of the preferred alternative for people to make comments on. The design team was on hand to facilitate the comments and answer questions. The last station gave participants an opportunity to vote on the details of the plan, including their preferred streetlights, trees, benches, banners and waste receptacles. In addition, community members were able to make notes on a blank map as to what and who used to be in the area prior to its' current incarnation.



Continuing Outreach

An important part of the outreach process has been to keep working with stakeholders to address outstanding issues in the area.

Project staff continued the outreach process beyond the main public meetings as the project moved forward towards the finalization of a draft preferred plan and adoption by City Council.

Project staff worked with local businesses to ensure that the proposed plan did not have a negative impact on the truck traffic that is vital to businesses in the lower Albina industrial area. Staff worked with businesses such as Striemer Sheet Metal Works, Tarr Inc. and Widmer Brewing. In one case, the preferred plan was modified to ensure driveway access was maintained.

Staff have also worked with members of the city's traffic investigations team to address continuing traffic concerns on the edges of the project study area along N Williams Ave. and N Vancouver Ave. In these cases, a solution may not be addressed as part of this planning project but may only be arrived at through a comprehensive study of the N Vancouver/Williams corridor and through continued work by the traffic investigations team with community members.

ROADWAY CONFIGURATION

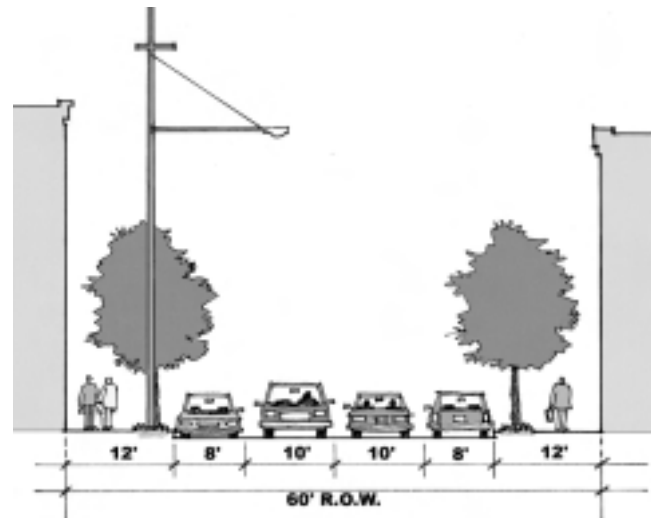
N Russell Street has a 60 foot wide Right Of Way (ROW) between N Interstate Ave and N Ross Ave. The sidewalks in this section are 12 feet wide with a roadway width of 36 feet. East of N Ross Ave and under the I-5 overpass the ROW gradually widens to 90 feet. Between I-5 and N Williams Ave the 90 foot wide ROW includes sidewalks that are 12 feet wide and a roadway that is 66 feet wide. The section of Russell Street east of the freeway has a median that varies in width from 3 to 15 feet to accommodate turn lanes.

Russell Street has one travel lane in each direction between N Interstate Ave and N Williams Ave with on street parking in most locations except between N Ross and N Commercial Aves where Russell Street passes under I-5. Bicycle lanes are provided on both sides of the street from N Ross to N Williams Aves.

N Mississippi and N Albina Aves between N Interstate Ave and Russell Street both have a 60 foot ROW with 12 feet wide sidewalks and 36 feet wide roadway. These streets each have one travel lane in each direction with on street parking.

Sidewalks

Russell Street has a continuous sidewalk that is adjacent to the street in the Project Area west of I-5. The sidewalk in this section is 12 feet wide and mostly dates back to the early part of the 20th century. In many locations the sidewalk is in a poor state of repair. At the start of this project, most of the intersections west of I-5 did not have curb ramps to ease access for people using wheelchairs and strollers. In the spring of 2003, curb ramps were constructed at intersections on Russell Street from Interstate Ave to Ross Ave as part of the city's curb ramp program. East of I-5, the configuration of the Russell/Kerby intersection means that there is no marked pedestrian access across N Kerby Ave for people using the north side of Russell Street. The sidewalk east of I-5 is also 12 feet wide on the south side on the street, on the north side of Russell the sidewalk is 7 feet wide with a 5 feet wide planting strip. The longest distance between protected pedestrian crossings (crossings with traffic signals) is currently about 1900 feet (from N Mississippi Ave to N Vancouver Ave).



RUSSELL STREET WEST OF I-5



RUSSELL STREET EAST OF I-5

N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave have continuous 12 feet sidewalks on both sides of the street. As part of the Interstate MAX construction, the sidewalks on the east side of N Mississippi Ave and on the west side of N Albina Ave between N Interstate Ave and Russell Street have been upgraded to include curb ramps and other amenities such as new street lighting.

Parking

On street parking is available on most parts of Russell Street, N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave in the Project Area on both sides of the street. Some parking is limited to one hour and two-hour zones or restricted during business hours to allow for truck loading in the section of Russell Street west of N Borthwick Ave.

Traffic Signals

Traffic signals are located on Russell Street at the intersections with N Interstate Ave, N Mississippi Ave, N Vancouver Ave and N Williams Ave. A traffic signal is also located at the intersection of N Albina Ave and N Interstate Ave. The traffic signal at the intersection of Russell Street and N Mississippi Ave is scheduled for removal. The signal equipment at this location has reached the end of its service life. A traffic study has shown that the volume of traffic at this intersection is well below that required for signalizing an intersection, the study also showed that the intersection would function better as an all-way stop with a flashing red signal.

Lighting

The streetlights on Russell Street west of I-5 and on N Mississippi and N Albina Aves are of the cobra head style typically used on city streets outside of downtown. East of I-5, the lights used are typical of the Emanuel Hospital campus that extends several blocks north of Russell Street between N Kerby and N Williams Aves.

Pedestrian scaled single ornamental street lights have been placed on the east side of N Mississippi Ave and the west side of N Albina Ave between N Interstate Ave and Russell Street as part of the Interstate MAX light rail construction.

Transit

Russell Street, N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave do not presently carry transit service in the Project Area. However, each end of the project area is served by a number of TriMet bus routes: line numbers 1 and 5 on Interstate Avenue, and lines 4, 33 and 40 on N Vancouver and N Williams Aves.

TriMet is currently assessing a proposal to re-route line 33 to travel on Russell Street between N Interstate Ave and Williams/Vancouver Aves. If the reroute of line 33 goes ahead, the preferred location for bus stops along Russell Street would be at the intersection with N Albina Ave.

Trees

There are few street trees on the portion of Russell Street west of I-5, or on N Mississippi and N Albina Aves, except for the block of Russell Street between N Interstate Ave and N Mississippi Ave where a number of trees have been planted by the adjacent property owners. East of I-5, there are mature trees regularly spaced on both sidewalks and in the center median of the street. Street trees have been added to the east side of N Mississippi Ave and the west side of N Albina Ave between N Interstate Ave and Russell Street as part of the Interstate MAX light rail construction.

TRAFFIC

On average, Russell Street carries between 3,800 and 5,600 vehicles per day in both directions. Traffic volumes are highest around N Vancouver and N Williams Aves and between N Interstate and N Mississippi Aves (see Appendix C). The lowest volumes are east of N Mississippi Ave. N Albina Ave carries 1,100 vehicles per day in both directions. (9% of traffic on Russell Street is trucks, west of I-5 that proportion increases to 25%).

Russell Street, between N Interstate Ave and N Williams Ave carries between 3,000 and 6,000 vehicles per day. Truck traffic accounts for approximately 13 percent of the total volume of traffic on Russell Street between N Interstate Ave and N Ross Ave, west of the I-5 overpass, and 9 percent of traffic volume east of the I-5 overpass to N Williams Ave.

Speeds

The 85th percentile is a standard engineering measure of speed, indicating the speed at or below which 85 percent of the traffic is moving. Traffic speed data is measured for a 24 hour time period during a normal weekday.

The speed limit on Russell Street is posted at 25 mph. The current 85th percentile speeds on Russell Street vary by location. Just east of N Interstate Ave, the 85th percentile speed is 23 mph. Near N Ross Ave, the 85th percentile speed is 36 mph. Between the I-5 over crossing and N Vancouver Ave, the 85th percentile speed is 33 mph. 85th percentile speeds greater than 5 mph over the posted speed are considered excessive.

On N Williams Ave south of N Stanton St, the speed posted on N Williams Ave is 30 mph and the 85th percentile speed is 32 mph.

Safety

Vehicle crashes reported to the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for the five years, 1997 through 2001, are compiled in a table (see Appendix C). The locations included all cross streets in the project area and crashes east of Interstate and west of Williams Ave only.

The signalized intersection of Russell Street and N Vancouver Ave had the highest number of crashes in the 5-year time period. Several of the collisions at N Vancouver Ave were vehicles turning from the wrong lane. There were no reported collisions at either N Borthwick Ave or N Ross Ave for the 5-year time period.

One pedestrian collision was reported at N Kerby Ave resulting in a pedestrian injury.

POLICY CONTEXT

Albina Community Plan & Eliot Neighborhood Plan (1993)

The Albina Community Plan represents a commitment to improving the quality of life in north and northeast Portland. It emphasizes jobs and wealth creation in the Albina Community, and implements land use, transportation and public use strategies. It also focuses on the preservation of the Albina neighborhoods, historic areas, and housing stock. The Russell Street Improvements Project supports the Albina Community Plan's objectives related to the addition of light rail on Interstate Avenue and the emphasis of Russell as a main street in the district.

