BURNSIDE/COUCH TRANSPORTATION AND URBAN DESIGN PLAN TECHNICAL REFINEMENTS

Final Draft
June 2005
The image on the preceding page is an artist's rendering of the reconfigured 12th/Sandy/Burnside/Couch intersection. With the opportunity of vacating a portion of Sandy between 12th and 14th, it will be possible to create a gateway to the Central Eastside at that location. This illustration does not represent specific planned or required development proposals by property owners or the City of Portland.
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The project was managed by staff members in the Project Management Division of the Portland Office of Transportation. A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of representatives from a variety of city bureaus and outside agencies, advised the project team on the development and refinement of the tasks in this phase. The project was funded by the Portland Development Commission and the Portland Office of Transportation.
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The central city is walkable now and will be so in the future. With growing urban intensity and more traffic, this means equitable access to our streets and public ways for all modes of transportation, while maintaining human scale and walkability. Additionally, we will build on Portland’s remarkable design successes with improvements to Interstate-405, the east bank of the Willamette River, and Burnside Street, as well as other opportunities to upgrade the physical quality of central Portland.

~A 25-Year Vision for Central Portland
April 1999
INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The Portland City Council adopted the Burnside Transportation and Urban Design Plan in December 2002. The 2002 plan’s implementation strategy recommended a subsequent detailed design and analysis of the project area to enable the plan to proceed to preliminary engineering. It also called for refining the preliminary cost estimates, and implementation and funding strategies. This work is included in this report and completes all design work necessary to begin preliminary engineering.

The plan provides a vision and strategy for “humanizing Burnside” by transforming the Central City’s most blighted area into a “people place” that is comfortable, safe and exciting. Street improvements and new development will create a place to walk, congregate, work, live and visit.

The proposed improvements eliminate the barrier between the adjacent neighborhoods and businesses that Burnside presents today. Burnside is envisioned as a gateway to Portland’s most dense neighborhoods, with diverse and interesting districts and activities.

The Burnside Transportation and Urban Design Plan promises to provide safe access for all modes of travel. It will improve and clarify vehicular access to, from and within districts and neighborhoods where underdeveloped properties have development potential. The project boundary includes a 2.3 mile reach through the Central City from East 14th Avenue to West 24th Place.
The project area has the highest concentration of social services and affordable housing providers in the metropolitan area. Street life on Burnside and Couch is out of balance with other parts of the Central City although local service providers and businesses are making significant efforts to provide intervention and improvement. The transportation and urban design improvements recommended by this plan represent one important piece of a larger set of changes to preserve and enhance the delivery of those services and to bring this area into a healthy balance.

The Burnside and Couch Catalyst Development Study was prepared by the Portland Development Commission (PDC) in 2005. The study’s Executive Summary is in the Appendix of this report. The Burnside and Couch Catalyst Development Study describes development opportunities and potential project feasibility. It also illustrates the potential return on investment of the Burnside right-of-way improvements and provides a basis for tax increment financing projections. The Burnside and Couch Catalyst Development Study identifies a potential of $800 million of investment in the Burnside/Couch project area over a 20-year period. The study also projects the proposed development and transportation improvements to Burnside and Couch to result in 3,330 new jobs and 1,060 new housing units.

Transportation improvements and catalyst development study are directly linked and together release significant potential for creating jobs and housing. While both transportation improvements and catalyst development can advance separately, together they offer a much greater synergy and community benefit.

This report provides an overview of the transportation and urban design improvements, and detailed drawings and descriptions of specific project components. It also outlines a strategy for funding and moving the project into the preliminary engineering phase.
Process

Phase II continued the outreach and community involvement from the initial planning process that began with the pre-planning phase in 2000 and led to the adoption of the Burnside Transportation and Urban Design Plan in December 2002. An inclusive public process was designed to balance participation by a diverse constituency of property and business owners, residents, neighborhood organizations and citizens. The goal was to help participants and stakeholders visualize and advise refinements to the adopted transportation and urban design plan and to resolve technical refinements for each segment of the project area. For example, East Burnside work focused on technical design whereas Central Burnside work included visioning and alternatives development and selection as well as technical design.

Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee formed during the project’s pre-planning phase continued through the planning phase and was reactivated to ensure that community, civic and business groups on and near Burnside and Couch had an opportunity to participate in the process and advise the project team. The committee met each month from March 2004 to February 2005 to provide input and guidance on the design details, and the funding/phasing strategy. Committee meetings were conducted as work sessions to enable extensive participation by members.

Community Events

Public open houses were held in July 2004 and February 2005 to inform the community about refinements to the plan and provide opportunities to comment on the recommendations.

Community and Business Groups

The project team gave informal presentations to business and community groups throughout the project to keep these groups informed about the project’s progress and solicit their input. In addition, project team members met with individual property and business owners to discuss proposed design recommendations and give them an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Project Web Site

The project’s web site was updated monthly to include information about community events and Stakeholder Advisory Committee meetings. The draft report was posted on the web site to provide an opportunity for review and comment by the community.

Coordination with Other Projects

Work from other on-going planning efforts, including the NE 3rd Avenue and NE 4th Avenue Street Improvements, Portland Transit Mall Revitalization and the Portland Streetcar Project, were considered throughout the project.

Previous Goals and Desires

The diagram on the following page summarizes actions and policies for Burnside as defined by adopted neighborhood and district plans. These community-defined actions and policies are the foundation for the Burnside and Couch Transportation and Urban Design Plan.
Goose Hollow Station
Community Plan (Jan. 1996)

Develop Burnside Street as a place that integrates pedestrians, cars and bicycles in a quality environment.
Identify improvements for safe and convenient crossings at specific locations and design standards for future adjoining developments.
Improve pedestrian crossing along I-405, especially Burnside with adequate sidewalks, curb cuts and signals.
Examine building heights, FAR's, bonus sizes along Burnside commercial zone to address the character and scale of the neighborhood and continuity of the street.
Apply a special 10-foot setback for new development on both sides of Burnside.

Goose Hollow District Design
Guidelines (Feb. 1995)

Buffer and separate the sidewalk from vehicular traffic with street trees, plantings, and bollards.
Enhance the pedestrian promenade along Burnside Street and make it a linear focus for safe pedestrian activity by widening the sidewalk.
Maintain visual contact and surveillance between the inside of buildings and the adjacent public right-of-way space on Burnside.
Punctuate ground floors of buildings with many destination points such as entries for pedestrians and display windows.
Locate driveways and garage entrances on side streets where feasible, rather than crossing sidewalks along Burnside.
Provide pedestrian scale to buildings fronting the street with awnings and/or second floor balconies.

Vision Plan for the West End (July, 1999)

Redevelop Burnside Street as the district’s front door.
Enhance the pedestrian environment.
Create a gateway to the West End at Burnside.
Improve the link across Burnside Street to the Pearl District.
Provide a continuous streetscape treatment on West Burnside from 20th Avenue to the I-405 bridge overpass.

Old Town/Chinatown
Development Plan (Dec. 1990)

Remove barriers that West Burnside possesses: width, high traffic speeds and difficult pedestrian crossing.
Provide a left turn lane for eastbound West Burnside Street traffic onto 4th Avenue.
Reduce West Burnside to two lanes in each direction rather than three, add parking meters on street.
Reclaim sidewalk space by reducing excess roadway space.
Increase number of pedestrian crossings.
Commence study for the reconstruction of West Burnside as soon as possible.
Add curb extensions.
Revises or eliminate medians.
Provide special paving at crosswalks.

Lower Burnside
Redevelopment Plan (Feb. 1996)

Create an identity that reflects the character of the Central East side.
Increase on-street parking on or near East Burnside.
Investigate possible off-peak turn signals at Grand, MLK and East Burnside.
Investigate possible signal at 7th Avenue and East Burnside.
Improve streetscape with ornamental lighting, street trees, tree grates and special sidewalk scoring pattern.
Analyze feasibility of gateway feature at 12th/Sandy/ Burnside.

Northwest District Plan
(Apr. 2003)

Create a gateway at NW 18th/19th Avenues and West Burnside.
Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections across West Burnside.
Improve pedestrian and bicycle access across I-405 on West Burnside and NW Couch.

