

Covington Downtown Plan and Zoning Study



Covington Downtown Plan and Zoning Study

Final Report
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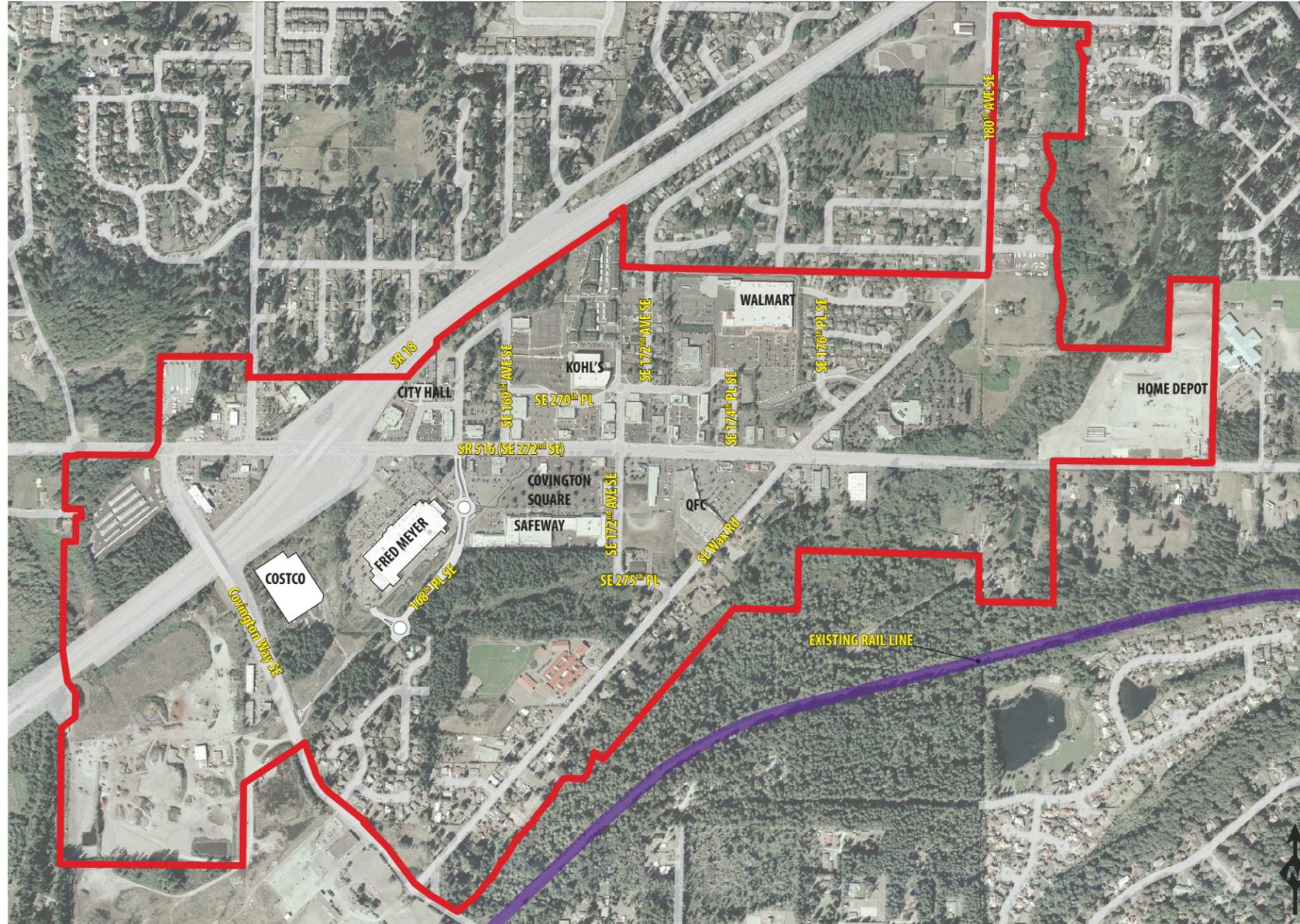
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FIGURE 1.1: EXISTING DOWNTOWN COVINGTON BOUNDARY



I. Introduction

Purpose of Downtown Plan and Zoning Study

The Covington Downtown is a large commercial area in the southwest quadrant of the City with limited vacant land. The Downtown is currently dominated by auto-oriented commercial development, including strip commercial centers, large-format retail stores and large parking fields. At approximately 530 acres, the Covington Downtown is bigger than the downtown area of much larger cities, such as Federal Way and Bellevue.

Comparatively low land costs, convenient freeway and highway access, rapid suburban housing growth in adjacent communities, the large amount of available commercial land and permissive zoning have likely all contributed to the low-intensity, auto-oriented retail development that dominates the current Downtown. This development has established Covington as a retail destination, providing retail sales tax revenue to the City.

The City has had an interest in encouraging mixed-use development and a pedestrian-oriented Downtown for the last decade, and the 2003 Comprehensive Plan reflected this desire. An update to the Downtown Element of the Comprehensive Plan in 2005 further articulated these policy objectives.

The current Downtown Plan and Zoning Study is designed to update the 2005 Downtown Plan. That Plan achieved a number of things, including a strong core as a retail and commercial destination, a strengthened tax base, new road connections, and a “big box” physical urban form.

Development has increased rapidly in Downtown over the last 10 years, and although recent building has exhibited some increased attention to visual quality and pedestrian orientation, the Downtown has not reached its potential. In particular, the City’s policy objectives for economic growth in a compact form, with a mix of uses that promotes a variety of travel modes, have not been realized. The Downtown remains a primarily utilitarian shopping destination and does not provide significant housing, a unique sense of place, or a public gathering space for the community.