The Eliot Neighborhood Plan was developed as part of the Albina Community Plan Process and is based on the "Eliot Neighborhood Vision Statement" that was developed jointly by the Eliot Neighborhood Association and Emanuel Hospital. The Plan includes a specific vision for Russell Street and Lower Albina: "Russell Street has become a historic design district between I-5 and Interstate. While this historic district retains its light industrial flavor, at night its combination of brewpubs, loft housing, shops, a jazz museum, live music clubs, restaurants and cafes makes it one of Portland's premier entertainment areas. The area is connected to adjacent residential neighborhoods by attractive and safe walkways for pedestrians leading to the east on Russell Street and to the North on N Mississippi Ave."

Goals and objectives related to Russell St include:

- Provide safe and attractive routes for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Strive for fully-improved rights-of-way which include curb ramps for disabled persons.
- Protect residential areas from impacts of through-traffic and the traffic of commercial, employment and institutional districts.

- Reduce the environmental impacts of the I-5 freeway.
- Use entertainment activities, hospitality industries, athletic and recreational centers, and daycare, park and other community facilities as attractors or primary anchors for the development and revitalization of small commercial centers and nodes.
- Use public resources to improve streets and amenities within business and employment centers to attract private sector investment and stimulate business growth.
- Develop symbols and design themes unique to the Albina Community's residential, commercial and employment districts that reinforce their positive characteristics.
- Design and install public improvements that are attractive and responsive to the needs of the area.
- Foster the creation and enhancement of district and neighborhood attractions and focal points.
- Create a network of safe, comfortable, pedestrian pathways that link the district's neighborhoods, commercial areas, transit facilities, parks, water features and other attractions.
- Protect and enhance Albina's historic and cultural characteristics and encourage compatible, quality development.
- Gateways: Emphasize the major gateways to Eliot including Interstate and Russell using transportation system improvements and other amenities.
- Plant street trees on Russell Street, Interstate Avenue, and Greeley Avenue.
- Create a gateway at the intersection of Russell and Interstate celebrating arrival at Russell Street entertainment district.

Central City Plan

West of the I-5 freeway, Russell Street is in the Lower Albina section of the Central City Plan area. The Central City Plan also calls for gateways to the Lower Albina area and to develop Russell Street as a pedestrian connection to the Eliot neighborhood. Russell Street is designated as an historical district and as an industrial sanctuary.

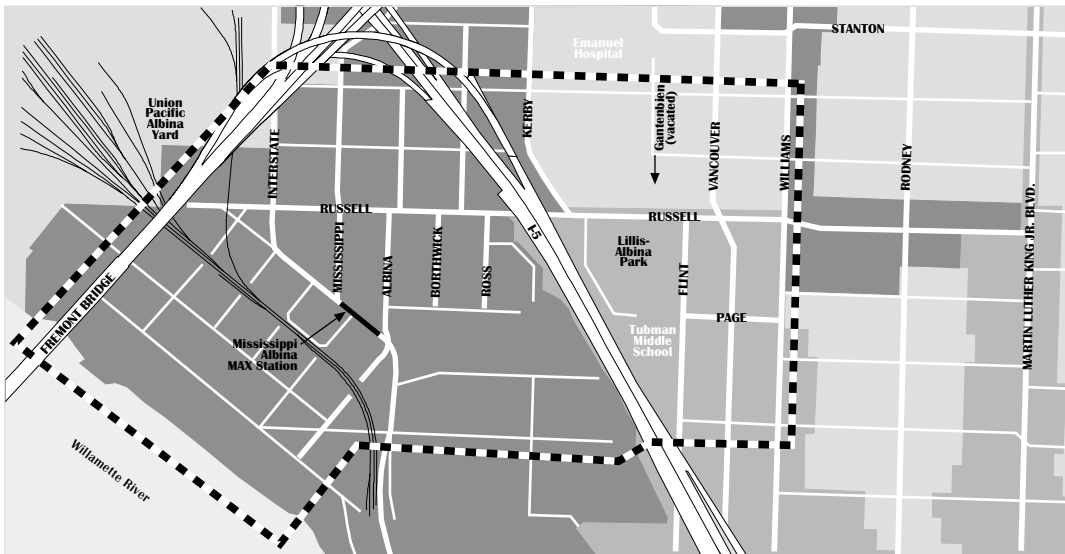
Emanuel Hospital Impact Mitigation Plan (1994)

The Emanuel Hospital Impact Mitigation Plan requires the hospital to address neighborhood livability issues proactively and provides it with flexibility in development, expansion and construction. The pedestrian circulation objectives and guidelines related to Russell Street include: Providing a pedestrian circulation system that connects buildings with bus and future light rail transit and adjacent residential areas. Establishing attractive outdoor spaces for pedestrian activities. The plan specifically calls for minor pedestrian access between the hospital buildings and Russell Street in the area of the vacated portion of N Gantenbein Ave.

Urban Renewal Areas

Urban renewal is a state-authorized, redevelopment and finance program administered by the Portland Development Commission (PDC) designed to help communities improve and redevelop areas that are physically deteriorated, suffering economic stagnation, unsafe or poorly planned. PDC uses urban renewal as a tool to focus public attention and resources in blighted or underused areas to stimulate private investment and improve neighborhood livability.

Parts of the Russell Street project area lie within one of two separate Urban Renewal Areas (URAs); The Interstate Corridor URA and the Oregon Convention Center URA (see map below). Both Urban Renewal Areas provide means to implement components of the Albina Community Plan and also provide important funding sources for development projects and for supportive public infrastructure improvements. Specific urban renewal objectives related to Russell Street include revitalization along mainstreets, optimizing light rail investment, and the importance of transportation improvements as a catalyst for redevelopment.



URBAN RENEWAL AREAS

- Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area
- Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Area

Transportation System Plan (TSP) and Central City Transportation Management Plan (CCTMP) Street Classifications

The segment of the Project Area from the I-5 overpass west to N Interstate Ave is within the Central City Transportation Management Plan (CCTMP). The Russell Street Project Area is partially within two plan districts. The segment of the Project Area from N Williams Ave to the I-5 overpass is within the North District of the Transportation System Plan (TSP). The street classifications from both plans are outlined below.

Street classifications included in the TSP and CCTMP specify the functional purpose of the street and dictate what types of automobile, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, truck, and emergency response uses should be emphasized in the design of each street and its surrounding land uses.

Street Classifications for Russell Street		
	West of I-5	East of I-5
Traffic	Traffic Access Street (CCTMP)	Neighborhood Collector
Transit	Transit Access Street	Transit Access Street
Bicycle	Local Service Bikeway	City Bikeway
Pedestrian	City Walkway	City Walkway, Pedestrian District
Freight/Truck Routes	Local Service Truck Street	Minor Truck Street
Emergency Response	Major Emergency Response Street	Major Emergency Response Street
Street Design	Community Main Street	Community Main Street

Street Classifications for N Mississippi & N Albina Avenues		
	Mississippi	Albina
Traffic	Local Service Traffic Street	Local Service Traffic Street
Transit	Transit Access Street	Local Service Transit Street
Bicycle	Local Service Bikeway	Local Service Bikeway
Pedestrian	City Walkway	Local Service Walkway
Freight/Truck Routes	Local Service Truck Street	Local Service Truck Street
Emergency Response	Major Emergency Response Street	Major Emergency Response Street
Street Design	Local Street	Local Service Street

Pedestrian Master Plan (1998)

Russell Street east of I-5 is part of the Eliot pedestrian district. The Pedestrian Master Plan details recommended pedestrian policies, street classifications and design guidelines. The Plan also designates areas within the city as Pedestrian District project areas. Pedestrian district projects include a wide range of improvements including widening sidewalks, curb extensions, street lighting and signing.

The Russell Street Improvements Project Area east of I-5 lies within the Eliot Pedestrian district. Sidewalks in pedestrian districts are recommended to be 15 feet wide and should be separated from vehicular traffic by landscaping or on-street parking. Crosswalks, signalized crossings, curb extensions and pedestrian refuges are also recommended. Protected crossings should be considered at every corner or at 400-foot intervals, whichever is less. Where two arterial streets cross within a Pedestrian District, design treatments such as curb extensions, median pedestrian refuges are recommended. In addition, marked crosswalks and traffic signals should be considered.

Land Use and Zoning

Russell Street once served as the main street of the City of Albina. The construction of I-5 and the expansion of Emanuel Hospital changed the role of the street from being a neighborhood commercial street to what it is today.

West of I-5, land use is mostly industrial and commercial. This area, also known as Lower Albina, is designated as an Industrial Sanctuary. The Industrial Sanctuary Designation is intended for areas where City policy is to reserve land for existing and future industrial development. A full range of industrial uses is permitted and encouraged. Non-industrial uses are limited to prevent land use conflicts and to preserve land for industry. The corresponding zones are General Industrial 1 (IG1), General Industrial 2 (IG2), and Heavy Industrial (IH).

East of the freeway, the primary land use is Emanuel Hospital on the north side of Russell Street. On the south side of Russell Street, east of the freeway, most of the land is open space with a small commercial strip between N Flint and N Williams Aves. East of N Williams Ave, the land use is largely residential.

The zoning classifications for Russell Street, N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave in the Project Area are:

- Central Employment (EX) in the area of the Russell/Mississippi intersection.
- General Industrial 1 (IG1) along N Mississippi and N Albina Aves and along Russell Street between Albina Ave and the I-5 overpass.
- Institutional Residential (IR) on the north side of Russell Street between N Kerby and N Williams Aves.
- Open Space (OS) on the south side of Russell Street between Commercial and Flint Aves.
- Storefront Commercial (CS) on the south side of Russell Street between N Flint and N Williams Aves.
- East of N Williams Ave, the zoning is primarily residential (R1).

The 2 blocks of Russell Street between N Interstate Ave and N Albina Ave (in addition to buildings at the Knott/Mississippi intersection) form the Russell Street Conservation District. Design guidelines for this district are meant to encourage the retention and rehabilitation of those elements that constitute the historical and architectural character of the district while accommodating reasonable changes. These elements include buildings built right to the front and side property lines, and pedestrian orientation in scale and function.