Goose Hollow Civic Stadium
Committee Vision (Mar. 2003)

Improve pedestrian crossings at 18th, 19th, Trinity Place, 20th, 20th Place and 21st.
Reconfigure intersections at 20th Place, 19th and 18th Avenues.
Change 19th Avenue to a two-way street from Morrison to West Burnside; design street so it could be closed for special events.
Close Morrison Street from West Burnside to 20th.

Bridge the Divide and
Cap I-405 (Oct. 1998)

Develop capped blocks at West Burnside.
Build an oval shaped plaza at West Burnside over I-405 that slows traffic, provides a pedestrian-oriented environment.

Midtown Blocks (May. 1999)

Vision: The Park Blocks act as a north/south pedestrian link between district.
Provide a continuous and identifiable connection between the mid-town and North Park Blocks across West Burnside.
Bring park continuity and pedestrian accessibility into balance with the auto-dominated Burnside corridor, enhance pedestrian crossings.
Conduct traffic analysis for proposed lane reductions on West Burnside.

Conduct traffic analysis for proposed lane reductions on West Burnside.
Add traffic signal at West Burnside and 9th/Park Avenues.
Improve streetscape at Burnside near bathrooms.
DESTINATIONS

Most people use Burnside to access the Central City for business, work, shopping and entertainment. Today, more and more people are choosing to live in the neighborhoods of the Central City. Free left turns from Burnside and Couch and a new focus on Burnside as the heart of the city will connect everyone with desired destinations in the Central City.
AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

The Burnside and Couch Transportation and Urban Design Plan is one part of an overall strategy to improve the social, economic and physical environment of Burnside and Couch Streets. This strategy includes efforts by both public and private sectors to deliver social services, create new jobs and preserve existing businesses. Taken together, these efforts humanize Burnside and Couch and enhance the quality of adjacent residential neighborhoods, offices and businesses.

STRATEGY FOR CHANGE

TRANSPORTATION: The plan balances the Burnside and Couch transportation system to better serve all modes and surrounding neighborhoods and businesses.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: PDC and other public and private partners are working to encourage new development and redevelopment of underdeveloped properties.

SOCIAL SERVICES: Public and private service providers are enhancing social services delivery and the manner in which the services interface with the street.

NEW JOBS AND HOUSING: PDC and other public and private partners are working to increase the quantity and variety of jobs and housing types in the Central City.

EXISTING BUSINESSES: The health and vitality of existing businesses along Burnside and Couch is essential to community livability and creating great streets.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION: Maintain historic architecture that contributes to the cultural character and quality of neighborhoods and districts.

HUMANIZE BURNSIDE: Taken together, the above efforts make Burnside a most diverse and interesting street. As a “people place” it will be comfortable yet exciting - a place to walk, congregate, work, live and visit. As a gateway to Portland’s most dense neighborhoods with diverse and interesting districts and activities, Burnside provides safe access for pedestrians as well as vehicles.
TRANSPORTATION ACHIEVEMENTS

ELIMINATES THE BURNSIDE BARRIER: The physical and perceived width of Burnside will be radically reduced to a crossable and less intimidating street environment.

SUPPORTS PEDESTRIANS AND BIKES: Wider sidewalks throughout provide enhanced pedestrian areas on Burnside. Curb extensions at all intersections on Couch will reduce pedestrian crossing distance. Extensive bicycle improvements on and parallel to Burnside will provide greater connectivity to the bike system.

PROVIDES LEFT TURNS AND ACCESS: Provides direct left and right turns from Burnside and Couch eliminating out-of-direction travel and providing more direct access to areas north and south. This will support business, residential and cultural destinations.

MAINTAINS TRAFFIC CAPACITY: Traffic signals on Burnside and Couch at every intersection between East 14th and West 16th Avenues will add efficiency for maintaining capacity and the movement of cars, buses and service vehicles.