Attendees of the first open house were asked to rank which Guiding Principles were most important to them.



Attendees also were asked to write down other things they felt were important for the Plan to address.



Attendees also were asked to give their opinions on what type of character the Downtown should have.

The Covington Downtown can be far more than just a place to pick up the “big box” essentials or a quick meal. This Plan envisions it as a “complete community,” meaning that over the long term a complete transportation system is established; there is a broader range of land uses, including residential, retail, and civic uses; and there is a livable, walkable public realm, which is rooted in healthy natural systems and includes a public gathering space which provides a “heart” for the community .

The goal of the City Council is to reverse the trend of single-story strip malls and large-format retail stores, and to encourage multi-story development with a mix of commercial and residential uses, shared parking, transportation alternatives, pedestrian connections and a significant public space in the Downtown. Revisiting the Downtown Plan offers the opportunity for the City to:

- Address mobility and congestion by providing transportation choices
- Provide increased housing choices for existing and future residents,
- Promote walking, active living and public health,
- Ensure the continued fiscal health of the City and its ability to provide services,
- Maintain and improve the quality of life,
- Create a true Town Center that can serve as a civic focal point,
- Promote a greater sense of place and community, and
- Prepare for the needs and preferences of future generations.

Planning Process

In 2008, the City prepared a Draft Economic Development Element for the Comprehensive Plan and a related Action Agenda. The Council also identified the revision of the Downtown plan as one of the City’s highest priorities. One of the key strategic opportunities discussed in the Economic Development Element is the need for a “Town Center Focus.” With this strategic approach, Covington would aim to strengthen and diversify its Downtown commercial core but with added emphasis on:

Achieving the Town Center vision of a pedestrian oriented commercial core that includes both small and larger scale retail together with a mix of other uses including office, residential, civic buildings and public gathering/open space.

The related “Planning for Prosperity” community survey, also completed in 2008, specifically identified support for:

- A broader range of retail, especially smaller local businesses,
- A more diverse and stable local economy,
- Additional transportation choices,
- A mix of entertainment and dining,
- A public plaza or outdoor gathering space, and
- More City involvement in economic development to leverage private and public dollars.

The City selected a team of consultants in early 2009 to develop specific recommendations for updating the Downtown Plan to meet City and community goals. The City identified a number of issues with its Downtown area that would be addressed in a Downtown Plan and Zoning Study, including a need for:

- Planning policies to clearly articulate a more specific vision for the Downtown and potential Town Center,
- A conceptual design of a potential Town Center development, a smaller, more compact subarea of downtown,
- Zoning standards to encourage and in some cases require the desired form of development, and
- Recommendations on access and circulation improvements and methods to encourage alternatives to single-occupant automobile use.

These recommendations are detailed in this Study. The Study recommendations will form the basis for future efforts by the City including: zoning and comprehensive plan amendments, capital improvement projects, and economic development incentive programs.

Stakeholder Input

City staff worked closely with the City Council, providing updates, public study sessions and other efforts to collaborate on recommendations for the future Downtown and Town Center. The City also made active use of a project web page on the City’s website,

posting key project materials for all interested parties to download. The City encouraged and facilitated the discussion of the Downtown and Town Center in other forums, such as the Covington Economic Development Council (CEDC) and the Planning Commission. The planning process for the Downtown Plan and Zoning Study featured input from a variety of stakeholders, including the general public, adjacent neighbors, local and regional developers and land owners. Over the course of six months, numerous stakeholder events were held. Each event is discussed below:

Developer's Forum, April 15, 2009

This event, which was attended by 42 people, featured presentations by and discussions with a panel of seven regional developers of successful Town Centers (Kent Station, Burien, Crossroads, Mercer Island, Northgate and others), as well as members of the City Council, City staff, Commissions and a moderator. The discussion focused on the role of the City in facilitating and encouraging Town Center development, the feasibility of multi-story development, and key needs and obstacles. Key themes for successful Town Centers included:

- Town Centers develop in phases over a number of years
- A long-term commitment is required of City leadership
- Public gathering spaces and an attractive, walkable public realm can only be developed through productive public-private partnerships, the need for one or more civic anchors to help catalyze development, and the belief that without financial participation from the City, 5-story mixed use buildings may not be feasible in the near-term.

Open House #1, April 21, 2009

Attended by 59 people, this event provided both an opportunity to learn more about the emerging ideas for the Downtown Study and Town Center Conceptual Design and to receive public input. Following opening statements by City staff and the Mayor, the Consultant Team provided a brief presentation on the context for and elements of a successful Downtown and Town Center, followed by a series of participatory events. Public input was obtained on the guiding principles and vision for the Downtown and Town Center; the location, activities and design of the public space; elements and character of a successful Downtown; and needed transportation improvements. Key themes included a desire for an active public space that was designed for families and children, including activities such as a water feature and a balance of landscape and hardscape, a desire for an east-west alternative to SR 516 (Kent-Kangley Road), more

north-south roadway connections, better transit service, and both support for and concerns about additional trail connections to nearby streams and public natural open space. A full summary of comments provide at Open House #1 is included as Appendix A.