STUDY AREA ZONING

EVOLUTION OF DESIGN CONCEPTS

The streetscape design portion of the planning process for the Russell Street Improvements Planning Project began with the first Community Design Workshop on July 23, 2002. Community members were asked to work with detailed maps of the project corridor and begin to record the kinds of improvements they would like to see there.

Workshop participants were randomly assigned to five different groups, with each group assisted by a designer, a facilitator and a recorder. Each group addressed the entire corridor, recording their ideas by drawing on the maps or applying icon stickers to represent various streetscape elements such as street trees, streetlights, benches, telephones, curb ramps, and curb extensions. Each group was also asked to rate the importance of those same amenities.

In the month following the workshop, the design team analyzed the information recorded on the maps, looking for patterns and common areas of concern. The design team produced design analysis sketches that summarized the salient points of each of the five maps. The sketches show some commonality between the concerns of the five groups. Every group called out the I-5 underpass as an issue of central importance. Problems at the intersection of Russell Street and N Kerby Ave were also noted.

The analysis also revealed some common themes identified by the community. For example, several of the groups called for gateway elements to mark the entry into the neighborhood.

Based on the analysis of the community design maps, the design team began to formulate some choices for the community to make at the alternatives evaluation workshop, and to think about organizational structures for the design elements identified by the community. In August, the design team prepared three distinct concept ideas for the project. Each concept is a way of thinking about the project area that guides the design decisions and choices of improvements. Each concept was also associated with certain themes.

RUSSELL STREET IMPROVEMENTS DESIGN CONCEPTS

Concept A: “Ribbon with Gateways”

This concept featured the idea of a continuous element, or “ribbon,” that would help guide people from one end of the project area to the other, and gateways that would define the entrances to the area.

Themes:

- “Indomitable spirit” of the people and neighborhood
- Historic recognition
- Artistic wayfinding



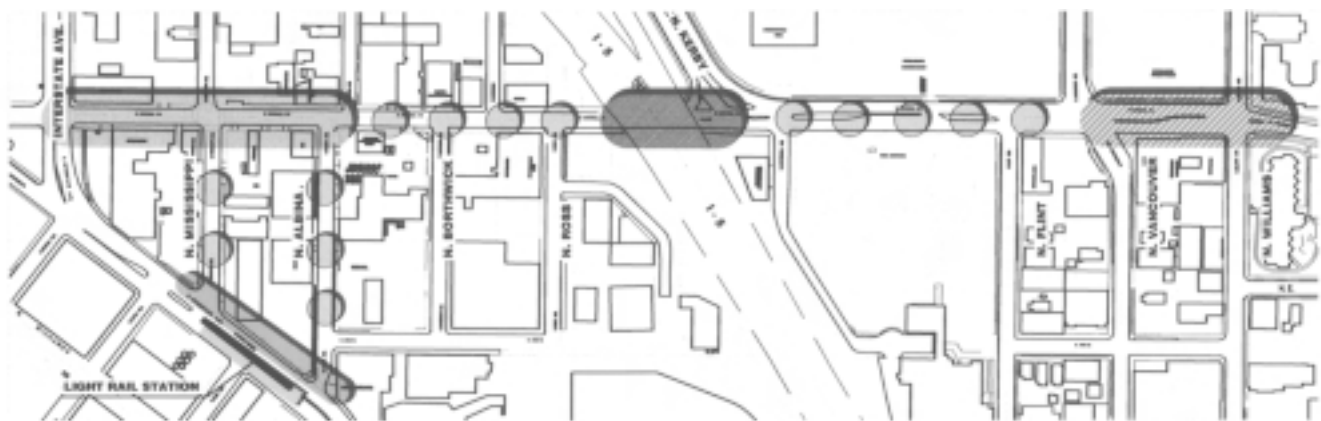
A RIBBON with GATEWAYS

Concept B: “Places and Links”

The four areas identified by the community as most important would be given the most attention with special improvements. In the links between these places there would be a basic level of improvements, such as new sidewalks, curb ramps, and street lights.

Themes:

- Celebrate the eclectic mix of uses in the neighborhood
- Celebrate the historic identity of the neighborhood



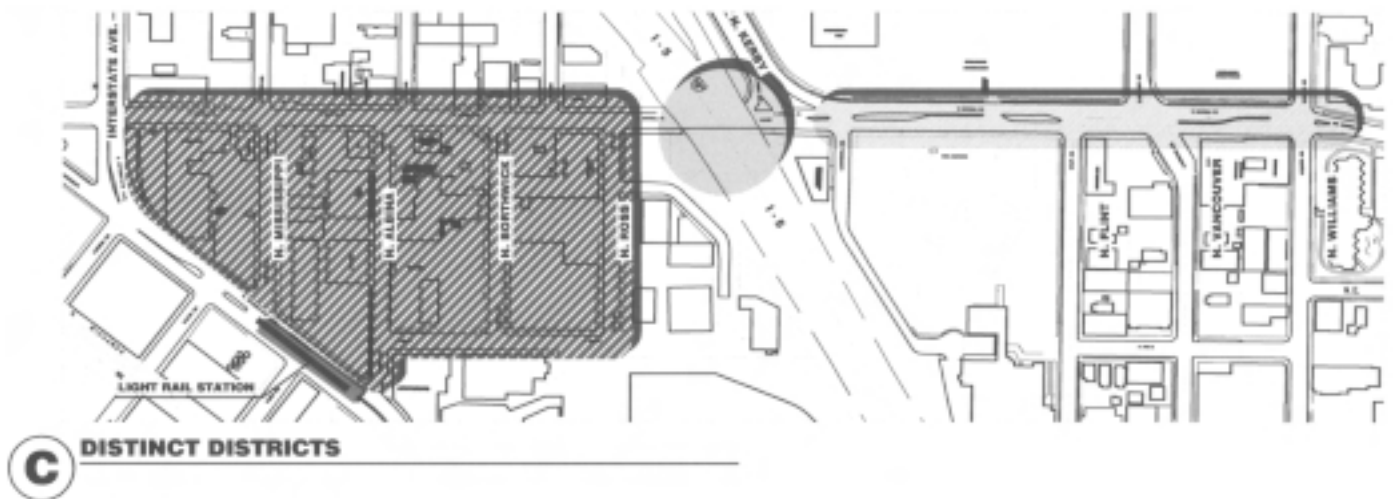
B PLACES and LINKS

Concept C: “Distinct Districts”

This concept divides the project area into two distinct districts, the “Lower Albina” district west of I-5 and the “Upper Albina” district east of I-5. Different treatments would be applied in the two districts to highlight their distinct characters. To knit the two districts together, a special treatment would be applied at the I-5 underpass.

Themes:

- Recognition of historic character and ethnic identities in each district
- Honor the industrial use and character of the area
- Respect the unique mix of industrial and commercial uses in the area
- Promote the day/night business uses in the area



CONCEPT EVALUATION

At the Community Design Concept Evaluation Workshop in September 2002 the community responded to these three design concepts. Participants divided into small groups to discuss and record their responses. There was divided opinion about the concepts presented. Generally, there was strong support for some kind of unifying element as opposed to the separation of a district approach. Project staff reviewed the community responses and comments and recommended blending elements of some of the concepts to create a preferred concept of “Ribbon with places,” that would include a unifying element throughout the project and special treatment at the places identified by the community as most important.

At the workshop, the design team also looked at nine areas with more detailed design issues for the community to address in the small group setting. Following the evaluation workshops, City staff synthesized the community’s responses and prepared draft staff recommendations for consideration by the Community Advisory Committee. A discussion of each decision follows.

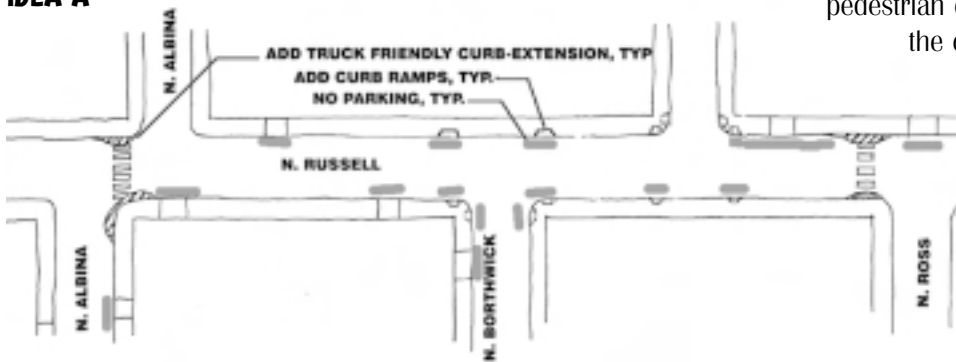
1. Russell from Interstate to I-5

On the walks and in the Design Workshop, the community identified both a need for more places to cross the street safely in this section and a desire to make things better for truck movements. The traffic engineer illustrated how “truck-friendly” curb extensions (see sidebar)

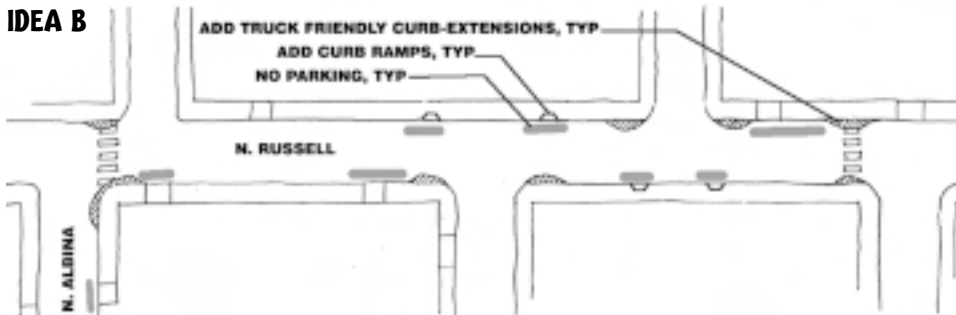
could be used to benefit both truck movements and pedestrian crossings. The design team offered

the community two variations on the application of truck-friendly curb extensions. Idea A added curb extensions at the intersections of Russell Street and N Albina Ave and Russell Street and N Ross Ave. Idea B included those two intersections, and, in addition, proposed truck-friendly curb extensions at Russell Street and N Borthwick Ave.