INCREASES ON-STREET PARKING: Increases on-street parking by approximately 15%.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PLAN

Taken alone, the transportation improvements provide significant benefit to Burnside, Couch and surrounding areas. Improvements include eliminating Burnside as a barrier, enhancements to the pedestrian and bicycle network, direct access to the north and south sides of Burnside and Couch via permissible left turns, more efficient traffic flow and increased on-street parking. These improvements address many of the transportation goals and aspirations found in the adjacent neighborhood plans as illustrated in the previous section.
Today, Burnside is a significant barrier between the neighborhoods and districts bordering its north and south edges. Multiple travel lanes, severely limited left turn opportunities, restricted on-street parking, narrow sidewalks (8 feet), barren streetscape, long pedestrian crossings (77 feet), pedestrian crossing prohibitions and underdeveloped properties all contribute to the barrier-like qualities that Burnside creates at the heart of our City.

Above from left to right:
East 12th/Sandy/Burnside today
W Burnside between W 13th and W 14th Avenues in front of Everyday Music
West Burnside at West 5th Avenue looking east before the improvements
Burnside looking east with the improvements
PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

The Burnside Barrier is eliminated by the street design that remakes Burnside into lively streets with improved traffic flow, two travel lanes eastbound with full time on-street parking from I-405 to W 4th Avenue and three eastbound travel lanes with on-street parking and a bike lane from MLK to E 12th Avenue, pedestrian accessibility at every intersection, increased on-street parking and the opportunity for redevelopment of underdeveloped properties.

Above from left to right:
West 2nd and Burnside with full pedestrian access and left turns from Burnside to West 2nd Avenue
Reduced pedestrian crossings on Burnside and West 3rd Avenue
West 2nd And Burnside looking west in front of Alexis Restaurant before the improvements
West 2nd And Burnside looking west in front of Alexis Restaurant with the project complete
LEFT TURNS

Today, eastbound traffic on Burnside has only two left turn opportunities within the Lower West Burnside segment. The first opportunity is at 8th Avenue via Ankeny and Broadway. The second is at 3rd Avenue via Ash and 4th Avenue. If these two turning opportunities are missed, then vehicles must cross the Burnside Bridge to east Portland and make a similar multi-block turning movement to recross the bridge to turn north into Old Town/Chinatown. This same required out of direction movement is found in the Lower East Burnside Couch segment where access to the Central Eastside District and I-84 is circuitous and confusing which compromises truck and automobile access.

The Burnside and Couch one way system allows four left turns from the eastbound direction into Old Town/Chinatown. The same advantage occurs from Couch to Downtown south of Burnside. This frequency of left turns is found between W 15th and E 14th Avenues.
Looking north on NW 4th Avenue from Burnside. Proposed improvements include relocating the Chinese Gate into open space created when westbound traffic travels on Couch rather than Burnside.

The project will increase on-street full time parking by approximately 15%. Signals at every intersection on Burnside and Couch will calm traffic and create greater balance in traffic flow during all times of the day. All intersections will operate at a Level of Service C or better.

The proposed improvements were identified as part of the Burnside Transportation and Urban Design Plan adopted by City Council in 2002. These proposed improvements are the basis of the Technical Refinements that follow.
Central West Burnside and Couch

- Continue eastbound traffic on Burnside.
- Transition westbound Couch to Burnside at 15th Avenue
- Convert Couch to two one-way westbound lanes preserving on-street parking, existing sidewalks and healthy existing street trees
- Provide traffic signals at every intersection from 8th Avenue to 16th Avenue on Burnside and Couch
- Close Couch between 15th Avenue and 16th Avenue:
  - Preserve bicycle and pedestrian access
  - Realign 16th Avenue north of Burnside to connect to 16th Avenue south of Burnside
  - Convert 16th Avenue south of Burnside to two-way
  - Direct exiting I-405 traffic onto 15th Avenue operation
- Build curb extensions at all intersections on Couch and Burnside
- Infill street trees and ornamental street lights on Couch and Burnside

Upper West Burnside

- Reconfigure two-way Burnside from 16th Avenue to 23rd Avenue with:
  - Four 10-foot travel lanes
  - 10-foot wide sidewalks
  - Ornamental street lights and street trees
- Reconfigure 18th/19th/Burnside/Alder intersection and add parking
- Reconfigure 20th Place intersection and add parking
- Add new signals at 20th Place and 22nd Avenue
- Close Washington between SW 15th and SW 16th Avenues for improved transit facilities, on-street parking and gateway features
- Adjust and enhance transit stops