Open House #2, May 27, 2009

Attended by 61 people, this event focused on the three Town Center Concept Alternatives developed by the Consultant Team (West, Central, and South alternatives). At the beginning of the event the public was invited to visit stations describing each concept and ask questions of the consultant staff about the concepts in an informal setting. Participants were given a "passport and comment sheet" that outlined the three Town Center concepts and solicited specific input on aspects of the concept plans. The Town Center Concept alternatives presentation described the details of each Town Center concept, followed by a question and answer session. Comments on the West Concept were generally unfavorable and included criticisms about displacing the existing Fred Meyer store at this location. Comments on the Central Concept were mixed, and the South Concept received the most favorable comments and was the most well received. Comments on the Central Concept were mixed, with many more passive responses; a few favorable comments about the general location, streets and public space; and a slightly larger percentage of negative comments about many of these same items. The South Concept, which is visible from Wax Road, overlaps the Central Concept and is located on the Ashton Site, was the most well received. Although concerns were expressed about the poor highway visibility of the site and some other aspects, positive comments were made about the location of the public plaza and main street, connections to trails, minimal disruption to existing businesses and other key aspects of the South Concept.

Based on public comment and further analysis, the South Concept was selected for further development and is presented in Chapter 3. A full summary of comments provided, and the three alternatives that were presented at Open House #2 are included as Appendix B.

Town Center Tour #1, March 14, 2009

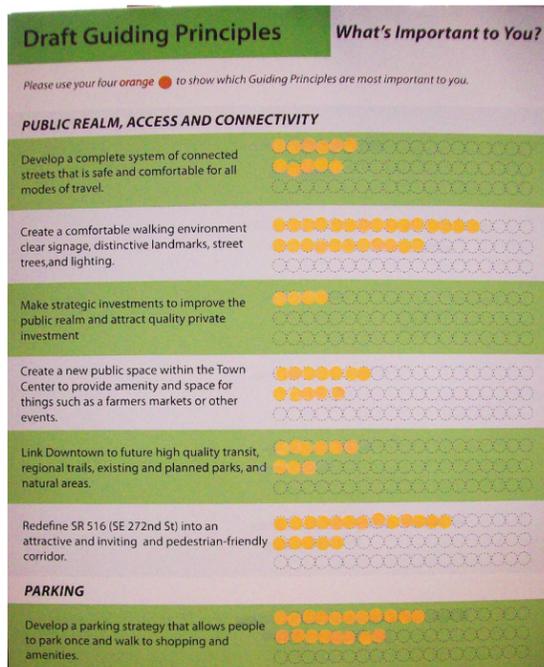
The City Council, City staff, Planning Commission members, and consultants toured several Town Centers on a Saturday to provide review, compare their various elements and contexts, and to see levels of activity and how they were used by the community. These included Burien, The Landing in Renton, Mercer Island, Juanita Village in Kirkland, and Mill Creek.



Attendees of the second open house reviewed the draft Town Center Concept.



Attendees also actively participated in a conversation about the draft Town Center Concepts.



Town Center Tour #2, August 18, 2008

A second tour of Town Centers was conducted with a focus on use of public space on a summer evening. Attended by the City Council, Covington Economic Development Council (CEDC) members, the Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, City staff and one of the consultants. This tour included Kent Station, Mercer Island, and Downtown Issaquah.

Vision

As part of the planning process, City staff, the City Council, stakeholders and the Consultant Team reviewed other recent successful downtowns and town center developments. In addition to the importance of public-private partnerships in providing the key capital improvements and civic amenities needed to catalyze private investment, another key lesson learned is the importance of articulating a vision for the future Town Center and then demonstrating a commitment to its implementation. Experience has demonstrated that cities who do this may have to wait a decade or more depending on market conditions, but they are likely to achieve success in realizing their vision.

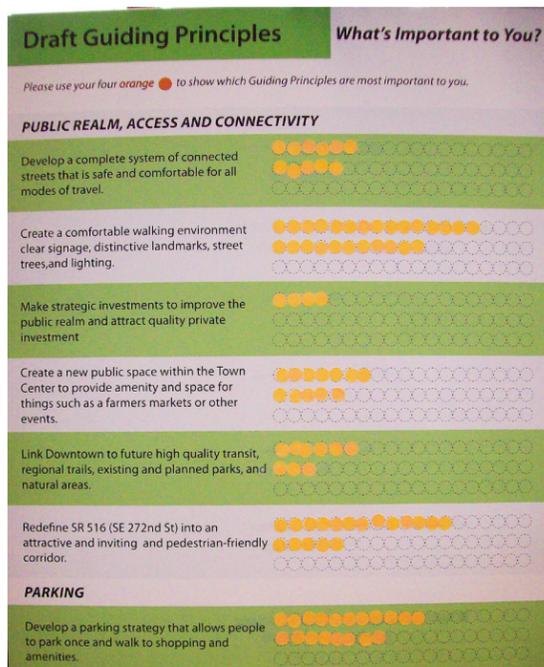
The following statements contain recommended key points for the Downtown Vision and Town Center Vision based on public input and discussions between the City Council, City staff and the Consultant Team. These statements provide a foundation for further refinement. It is assumed that City staff with input from the City Council will craft the actual vision statement language.

Covington Downtown

The Downtown, a complete community, is the center of economic and social activity in Covington. It includes a vibrant, active streetscape and public realm with significant pedestrian activity, an improved circulation system with ample sidewalks, street trees and landscaping, and a public place designed for community events and families. A combination of new and existing commercial, mixed-use and residential buildings provide for a broad range of economic activity, while exhibiting a visual relationship to the street and a scale and form that is comfortable for pedestrians and compatible with the automobile. Pedestrian and bicycle connections are provided throughout the Downtown and to surrounding parks, trails and natural spaces, seamlessly combining urban amenities with the natural beauty of the setting, and the area is well served by transit. Named streets, signature streetscapes and distinctive landmarks give the area a unique sense of place and assist all modes in finding their way in the Downtown.