IDEA A



IDEA B

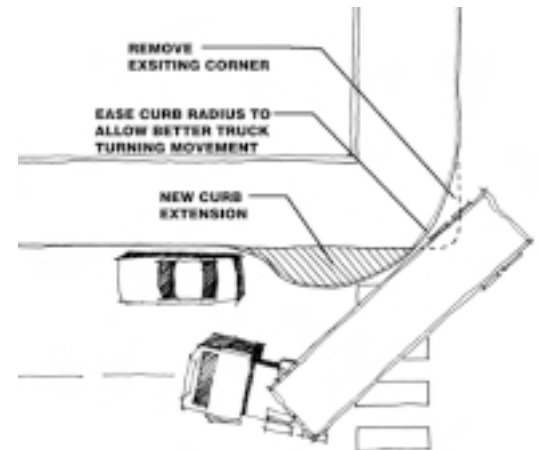


Community opinion on these two alternatives as well as on whether to use curb extensions in this section at all was divided. While some people enthusiastically supported the installation, others commented that this stretch of Russell Street is already relatively narrow and is not that hard to cross.

Balancing the community’s ambivalence and the technical advantages of the curb extensions, staff recommended that Idea B be incorporated into the final design.

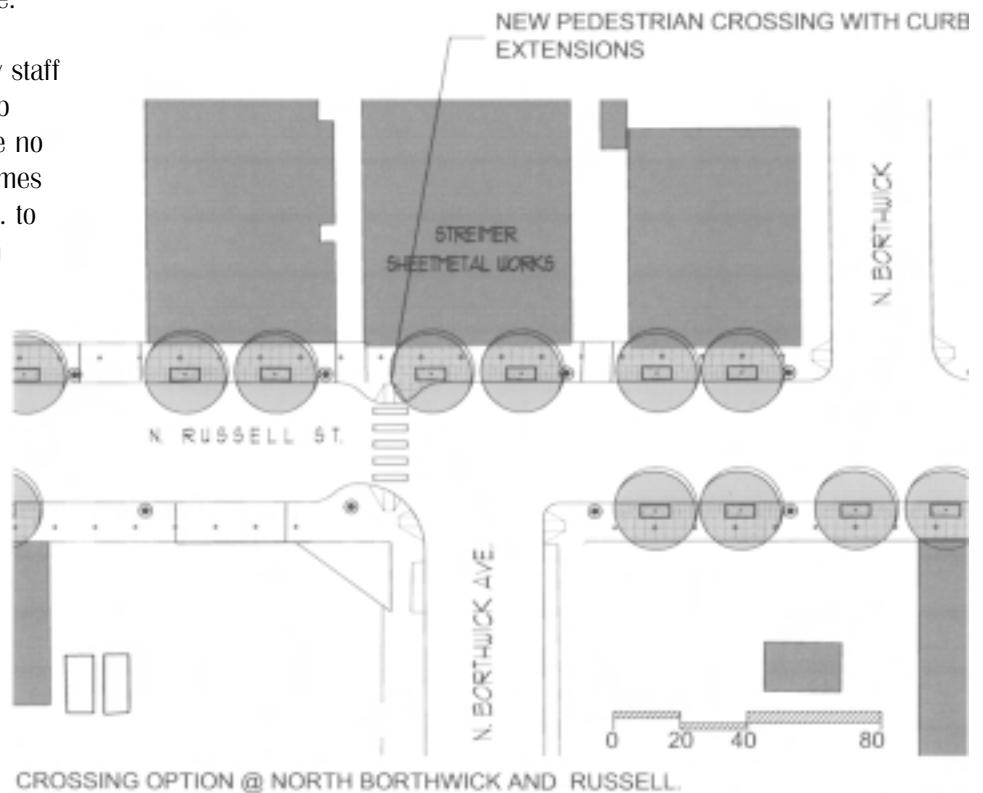
What is a “Truck-Friendly” Curb Extension?

Curb extensions help make crossing the street safer and more convenient for pedestrians by shortening the crossing distance and putting pedestrians where they can see and be seen. Curb extensions can be truck-friendly when they are designed with a generous compound curb radius that a truck can easily turn around. By preventing on-street parking of cars too close to a corner, curb extensions improve sight distance at intersections for all drivers, and make truck movements easier.



The Community Advisory Committee, in considering this recommendation, looked closely at the issue of on-street parking. They concluded that, in fact, the installation of the curb extensions would provide the greatest retention of on-street parking, and concurred in the recommendation to include curb extensions with marked crosswalks at N Albina, N Borthwick and N Ross Aves. The CAC helped the design team choose exactly which of the corners would receive this crossing treatment, taking into account existing driveways and parking restrictions. The City staff committed to consciously designing the curb extension to occupy as little of the on-street parking area as possible.

After the CAC’s recommendation, city staff took another look at the planned curb extensions to be sure that there were no negative impacts. Staff met several times with Streimer Sheet Metal Works, Inc. to discuss their use of the driveways on the north side Russell Street opposite the intersection of N Borthwick Ave. After careful study of truck turning radii and movement into and out of the driveways, it was decided that placing curb extensions on both sides of the street at this location would not work. This meant that idea A would be the preferred option and this is the one that has been shown on the final plan. However, if Streimer decides to reconfigure its property or sell, idea B could be used. A plan of this option is shown on the previous page.





N Mississippi Ave.



N Mississippi Ave with sidewalk improvements.



I-5 overpass.

Marking Crosswalks

There is a legal crosswalk at every leg of every intersection, whether or not there are crosswalk markings, unless otherwise indicated. The one exception is that, under State law, if a crosswalk is marked at an intersection that becomes the only legal crosswalk. The City of Portland generally does not mark crosswalks at unsignalized intersections, except where markings are needed to indicate to pedestrians and motorists the safest place for pedestrian crossing. At offset intersections, or at closely spaced “T” intersections, overall pedestrian safety and convenience may be increased by selectively enhancing some crosswalks while eliminating others.

2. N Mississippi and N Albina Avenues

The Interstate MAX project included the installation of some new street trees and streetlights on the east side of N Mississippi Ave and the west side of N Albina Ave, between N Interstate Ave and Russell Street. The design team asked the community to help decide what level of additional improvements would be appropriate for the final plan, whether new sidewalks should be put on both sides of the street. One consideration is that the west side of N Mississippi Ave in this stretch is mostly driveway. In the final plan, improvements are shown on both sides of both streets.

3. I-5 Overpass

There was a high level of community consensus in identifying the safety and appearance of the I-5 underpass as major community concerns. The design team responded with a sketch of one possible intervention which included lighting, screening and designation art. The troll sculpture under the Fremont Bridge in Seattle was shown as an example of such art. At the Design Concept Evaluation workshop, the community was asked what they liked and disliked about this concept.

Better lighting got a very favorable response, as did the idea of destination art. People responded well to the idea of introducing color. However, ODOT expressed a concern about any prominent element that might distract drivers. Subsequent work with the CAC established the importance of the lighting and the art as well as the importance of closing off the upper reaches of the space under the bridge.

4. Russell Street and N Kerby Avenue

The interruption of the pedestrian path on the North side of Russell Street at the N Kerby Ave intersection was identified as a problem, especially with higher pedestrian use expected along both sides of Russell Street. At the Design workshop, a number of people supported a conceptual alternative that would realign the entire N Kerby Ave intersection into a more standard “T” configuration. However, due to the grades, the surrounding hillside and the proximity to the I-5 structure, such a realignment was judged to be problematic by the traffic engineer and the design team. Working together, the engineer and the design team proposed to implement a more modest realignment that would allow the installation of a continuous sidewalk along the North side of Russell Street. The channelization of the two southbound lanes would be eliminated as they are realigned to be nearly at a right angle to Russell Street. A larger pedestrian refuge island would separate the north- and southbound lanes, and the northbound lane of N Kerby Ave would be narrowed at the throat of the intersection to slow traffic, shorten the crossing and improve pedestrian safety. The new crosswalk would be aligned so that pedestrians have a good view of approaching vehicles. The new crosswalks and sidewalks section would complete the pedestrian network on the North side of Russell Street.

At the Concept Evaluation Workshop, there was support for making changes to this intersection. Some felt the proposed changes described above were “too timid.” The CAC also suggested a more aggressive intervention, but after discussion of the constraints, they supported the partial realignment, with the caveat that, in the future, should traffic and pedestrians volumes increase, the possibility of using an all-way stop will be reexamined.