Lower West Burnside and Couch

- Convert Burnside to two lanes, one-way eastbound with:
  - Traffic signals at every intersection beginning at West 8th Avenue
  - Add full time on-street parking on both sides of street
  - Rebuild sidewalks, expanded to 12 feet
  - Curb extensions at all intersection
- Install new street trees and ornamental street lights
- Widen sidewalks on the I-405 bridge
- Grind and overlay Burnside Street pavement section
- Convert Couch to two one-way westbound lanes with:
  - Traffic signals, curb extensions at every intersection
  - Preserve on-street parking, existing sidewalks and healthy existing street trees
  - Widen sidewalks on the I-405 bridge
  - Rebuild Couch Street pavement section
- Enhance Burnside pedestrian crossings at W 8th, W Park
- Close Oak Street between Burnside and SW 10th Avenue
- Slip angle parking on SW Oak north side, SW 9th-SW 10th
- Transition westbound Couch traffic to Burnside at 15th Avenue
- Rebuild SW 16th Avenue to align with NW 16th Avenue
- Preserve Couch ROW from NW 15th to NW 16th for peds, bikes
- Create gateway feature opportunities at 15th and Burnside
- Use sustainable practices in street area design
• Close Sandy between NE 14th and NE 12th Avenues
• Convert NE 14th between Burnside and Couch to three lanes, one-way northbound, remove on-street parking, provide pedestrian refuge
• Preserve the NE 13th right-of-way with two-way movement
• Realign NE 12th to include four lanes (two southbound, two northbound), and two striped bike lanes
• Install signals at every intersection on Burnside and Couch.
• Enlarge pedestrian island at 12th/Sandy/Burnside
• Install a new signal on NE 12th and NE Davis
• Provide diagonal parking on Couch east of NE 14th Avenue
• Transition west end of couplet at NE 3rd Avenue
• Convert Burnside to three lanes from the bridgehead to 11th Avenue. Burnside will be one-way eastbound with full-time on-street parking, a striped bike lane, wider sidewalks; existing street trees and street lighting will be preserved.
• Transition Burnside to four lanes west of 11th Ave. to 14th Ave.
• Convert Couch to two lanes, one-way westbound, preserve on-street parking, existing sidewalks and healthy existing street trees
  - Provide curb extensions at all intersections
  - Infill street trees and ornamental street lights
• Maintain NE 3rd Avenue as a two-way street
• The area from NE 3rd to NE Grand did not receive technical refinements.
Burnside looking east from 9th Avenue showing proposed right-of-way improvements with conceptual architecture.
TECHNICAL REFINEMENTS

INTENT
The goal of this phase was to develop technical refinements in preparation for preliminary engineering. In adopting the 2002 plan, City Council directed this work to reconcile technical details of the plan and to refine the preliminary budget estimates. This report provides more detailed design and engineering work for specific elements of the project based on the adopted 2002 Burnside Transportation and Urban Design Plan.

APPROACH
The project was divided into five sub-areas. The design team and Stakeholder Advisory Committee identified and reviewed concepts, alternatives and details for specific locations within each sub-area. Typical details were prepared for all other areas. The refined design work was used to revise the cost estimates and funding and implementation strategy. No significant amendments were made to the 2002 Burnside Transportation and Urban Design Plan. The sub-areas are as follows:

SUB-AREAS
• Upper West Burnside - 16th Avenue to 24th Place
• Central West Burnside and Couch - 8th to 15th Avenue
• Lower West Burnside and Couch - Willamette River to Park Avenue
• Lower East Burnside and Couch - East Burnside Bridgehead to East 14th
• Flanders Bike Improvements - Waterfront Park to Westover (not shown on diagram)

NOTE: Sections and plans are diagrammatic and are not meant to be scaled. The provision and design of specific corner curb extensions is to be determined by the traffic engineer during the preliminary engineering phase and will be based on such factors as turning movement, volume, design and vehicle type and size.