Town Center

The Town Center, a smaller, more compact sub-area of the total downtown, is the heart of the Covington community. It features a large public space anchored and framed by civic buildings and other more intensive residential, office and ground-floor retail buildings. This space blends an urban plaza with a desire for softer green space and a water feature. It also reflects the local context of young families with children. It includes active uses for families and an outdoor venue for community events. Public art is a defining element in the Town Center and plaza. Pedestrian oriented buildings contain a mix of uses and frame the active streetscape. Short block sizes, wide sidewalks, landscaping and on-street parking make the Downtown conducive to walking. Connections to arterials and SR 18 and access to transit make this an accessible location for all modes of travel. A signature main street and a central avenue design, sidewalk cafes and ground floor retail uses provide an intimate and unique experience. Connections to local and regional trails and surrounding natural areas are key features that distinguish the Town Center and reflect the quality of life, family orientation and opportunities for active living found in Covington. The Town Center is the place in town where Covington residents, visitors and workers meet friends, gather with family, attend community events, shop and play.



Open house attendees indicated what aspects of a Downtown were important to them.

II. Existing Conditions & Opportunities

Existing Conditions and Opportunities

This chapter identifies key opportunities and constraints for Covington's Downtown. In combination with public input and City Council goals, this information provides a foundation for urban design, policy, zoning code and capital improvement planning recommendations for the Downtown and future Town Center development. A detailed *Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints Analysis* is contained in Appendix C.

Existing Downtown Character and Context

The Downtown area consists of primarily auto-oriented commercial uses with large surface parking lots, single-family residential uses and the site of an elementary school that is planned to be relocated with the site sold for redevelopment. With its numerous "big box" stores, Covington's Downtown draws customers from a large regional market. Major state routes, including SR 516 and SR 18, connect the downtown to other major population centers, including Kent, Auburn and Maple Valley.

Key Opportunities and Constraints Identified in this Analysis Real Estate Market Position

Opportunities

- Strengthen Downtown's position as a retail concentration and capture more of the larger regional trade area by attracting additional general merchandise retailers such as Target, Sears, and lifestyle center tenants.
- Transition from community scale retail to more intensive Downtown development, including a Town Center mixed-use development, as Covington grows.
- Leverage customer traffic and visibility from large-format auto-oriented uses to draw people into a pedestrian-scaled Town Center.
- Provide a desirable, walkable environment in the Downtown with amenities such as connections to nearby parks and regional trails to attract future multi-family residential development.
- Attract lodging uses with convenient highway location by providing adjacent restaurants and retail.



Constraints

Local and regional competition for retail and office development, limited City funds to leverage desired types of development, concern about the ability of the market to support structured parking and mid-rise construction types, and lack of established multi-family neighborhoods, or the amenities to support them, are among the constraining factors for realizing the opportunities listed above.

Land Base and Development Pattern

Opportunities

- Redefine Downtown boundaries and zones, including defining a Town Center site, and redefining some Downtown areas as a transition between a dense core and residential areas outside the Downtown.
- Large parcel size is conducive to intensive, mixed-use development.
- Improve walkability by filling existing gaps in sidewalks, requiring complete connections for new development, and adopting “complete streets” policies and regulations that support multiple modes of travel, long-term redevelopment and infill of low density areas with more intensive uses.
- New “big boxes” could be designed in a different format, such as multiple stories with a mix of uses, structured parking or parking behind buildings, sidewalks and public space.
- Achieve a new format for new big box development, including a mix of uses, pedestrian networks through parking areas, and buildings and building entries pulled up to the street edge.
- Pursue the implementation of a Town Center through City leadership with public-private partnerships, a shared parking strategy, public infrastructure investments, and other civic investments.
- Identify a preferred Town Center location and appropriate phases for its implementation, including development of a “Main Street” retail area, shared parking strategy, public gathering space, transit improvements, and a mix of uses.
- Include a vision for public spaces in the purpose statements of the Downtown with a specific statement about a new public gathering space in the Town Center.
- Redesign/shift the location of Wax Road to better accommodate desired uses and densities, and improve safety for the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) site as required by Homeland Security.
- Develop shared parking strategies for various sub-areas of Downtown to more efficiently provide and use parking resources. Strategies could include public/private partnerships, shared private parking, or a shared parking structure in the long-term.



Downtown Covington has access from major State Routes and includes extensive parking areas that could be infilled with more intensive uses over time.



Large parking lots and block sizes currently constrain the connectivity and walkability of the Downtown, provide long-term opportunities for future infill development that is more pedestrian-friendly.



Recent residential development in Downtown.



While many parts of downtown currently have sidewalks, there are still many gaps and impractical connections that create a challenging walking environment

Constraints

Connectivity and walkability are constrained by large parcel sizes, limited sidewalks, and impractical connections. Furthermore, the existing relationship of buildings to the public realm, large parking lots fronting the street, and retailers' preference for auto-focused building orientation may present a challenge to achieving a more walkable downtown.

Comprehensive Plan

Opportunities

- Establish new Downtown land use designations that clearly identify distinctions between Town Center, the balance of Downtown, and peripheral or transition areas in terms of land use, character, density, height and other standards.
- Define a site, or sites, for a Town Center development, to include a mixed-use development with an urban public plaza.
- Streamline and target policies related to the Downtown by eliminating inconsistencies between the Downtown Element and the rest of the Comprehensive Plan. Include policies regarding uses, walkability, transit supportive densities and green infrastructure (parks, trails and low impact development).
- Include specific parking policies and strategies addressing the “park-once-and-walk” concept and structured parking where/when economically viable.
- Strengthen relevant policies to call for and support more prescriptive design and development standards.
- Establish a comprehensive strategy for pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the Downtown.
- Establish policies to complete the street grid for all modes of travel.

Constraints

None identified.

Zoning Districts and Development Standards

Opportunities

- Concentrate Downtown growth and achieve location-specific objectives by realigning, consolidating, re-purposing current Downtown Zones, adding new zones, and deleting old zones.