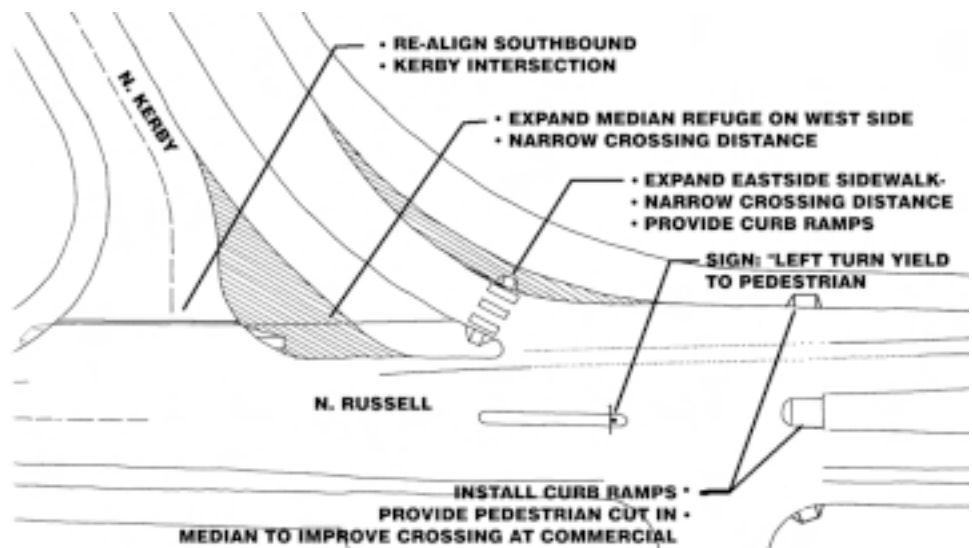
The design team recognized that the grades on the north side of Russell Street may create some running slopes in the sidewalk that compromise the accessibility for people with disabilities. Although the ADA allows sidewalks to follow the grade of the roadway, the team felt that giving people the option to cross Russell Street to the more moderately-sloping sidewalk on the South side would provide a greater level of accessibility. As a result, a marked crosswalk across Russell at Commercial was added to the preferred design.



Russell Street at N Kerby Ave.



Russell Street at N Kerby Ave showing interrupted sidewalk on north side of street.





Russell Street at vacated N Gantenbein Ave

5. Russell Street from N Kerby Avenue to N Vancouver Avenue

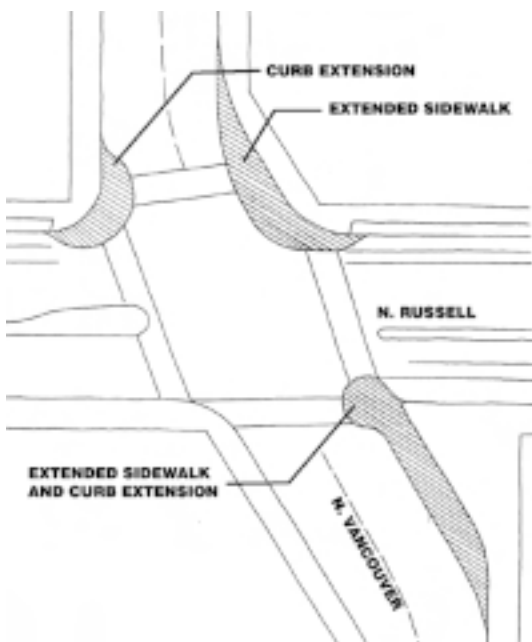
In this section, the design team responded to two concerns identified by the community: the need for an additional opportunity to cross Russell Street, and a desire for a more open entrance to Lillis-Albina Park. The team proposed curb extensions and a marked crosswalk across Russell Street at the point where the now-vacated N Gantenbein Ave intersects Russell Street. On the North side, the Emanuel Hospital Master Plan calls for the Gantenbein corridor to be developed as a pedestrian connection to the Emanuel campus. On the South side, the proposal included a new stairway and entrance to the park, with pedestrian amenities such as pedestrian seating and drinking fountains.

The community was asked whether they supported this idea, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Staff recommended including this in the plan, and the CAC reaffirmed this decision.



Russell Street and Gantenbein Ave pedestrian connection with new entrance to Lillis-Albina Park.

In the course of discussing this area, the project team and the community were able to resolve some other issues related to the safety of students at Harriet Tubman Middle School. Subject to the standard community approval process for traffic calming devices, three speed bumps will be added on N Flint Ave near the school. Flashing lights will be added to the school zone signs on N Vancouver Ave and N Williams Ave at N Page St. A crosswalk will be marked across Russell Street on the west side of N Flint Ave.



6. Russell Street and N Vancouver Avenue

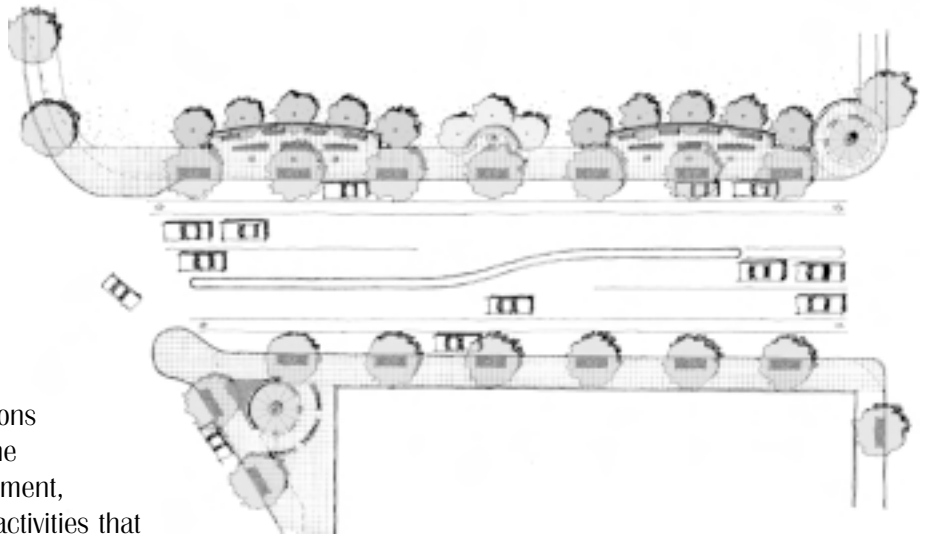
During the Community Walks, the length of the crosswalks at the signalized intersection of Russell Street and N Vancouver Ave were noted as a problem. The traffic engineer identified that there is more pavement than needed for the traffic movements in that intersection, and the design team proposed to narrow the intersection at the corners to make the crosswalks shorter and allow the crosswalk on the east side of N Vancouver Ave to align better. This solution would create additional pedestrian space on the corner outside Sloan's Restaurant.

This idea was strongly supported by the community in the Concept Evaluation Workshop, and staff recommended inclusion in the plan. The CAC modified the recommendation by removing the proposed curb extension on the northwest corner of the intersection to preserve the existing right-turn-only lane.

7. Russell Street from N Vancouver Avenue to N Williams Avenue

Out of a suggestion made during the Community Walk came the proposal to put a “Promenade” along the north side of Russell Street between N Vancouver Ave and N Williams Ave. This section has the vacant Legacy parcel to the north, and the proposal was to encroach (with permission) on the Legacy property to create a much wider sidewalk area that would feature a high level of amenities such as seating, drinking fountains, planters and historic markers.

The community was asked to respond to what they liked and disliked about the promenade proposal, and the response was generally very positive. The reservations expressed were related to what impact the promenade might have on future development, and possible problems with undesirable activities that might be associated with an attractive seating area that has no real pedestrian generators such as restaurants and other businesses.



There were a number of people who suggested extending the promenade concept further, and the CAC eventually decided to include in the final plan an extension of this treatment all the way to Gantenbein to connect to the proposed crosswalk and new park entrance.

8. Russell Street from N Williams Avenue to NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

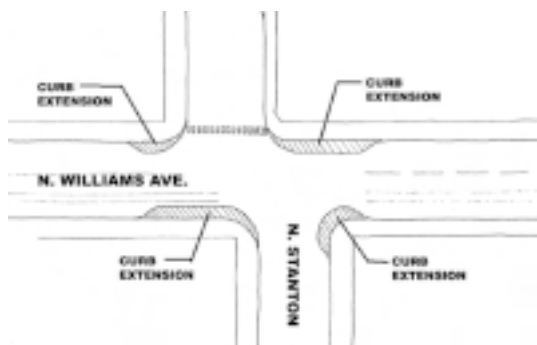
Although the project boundaries end at Williams, there were several members of the community who suggested that the project be extended east to NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. There was general community support for this idea.



NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and Russell Street looking west.

4. N Williams Avenue and N Stanton Street

Although this intersection was not within the project boundaries, there was an extremely strong community request for action to address safety concerns at this location. At the Concept Evaluation Workshop, the community was asked whether they preferred to add curb extensions to shorten the crossing distance or to study the possibility of adding a pedestrian-activated signal at this location. Opinion was somewhat divided, with a slight margin of support for the curb extensions. From a technical point of view, a traffic signal was not warranted here. The traffic engineer also analyzed the possibility of adding a median refuge. The CAC was presented with a refined alternative that included the curb extensions along with pedestrian-activated flashing overhead cabinets. This solution was accepted by the CAC with one dissenting vote.



Due to continued concern about the safety of this intersection, the traffic investigations group in the Office of Transportation completed a detailed study of traffic conditions at this location. Based on this evaluation, traffic conditions did not meet warrants. Traffic Design staff suggested a median island in addition to curb extensions as a solution. The analysis is shown in Appendix C. Engineering staff also said that pedestrian activated flashing overhead signals were not a good option due to cost and being unproven technology.

Project staff suggested that traffic issues along N Williams and N Vancouver Aves could not be remedied on a piecemeal intersection by intersection basis. A better way to deal with the problems along these streets was to study a stretch of the streets as a single project or study and that the city should seek funding for such a study.

The design alternatives discussed here were combined with the recommended concepts to create the preferred plan.

4 PREFERRED DESIGN PLAN

PREFERRED DESIGN CONCEPT AND THEME

The design concept organizes the design elements for street improvements. The preferred concept and theme is as follows:

“Ribbon with Places: This concept features the idea of a continuous element, or ‘ribbon,’ that would help to guide people from one end of the project area to the other. Places identified by the community as most important will be given significant attention with special improvements. Historic, cultural and ethnic identities that have contributed to the area will be expressed artistically all along the street. The unique mix of industrial, commercial and institutional uses would be recognized at the places.”