- Provide more distinct and detailed purpose statements for each zone to address and clarify current land use, the new vision for the zone, development opportunities and intended public improvements such as sidewalks and connections to planned trails.
- Revise site planning standards to provide connections and a pedestrian-oriented framework.
- Consolidate standards for use, development, design and incentives into a new Downtown code section.
- Consider establishing minimum densities in the Town Center and other parts of Downtown. Within the Town Center, Mixed Commercial and General Commercial zones, residential density should be limited only by height, building coverage and setback requirements. Simplify height standards by regulating only height rather than both height and stories.
- Revise the use determination process and define broader use categories to better support the vision for new zones.
- Establish a public-private partnership, and where the market allows, provide development incentives that establish a collaborative and flexible approach to encourage public benefit features in new development.
- Establish maximum setbacks to achieve the desired relationship to the street.
- Develop a flexible and tiered approach to regulation of non-conforming sites and structures. Owners should be able to rebuild non-conforming structures to the previous configuration in the event of a catastrophic loss. New development or additions to existing structures should not increase the degree of nonconformance.
- Regulate intentionally altered non-conforming sites and structures based on fair market value of the existing and proposed improvements. When the cost of proposed improvements exceeds a certain threshold, e.g. 50% of the cost of the current improvements, the structure and site should generally be required to meet all current development standards.
- Different levels of intentional renovation/redevelopment or expansion should trigger a higher level of compliance with new standards. Interior tenant improvements should not trigger requirements to bring exterior improvements up to current standards. Conforming façade and landscaping improvements should be required when significant exterior alterations are proposed.
- Revise parking ratios and allow reductions for all Downtown uses, and establish maximum parking ratios, and delete minimum requirements.
- Revise the existing approach to shared parking standards as part of a comprehensive parking strategy.



The NE 168th PI extension incorporates eight-foot wide sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and landscaping.



Well-marked crosswalks at intersections are key elements of a walkable Downtown.

- Require sidewalks and street trees that meet specific requirements and reflect a distinctive character along all public streets in Downtown.
- Revise requirements for public spaces regarding their location, size, orientation to the sun and views, and relationship to uses.
- Modify minimum project size requirements to create more opportunities for redevelopment in existing single-family areas within Downtown.

Constraints

Constraining factors to achieving some of the opportunities listed above include current market conditions limiting what can be achieved through a bonus incentive program, agreement on what constitutes a non-conforming use, and lack of funding for completing street C.I.P. projects and critical sidewalk connections. Additionally, current market conditions favor single-story auto-oriented uses.

Urban Form and Identity

Opportunities

- Define urban form by establishing a fine-grained circulation network with frequent connections, a smaller building scale, and public spaces.
- Require infill development at a pedestrian scale through development standards that reduce the visual prominence of large buildings and associated parking areas.
- Improve pedestrian orientation in Downtown zones by developing or strengthening code provisions for features such as entry treatments, ground floor transparency and detail, façade articulation, overhead weather protection, parking location in relation to the building and street, etc.
- Work with property owners to identify opportunities to improve the pedestrian-oriented design quality of existing “big box” developments with improved pedestrian connections to entrances, wayfinding signage, and parking lot aisles designed to look like a street.
- Provide prescriptive design standards for a new public plaza in the Town Center.

Constraints

Constraining factors to achieving the envisioned urban design character include non-conforming structures and sites that negatively impact the pedestrian environment because of their lack of pedestrian infrastructure and design quality, continued demand for auto-oriented retail, lack of funding for completing critical sidewalk connections and other pedestrian amenities, and limited funds to implement City CIP projects, which can negatively affect the investment climate.

Circulation and Transportation

Opportunities

- Define the public realm, including streets, walkways and transit connections.
- Pursue a “peel off ramp” to the northbound off-ramp from SR 18 to Covington Way SE that would provide an additional access to the south side of downtown.
- Continue to connect the street grid and improve intersections, with particular emphasis on east-west connections.
- Establish criteria for future street connections, such as maximum intersection spacing, priority locations for intersections, minimum features for intersection and crosswalk design, and maximum parking square footage before internal sidewalks are required.
- Consider renaming one or more numbered streets to improve legibility and sense of identity in the Downtown core.
- Local improvement districts (LIDs) are an adopted policy tool for Covington and can be used to fund street and other improvements.
- Large surface parking lots, if oriented with the grid, can be divided into smaller, walkable blocks.

Constraints

Constraining factors to achieving some of the opportunities listed above include limited state funding for making major improvements such as additional access from SR 18, existing “big box” stores that create impediments to connecting street grid, developer concerns about impacting auto accessibility, and few parallel east-west through routes that could serve as alternatives to SR 516.

Non-motorized Transportation

Opportunities

- Ensure that all new street connections accommodate bicycle and pedestrian facilities, particularly east-west connections both north and south of SR 516.
- Require sidewalks with sufficient width for a pedestrian-friendly Downtown and make necessary changes to engineering standards.
- Develop planned trails connecting to Big Soos, Little Soos and Jenkins Creeks trails and linkages to these trails within the Downtown and Town Center to provide both recreational opportunities and a non-motorized transportation network.

Constraints

Constraining factors to achieving some of the opportunities listed above include insufficient right-of-way on some existing streets, high costs of retrofitting, and existing development that was built without sufficient sidewalk facilities. Additionally, funding is limited for developing trails.

Transit

Opportunities

- Develop a central transit center and park-and-ride facility using surface parking or other underutilized land in the Downtown core, in coordination with Town Center design, to maximize access to the most pedestrian-friendly part of the Downtown.
- In the long term, it may be possible to utilize the BNSF rail line in the south part of the City to provide a form of commuter rail service from Covington to the Auburn Sounder station.
- Pursue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) options to connect to the regional transportation network.

Constraints

Because Covington is not a designated urban or regional center, due to its relatively small population, it is not a regional priority for improved transit service. Furthermore, King County Metro is cutting service regionally in response to the recent economic downturn. In addition, Covington is not a part of the Sound Transit or Regional Transit Improvement District (RTID). Any rail connection that is established would be in the long-term.

Parks and Trails

Opportunities

- Provide a significant public space in the heart of the Town Center that contains a mix of urban plaza and greenspace features, activities for families with children, and is framed by civic uses.
- Work closely with stakeholders to further define the location and character of a public gathering space in the Town Center, and link it to other parks via sidewalks, paths, trails and natural features.
- Create an interconnected network of parks and trails to establish an identity for

Downtown and the larger community and make Downtown more attractive to developers, investors, employees, residents, families and customers.

- Specify how parks, trails, natural features and public plazas should be connected.
- Preserve a portion of the one remaining forested area in Downtown in conjunction with the Town Center.
- Existing large surface parking areas may offer opportunities for public open space with future redevelopment.
- Connect Downtown and future Town Center development to the future Jenkins Creek Trail and Soos Creek regional trail with a network of paths and sidewalks.
- A new park on Jenkins Creek.

Constraints

Constraining factors to achieving some of the opportunities listed above include funding and land acquisition for new parks and trails. However, land acquisition may be achieved in some areas during redevelopment.



Big Soos and Jenkins Creeks offer opportunities for creating a network of trails that would provide access to these natural areas from the Downtown.



The Big Soos trail and future Jenkins Creek trail will provide an amenity to Downtown.

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III. Downtown Plan Framework

This chapter provides the policy guidance and physical framework for the City to implement the vision for the Downtown and Town Center. Guiding principles provide direction on land use, public improvements, circulation, parking and creating a healthy community that is connected to its environment. The future Downtown concept demonstrates the application of these principles at a gross scale, and the Town Center concept provides greater detail on the composition of this central element of the Vision. Specific circulation and access improvements are identified which are needed to transform the area from highway strip to a more unique and functional downtown for all modes of travel. Finally, recommendations are provided on strengthening the identity and creating a viable and attractive brand for the Downtown and Town Center that focuses on a new breed of urban place connected to its natural surroundings and healthy living.

Downtown Guiding Principles

Building upon the goals that were articulated in the City's Draft Economic Development Element (2008), City Council goals, review of existing information, and discussions with staff, the following guiding principles were prepared to guide the Downtown Plan and Zoning Study analyses and recommendations.

Land Use

1. Create a complete community with a balance of residential, commercial, recreational and cultural land uses and activities in the Downtown.
2. Create a Town Center with multi-story mixed-use buildings and inviting public spaces as a core feature within the Downtown.
3. Create a more diverse housing mix in the downtown.

Employment

4. Encourage new and diverse jobs and employment in the Downtown.

Public Realm, Access and Connectivity

5. Provide a public realm of connected streets and plazas in the Downtown. A complete system of local streets, regional connections, transit and linkages for bicycles and pedestrians will provide safe and comfortable access for all modes of travel.

6. Make the public realm a comfortable walking environment supported by clear signage to help people find their way, distinctive landmarks, street trees, lighting and street furniture.
7. Make strategic investments to improve the public realm and attract quality private investment.
8. Create a new public space within the Town Center to provide amenities and allow for active use of the public realm, such as for farmers markets or other events.
9. Design the Town Center for linkages to future high quality transit, regional trails and the system of existing and planned parks and natural areas that ring the Downtown.
10. Redefine SR 516, which carries the most traffic and bisects Downtown, into an attractive and inviting corridor that weaves together the two sides of downtown, facilitates travel for all modes, is flanked by pedestrian-oriented ground floor uses, and presents a positive image for the community and investors.