PREFERRED DESIGN CONCEPT



In assessing the design concepts, CAC members needed to decide if the concepts meet the objectives listed below.

- Recognize the diverse historic, cultural, and ethnic identity of N Russell Street east and west of I-5.
- Design improvements in a way that accommodates the truck traffic serving businesses in the industrial area.
- Identify improvements to create not only safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access to light rail, but improvements that draw and motivate people to want to explore this unique area and benefit from the transportation opportunities.
- Provide connections to the Eliot neighborhood and Emanuel Hospital via Russell Street.
- Enhance pedestrian environment around the light rail station.
- Balances the needs of retaining businesses in the Lower Albina Industrial Sanctuary with the needs of providing safe pedestrian access to the light rail station for existing institutions and residents.
- Bicycle access will be planned around truck access, on street parking and the limited Right-of-Way.



Ribbon sidewalk markers.

REALIZING THE CONCEPT AND THEMES IN THE DESIGN

THE RIBBON ELEMENTS

The plan calls for new sidewalks, street trees and streetlights throughout the project. As called out in the concept, these elements will be applied differently in the three types of design districts.

Ribbon Sidewalk Markers

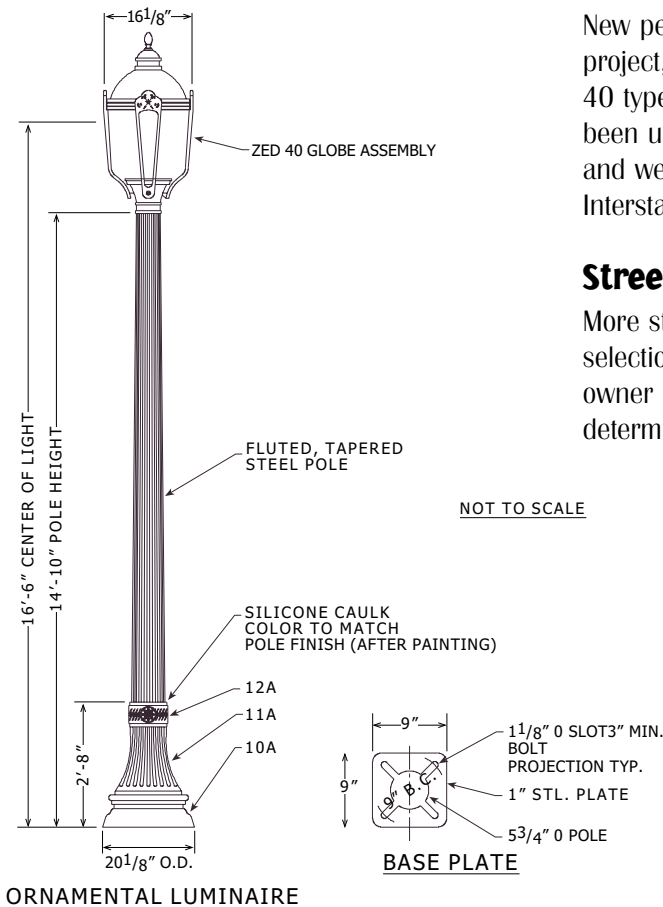
The most distinct ribbon element is the plan to incorporate unique markers in the sidewalk. The markers are conceived as bronze diamonds, with a design that should reflect the community's chosen theme. The markers are to be placed every twelve feet in the new concrete sidewalks. The sidewalks will be scored as shown on page 45.

Streetlights

New pedestrian-scaled streetlights will be included throughout the project, giving a unified look. The proposed streetlights are of the Zed-40 type Luminaire and pole assembly. This type of streetlight has been used for the new lighting on the east side of N Mississippi Ave and west side of N Albina Ave that was provided as part of the Interstate MAX light rail construction.

Street Trees

More street trees would be added in the project area west of I-5. The selection of trees will be a partnership between the adjacent property owner and the City's Urban Forester. Tree placement will be determined by property visibility, driveway location and safety issues.



THE PLACES ELEMENTS

The Historic District

In this section of Russell Street, between N Interstate Ave and N Albina Ave, the existing historic feeling will be maintained with minimal addition of furniture. A gateway element will be added at N Interstate Ave and Russell Street.

The MAX Station

Gateways to the Russell Street area will be added at N Interstate Ave and N Albina Ave and at N Interstate Ave and N Mississippi Ave. The installations will include signage or maps that direct people to the upper part of Russell Street. Signage will include information for persons with disabilities regarding the easiest route (up Mississippi).

The I-5 Underpass

Lighting and art will be the main elements used to enliven the scary space of the I-5 underpass. In addition, the upper reaches of the space under the freeway will be blocked off. The new streetlights will continue through the underpass area, and additional flood lighting will be added. This additional flood lighting may be implemented ahead of other improvements. The art should be of a scale and quality that it becomes a destination.



Concept for I-5 overpass.

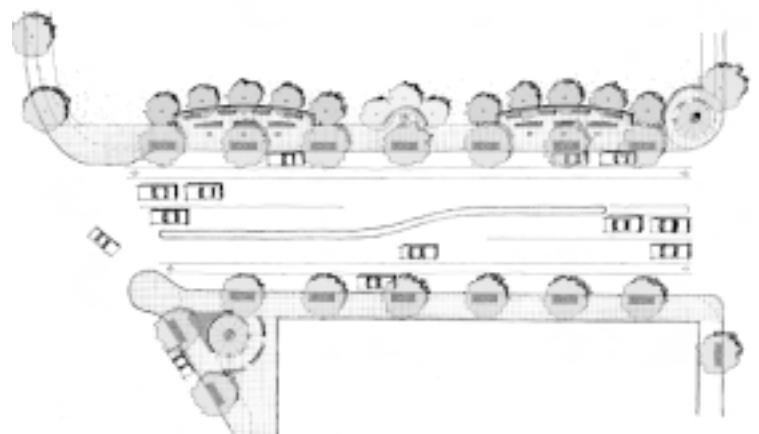
The Gantenbein Crossing

Curb extensions and a marked crosswalk will be installed across Russell Street at the vacated N Gantenbein Ave. A new entrance to Lillis-Albina Park will be constructed where the crosswalk terminates. The new entrance area will include seating, drinking fountains, stairs and a ramp into the park.



The Promenade

The sidewalk on the north side of Russell Street between N Gantenbein Ave and N Williams Ave will be widened (with the permission of and consultation with Legacy Emanuel Hospital) to include benches, planters, trees and historic markers. Gateway elements will be included at the northwest corner of Russell Street and N Williams Ave and the southeast corner of Russell Street and N Vancouver Ave. Special transit shelters with community and historic information will be installed at the northbound transit stop north of Russell Street on N Williams Ave and the southbound stop on N Vancouver Ave south of Russell Street.



ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS

New Transit Stops

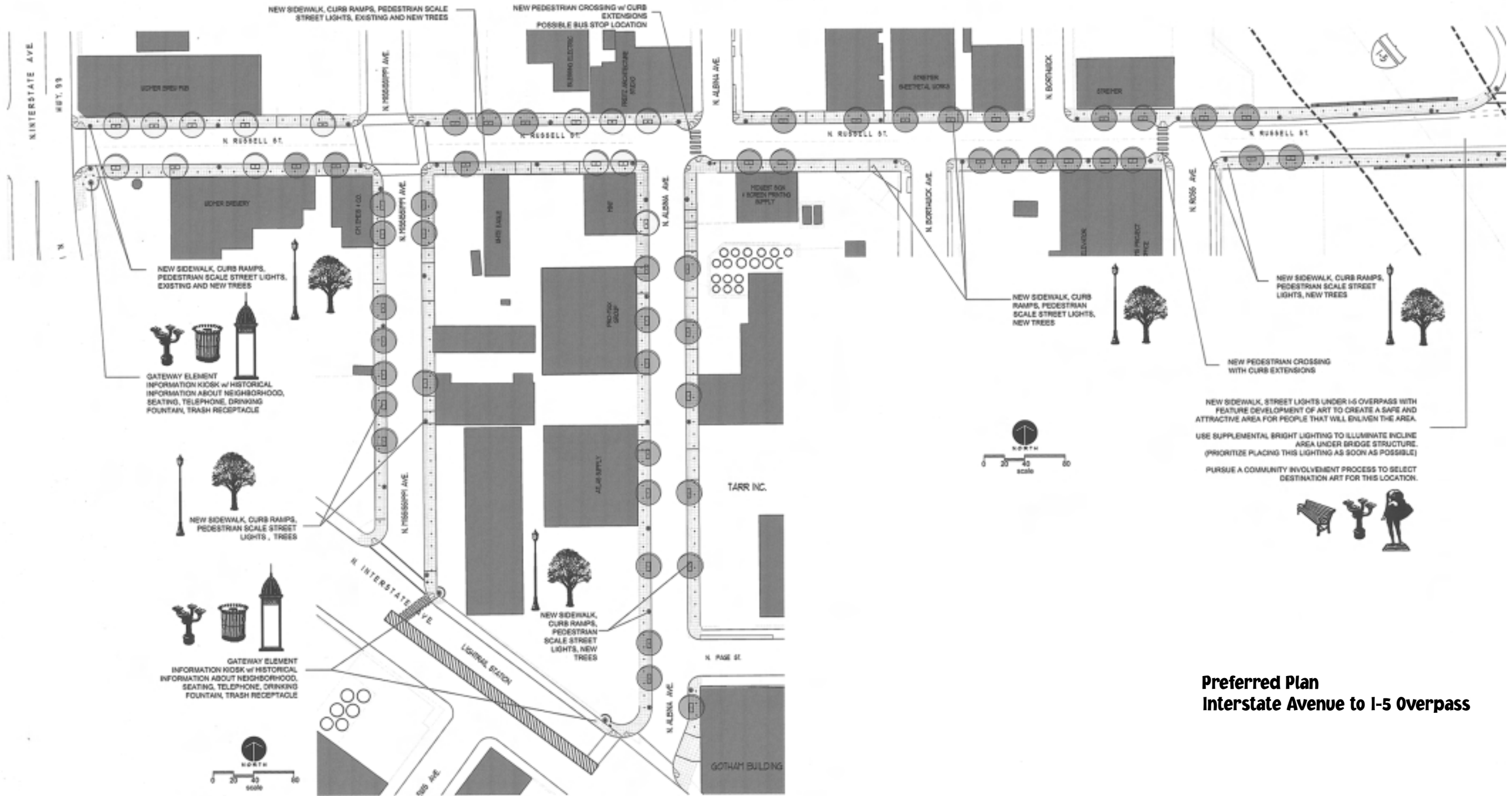
At the time of this report, TriMet was working on a plan to reroute bus Line 33 to provide service on Russell Street between N Vancouver Ave and N Interstate Ave. The decision was still in process. It is likely that new transit stops will be located along Russell Street near N Albina Ave.