Parking

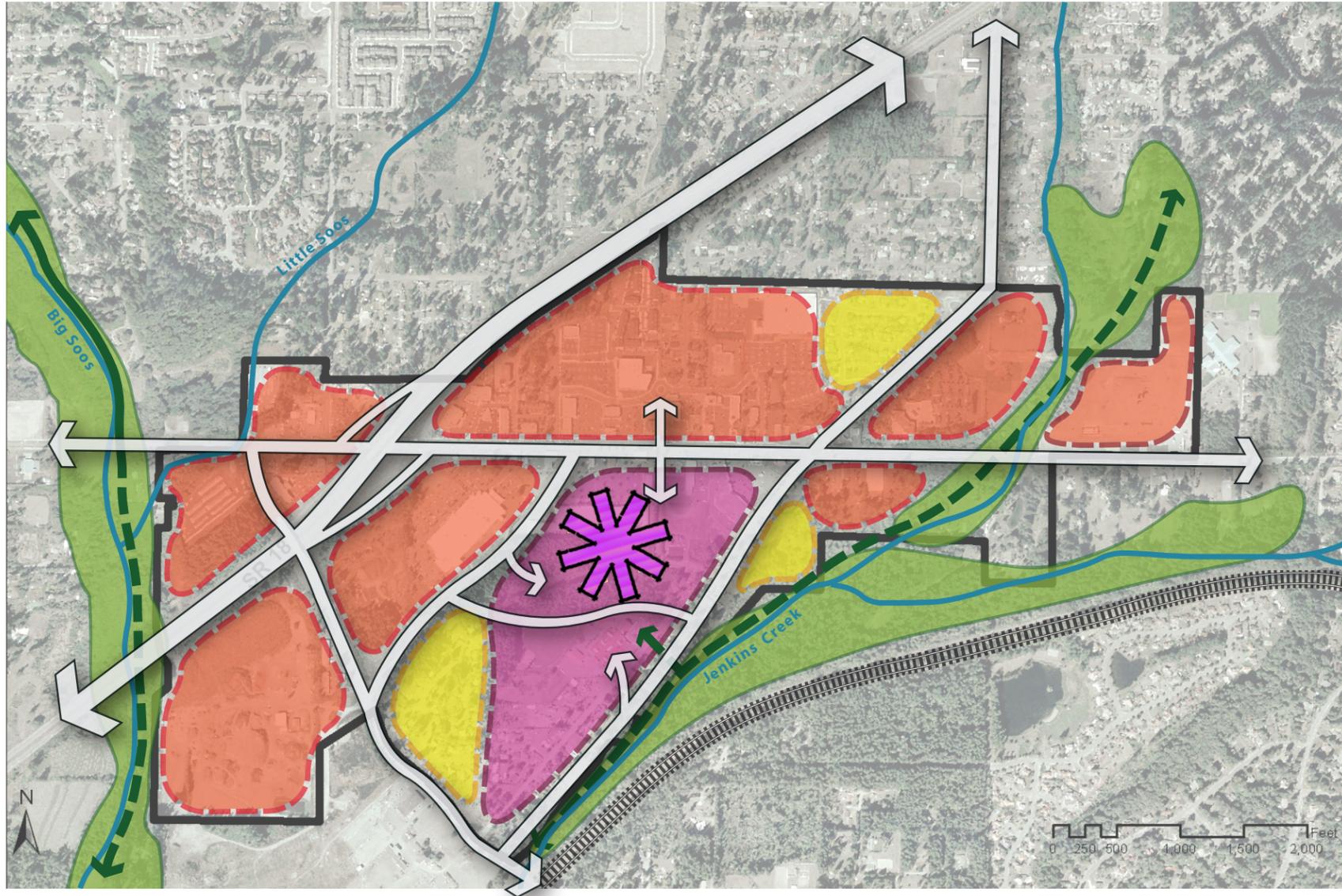
11. Develop a Downtown parking strategy that reinforces the Town Center as a compact and walkable place, making it easy and convenient for people to park once and walk to shopping, restaurants, offices and amenities.

Livability and Healthy Natural Systems

12. Build a livable Downtown to attract residents, using regulatory tools and market incentives to attract high quality development with an appropriate level of amenity.
13. Encourage the use of green building and low impact development techniques to create a healthy community and reduce impacts on local natural systems.



FIGURE 3.1: FUTURE LAND USE RELATIONSHIPS



Downtown Land Use Concept

Figure 3.1 illustrates the overall downtown concept, its relation to the surrounding natural areas, the potential future rail transit, and the generalized location of the Town Center. The Town Center is located at the center of the Downtown, with mixed commercial/residential throughout most of the Downtown and pockets of lower intensity multi-family residential and office uses along some of the edges. Figure 3.1 shows the major roads which form the local and regional connections within Covington, local street connections into the Town Center and other areas of Downtown. Figure 3.1 also illustrates future trail connections between Downtown, the Jenkins and Soos Creek corridors and natural and open spaces to the east and west.

The Town Center, centrally located south of SR 516, and between SE Covington Way and SE Wax Road, will form the heart of the community. Mixed-use/commercial and multi-family transition areas surround the Town Center and provide commercial areas adjacent to SR 18 and SR 516 and will provide a varied mix of businesses which serve both the large format retail market and more local and specialty retail. The Proposed Zoning Map, presented in Chapter 5, will implement the Land Use Concept in detail, as will the circulation system and the other framework systems described below in this Chapter.

FIGURE 3.2: TOWN CENTER CONCEPT PLAN

Town Center Concept

With its birth as an unincorporated community crossroads, Covington naturally evolved as a retail shopping area oriented to vehicular travel and was not developed with complete transportation systems or a true downtown. Since incorporation, the community has consistently expressed the desire for a central place where people can go to gather, to participate in community events and interact with their fellow residents.

Successful Town Centers have four main components which are described below.

- **A Heart:** A public gathering space that is flexible yet active, and hosts civic activities,
- **A Main Street:** Walkable/bikable streets with active uses and edges, and that is landscaped, pedestrian-scaled and visually attractive,
- **Diversity:** A mix of uses, scale and form, and is intimate and friendly, and
- **Connections:** Great streets and sidewalks, “park once” parking strategy, transit options, and where walking is a priority.

The Town Center will be generally located in the vicinity of 171st Ave SE , 172nd Ave SE, and a new east-west connector street at the southern end of what is known as the “Ashton” property. The exact location will be determined by land availability and by when development occurs in this area. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 provide an illustration of the Town Center Concept.

The Town Center will provide the heart, a community gathering place in the form of a public plaza, where people can participate in local events, celebrations, and cultural activities. This public plaza will include ample landscaping, places to sit, public fountains, and smaller green areas where children can play. A landmark tower, or other key feature which will be visible from surrounding areas, will anchor the plaza at a key street terminus.