Crossing Improvements

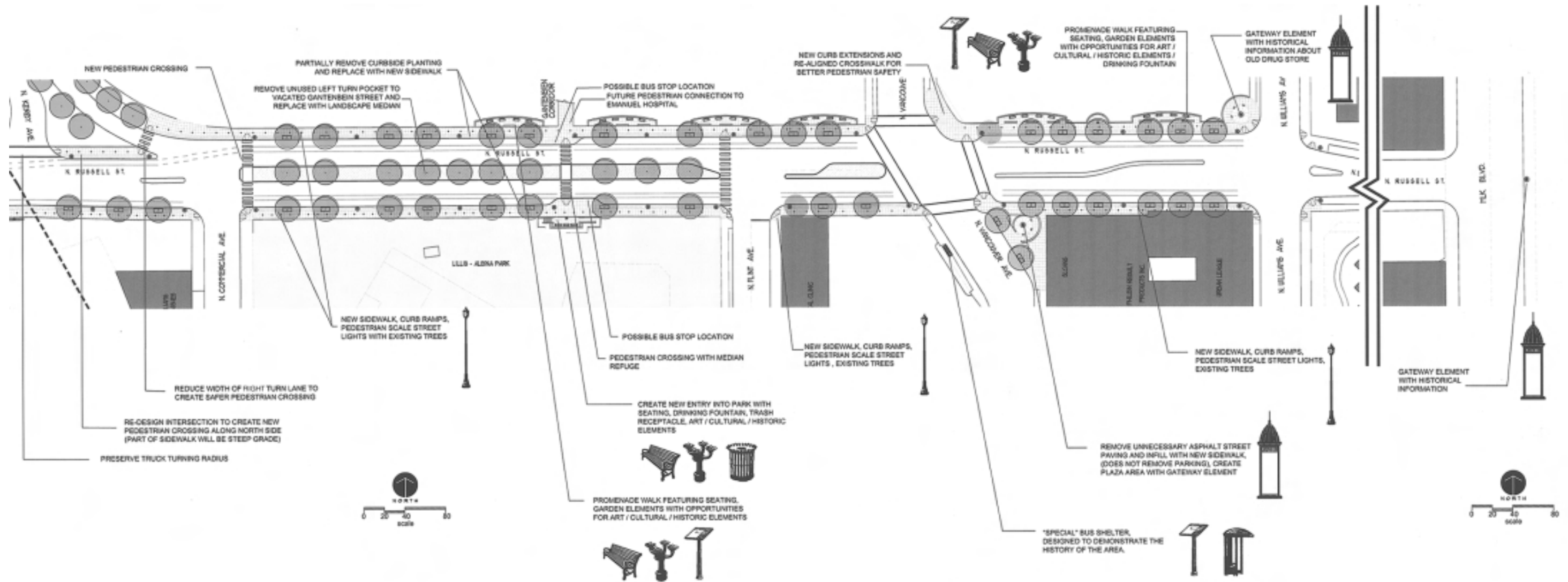
Improved pedestrian crossings with curb extensions and marked crosswalks will be installed across Russell Street at N Albina Ave, N Borthwick Ave and N Ross Ave. Curb extensions will be 'truck friendly' (see page 29) to minimize the loss of on-street parking. Crosswalks will also be marked at N Commercial Ave and on the west side of the N Flint Ave intersection. An improved crossing with curb extensions and overhead signs will be installed at N Williams Ave and N/NE Stanton Street.

School Safety Improvements

Speed bumps will be installed on N Flint Ave. Flashing school beacons will be added to the school zone signs on N Vancouver Ave and N Williams Ave at N Page St.



**Preferred Plan
Interstate Avenue to I-5 Overpass**



**Preferred Plan
I-5 Overpass to Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.**

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

Project Phasing

The improvements outlined in this plan would cost approximately \$3.3 million. The total consists of:

N Mississippi Ave – N Interstate Ave to Russell Street	\$245,000
N Albina Ave – N Interstate Ave to Russell Street	\$390,000
Russell Street – N Interstate Ave to N Williams Ave	\$2,437,000
N Williams Ave at N Stanton Street intersection	\$255,000

Although the phasing of improvements was not discussed in detail by the CAC, the following outlines a possible strategy for project phasing.

- Phase I improvements could emphasize sidewalk improvements on Russell Street between N Interstate Ave and I-5 and also on N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave between N Interstate Ave and Russell Street. Russell Street itself is on the Bureau of Maintenance list to be re-paved in 2003/2004. Improvements such as crossing markings could also be done as part of the re-paving project.
- Phase II improvements would include the portion of Russell Street east of I-5 to N Williams Ave. In this section, the promenade improvements would require a partnership with Emanuel Hospital as the widened sidewalk would be constructed on land owned by the hospital.
- A final phase of the project would be to add pedestrian-scaled lighting along Russell Street from N Williams Ave to NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. This phase would also add a gateway marker at the intersection of Russell Street and NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. This portion of Russell Street received some sidewalk improvements in early 1990's.

Some incremental improvements may be implemented through other city programs. In the spring of 2003, ADA compliant curb ramps were constructed at all intersections on Russell Street west of I-5 as part of the curb ramp program. Community members at the start of this project cited the lack of curb ramps at these locations as a major problem. Also in the spring of 2003, an Audible Pedestrian Signal (APS) was installed to assist sight impaired community members at the intersection of Russell Street and N Vancouver Ave.

Public improvements in the project area may also help to leverage privately funded investment to improve properties adjacent to the project area.

Other Project Elements

The I-5 overpass improvements to provide a more attractive environment for people using Russell St. will require a targeted funding strategy. Providing bright lighting under the bridge structure may require that lights be attached to the structure itself which would require working with the Oregon Department of Transportation, who owns the structure. Making this area more attractive provides an opportunity for local artists to work with the community to provide an attractive space. This location may also provide an opportunity for alternative ways of providing improvements using the model of the City Repair Project, who have worked with the community and the city to do neighborhood street improvement projects in several City of Portland neighborhoods.

TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT

N/NE ECO-Collaborators

The N/NE ECO-Collaborators group grew out of the desire of large employers within the Lower Albina Industrial area to meet the newly created Employee Commute Option (ECO) Rules adopted by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality in 1996. These employers originally came together to share ideas and strategies for reducing drive alone commute trips and for completing the required ECO surveys. The group found the collaboration helpful and has continued to meet over the years. The group provides advice to help businesses meet ECO requirements. Several members of the N/NE ECO-Collaborators actively participated in the Russell Street project. Currently, representatives from the following employers and interested organizations participate in the group: City of Portland Water Bureau, City of Portland Bureau of Maintenance, City of Portland Bureau of Transportation System Management, Portland Public Schools, Legacy Emanuel Hospital, Widmer Brothers Brewing, Swan Island Transportation Management Association, TriMet, and the Eliot Neighborhood Association.

The City of Portland Bureau of Maintenance, Legacy Emanuel Hospital and Portland Public Schools all participate in TriMet's passport program which provides reduced rate bus passes for employees.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Portland Development Commission (PDC)

The Portland Development Commission (PDC) will be a key funding partner in implementing the street improvements outlined in this report. PDC oversees both of the urban renewal areas (URAs), the Interstate Corridor URA and the Oregon Convention Center URA of which the project area and study area are parts. Both urban renewal areas serve as primary means of implementing components of the Albina Community Plan.

Urban Renewal Areas provide funding sources for development projects and supporting public infrastructure improvements.

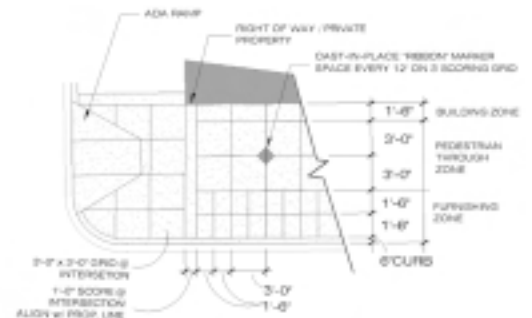
PDC has developed the Storefront Improvement Program. This program provides grants to assist property and business owners in rehabilitating their storefronts. The following are allowed if these repairs are part of the work directly affecting the building facade: landscaping, fences, sidewalk repair, bike racks, seal coating and restriping of parking lots and interior window display lighting.

DESIGN DETAILS

A number of elements that will eventually define the Russell Street project have been left unspecified to increase the opportunity for artistic expression, as described in the previous section. There are four elements for which more detail is provided as part of this plan:

Gateway Element

The gateway element is designed to make a playful historic reference to the onion dome that once graced the Hill Block building on the corner of Russell Street and N Williams Ave and now stands alone as a gazebo in Dawson Park. The gateway element would be constructed in different versions according to location. At the MAX station and at N Interstate Ave, the gateways would incorporate community and historic information. At N Williams and N Vancouver Aves, those functions would be transferred to the special transit shelters, and the gateway elements would be gateways only. An example is shown here.



Sidewalk Scoring

The dimensions for the sidewalk scoring pattern and location of the diamond markers are shown to the right.

Streetlights

The pedestrian scale streetlights for this area will be the Zed 40 in green. See cut sheet (on page 36) and photo to the right.

Street Trees

There was unanimous support by the CAC for more trees in the area west of I-5. Selection of street trees will be a partnership between each affected property owner and the Urban Forester, with consideration of visibility needs.

The design team met with Urban Forestry staff to discuss selecting the appropriate trees for the street improvements. Street trees are a highly desirable part of the pedestrian environment. Shade trees moderate sidewalk temperatures and can extend the life of asphalt. However, selecting the right tree to fit the differing conditions and provide long-lasting value is a challenge. One very controlling factor is availability



of trees in the required 3.5 inch to 4 inch caliper size. Because of this, it was decided to provide a suggested list of species choices rather than specifically determine what trees should be used for each block of the study area. As the streetscape is incrementally built when each property redevelops, the designer can select trees based on availability using the list as a guideline.

The team discussed the possibility of specifying one tree for the entire streetscape plan to link together the entire length of the street. This approach would be more successful if the entire streetscape were implemented at the same time. Currently there is no funding for total redevelopment, but there are individual properties that could potentially redevelop. Availability again plays a role because the nursery industry could not provide the number of trees in the required size to plant the entire corridor. Another factor making one tree selection difficult is the variety of existing trees that include a major stand of Sweetgum trees east of the I-5 overpass and several Ash trees at the Widmer properties.

For this and other reasons, the design team and Urban Forestry recommend planting many different species along Russell Street, N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave. This strategy reinforces the design concept by helping to differentiate the districts along the study area. It also allows the designer to select trees of the right size and habit to fit the different spatial opportunities or limitations.

The following are guidelines for selecting trees at different conditions along Russell Street, N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave:

The sidewalk width throughout the study area is 12 feet.

Overhead power lines exist on the south side of Russell Street. However, at a few locations, there are auxiliary poles to feed specific lots on the north side of Russell Street. Power lines are also along the east side of N Mississippi Ave and the both sides of N Albina Ave. Trees selected to be planted underneath power lines should not exceed 30 feet at maturity.

On Russell Street between N Interstate Ave and N Mississippi Ave, the existing Ash trees are in good condition, but block views of the historic building. They should be pruned as they mature to create an open canopy that will allow the buildings architectural detail to be viewed from the street. New trees shown on the plan for this area should be of a matched species.

At Russell Street between N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave, there are existing Crabapple and Flowering Plum trees at the east end of the area. New trees shown on the plan do not need to match existing species. At the White Eagle Tavern, tree selection should be carefully done to avoid interfering with views of this historic building.

At Russell Street between N Albina Ave and the I-5 overpass, there is only one existing Columnar Norway Maple at the SW corner of N Ross Ave and Russell Street. As new trees are selected for this block face (with overhead power lines above), the Maple should be replaced with the newly selected species to create uniformity for the block face.

On N Mississippi Ave between Russell Street and N Interstate Ave, there are two Columnar Norway Maples at the south end of the west side of the street. As new trees are selected for this block (with overhead power lines above the east side of street), the Maples should be replaced with the newly selected species to create uniformity for the block.

On N Albina Ave between Russell Street and N Interstate Ave, there are two Purpleleaf Norway Maples at the north end of the west side of the street and two Columnar Norway Maple trees at the middle of the east side of the street. The northern-most Purpleleaf Norway Maple is shown on the plan to be removed to allow better street light coverage. As new trees are selected for this block (with overhead power lines above the both sides of street), the Columnar Norway Maples should be replaced with the newly selected species to create uniformity for the block. The remaining Purpleleaf Norway Maple may remain as a specimen, but will need extensive pruning because of the overhead power lines.

On Russell Street between the I-5 overpass and N Williams Ave, there are existing Sweetgum trees planted along both sides of the street and the center median south of Emanuel Hospital. There is one new tree of another species planted along the south side of the street between N Vancouver and N Williams Aves. Many are in good health, but all of the Sweetgum trees along the south side of the street have been topped because of the existing overhead power lines. Where the median is shown on the plan to be extended, additional Sweetgum trees should be added. Along the north side of the street, if redevelopment on hospital property requires removal of the existing Sweetgums, a different species of replacement tree is recommended for more variety and better longevity of the sidewalk improvements. Along the south side of the street, the topped Sweetgum trees should be removed and replaced with a different tree species with a 30 foot maximum height at maturity.

The following are tree selections are provided to help the designer select trees to fit the varying conditions along Russell Street, N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave. Other trees may be proposed by the designer subject to approval by Urban Forestry:

Acer buergeranum – Trident Maple

Height 20', spread 20', deciduous, glossy green foliage, red orange fall color

Acer campestre – Hedge Maple

Height 35', spread 30', deciduous, dark green foliage, yellowish fall color

Acer davidii – David's Maple

Height 35', spread 25', deciduous, glossy deeply veined foliage, yellow, red, orange and purple fall color, distinctive bark with silvery white stripes on glossy green background

Acer truncatum x *platanoides* – Pacific Sunset Maple

Height 30', spread 25', deciduous, dark green glossy smooth foliage, yellow orange – bright red fall color.

Betula jacquemontii – Jacquemontii Birch

Height 40', spread 30', deciduous, dark green thick glossy foliage, yellow fall color, whitest bark of all birchs, does not suffer from aphids as other birchs

Cladrastis kentukea – Yellowwood

Height 30', spread 40', deciduous, bright green foliage, brilliant yellow fall color, spectacular white fragrant flowers May - June

Cornus capitata 'Mountain Moon'

Height 30', evergreen, grey-green foliage, large sulfur-yellow flower bracts June - July

Cornus kousa – Kousa Dogwood

Height 20', spread 20', deciduous, medium green foliate, reddish fall color, many varieties with different colors of flowers

Cornus omeiense – Mt. Omei Dogwood

Height 30', evergreen, glossy foliage with red new growth, creamy yellow flowers in June

Davidia involucrata – Dove Tree

Height 30', spread 30', deciduous, unique flowers with long white bracts that flutter in the wind

Fagus sylvatica 'Roseo-marginata' – Tricolor Beech

Height 30', spread 20', deciduous, purple foliage marked white with pink edge

Gleditsia triacanthos – Honeylocust

Height 35'-45', spread 35'-40', deciduous, several varieties suitable for use as street tree, can be shaped to fit tight conditions, open habit allows filtered sun through

Magnolia denudata – Yulan Magnolia

Height 30', deciduous, densely branched, pure white, fragrant, orchid-scented flowers Mar-Apr, flower petals edible, buds used in traditional Chinese medicine

Michelia maudiae

Height 30', evergreen, Magnolia relative, fragrant pure white flowers that are used in traditional Chinese medicine

Nyssa sinensis – Chinese Tupelo

Height 40', deciduous, coppery red new growth, glossy deep green foliage, brilliant pink – red fall color

Parrotia persica – Persian Parrotia

Height 30', spread 20', pink-tinted new growth, green foliage, yellow orange red fall color, exfoliating bark, hazy red flowers

Prunus cerasifera 'Thundercloud' – Thundercloud Plum

Height 20', spread 20', deciduous, dark purple foliage, featuring light pink plum blossoms

Quercus frainetto 'Schmidt' – Forest Green Oak

Height 50', spread 30', deciduous, dark green glossy foliage with rounded lobes, yellowish brown fall color

Styrax obassia – Fragrant Snowbell

Height 25', spread 15', deciduous, large deep green foliage, white fragrant flowers in June, drought tolerant

Viburnum odoratissimum 'Awabuki' – Awabuki Viburnum

Height 30', evergreen, glossy green foliage, fragrant white flowers in spring

Zelkova serrata – Zelkova

Height 40'-50', spread 40', green foliage resembles Elm, orange fall color, varieties include 'Green Vase' and 'Village Green'

The Art

An important component of this design is the art that is still to be defined. This project can be realized as a truly community-based effort through the definition, creation and selection of that art. The community itself may wish to take control of that process, and might very appropriately choose to work with local artists.

The art for Russell Street will provide an opportunity to reflect the theme of historic, cultural and ethnic identities that the community has identified for this project. Different installations or performances may emphasize different themes. Historic photos and documents may be incorporated into the artistic expression.

The art may be reflected in much of the street furnishings. The “ribbon element” of a bronze diamond marker in the sidewalks is one obvious opportunity for art and design. Other opportunities for artistic expression include benches, drinking fountains, trash receptacles and historic markers.

NEXT STEPS

Implementation of the Russell Street Improvement Planning Project will include the following steps:

- Present the plan to the Portland City Council for adoption, by resolution, as the guiding document for public right-of-way improvements along Russell Street and along N Mississippi Ave and N Albina Ave between N Interstate Ave and Russell Street.
- Seek funding to design and construct the recommended improvements.
- Work with local businesses to plan and schedule construction in a manner that minimizes impacts on businesses and community uses on the street.
- Continue to work with the Eliot neighborhood, local businesses and the artists’ community to define public art projects, identify funding sources and to write or support grant applications for public art.

Recommended Action

The Office of Transportation should seek funding to study the N Vancouver Ave and N Williams Ave couplet. This would allow a full investigation of pedestrian and traffic issues in the area. Such a study would also help to avoid the problem of dealing with each intersection on a piecemeal basis that merely moves the conflict to another nearby intersection.

Appendix A: Glossary

Appendix B: Summary of Community Input

Appendix C: Traffic Analysis Report

Appendices available only in hard copy.
Please contact Portland Office of Transportation
at 503-823-5185