The public plaza will be surrounded by a civic complex comprised of multiple buildings and mixed-use multiple story buildings. The public plaza will have visually prominent east-west connections to SE Wax Road and the Jenkins Creek natural system and future trail to the east. This Plan shows the preferred location for the Jenkins Creek trail to be on the west side the creek while the existing Capital Improvement Plan calls for the trail to be developed on the east side of the creek. The exact location of the Jenkins Creek trail will be determined during implementation. Long term, SE Wax Road will be

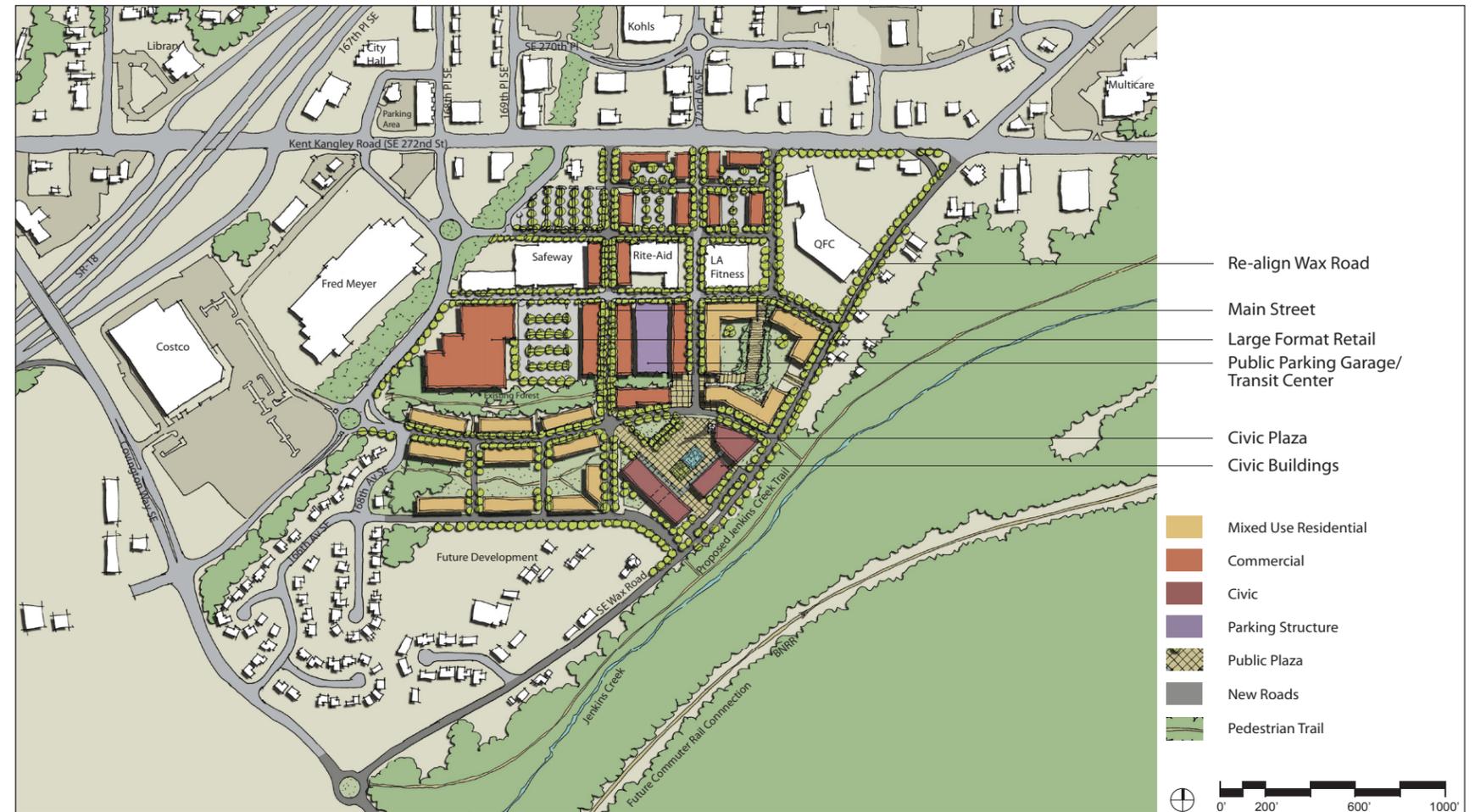


FIGURE 3.3: TOWN CENTER CONCEPT BIRD'S EYE VIEW



relocated to the east, bringing the Town Center and plaza closer to these natural areas. A portion of the stand of trees on the Ashton property is shown to remain to provide a green natural area in the Town Center, preserving a unique and valuable natural resource. Neighborhood parks will also be included in the Downtown.

The Main Street is generally envisioned to be located where 171st AveSE would be extended to the south. The Main Street will be typified by slow moving traffic, on-street parking, and visible retail businesses along the street. Differing types of residential development will be integrated in both mixed-use and stand alone buildings in the Town Center, as will differing types of retail, including large and small formats.

The Circulation System

Figure 3.4 shows the existing circulation system within the Downtown and identifies opportunities for how this system may be improved. The full street circulation system envisioned for downtown is identified in Figure 3.5. The system will include a completed street grid augmented by a finer grained system of pedestrian connections. Additional street connections will be made over several phases to build out the completed grid.

Types and Quality of streets

The circulation system provides the skeleton for both travel and community character. How the future street system is designed and used is as important as the provision of roads themselves when building a multimodal, walkable downtown. A high level of greenery and distinctive signage and streetscape features would be common to all streets.

The following section describes an appropriate approach to street design for the Town Center.

Main Street (171st Avenue SE)

Key roles of a town center Main Street are to support a vibrant storefront retail district, through on-street parking and a pleasant pedestrian environment. The Main Street would have on-street parking and a 15' sidewalk/pedestrian corridor. Ten feet of the sidewalk would be used for through-movement of pedestrians while a 5' planting strip buffers pedestrians and businesses from street noise and traffic. The planting strip can be used for trees, street furniture and/or to provide passage from parked cars. A 10' travel lane width, in addition to lane width for on-street parking, is recommended for the Covington Town Center Main Street as a means to slow traffic and reduce crossing distances for pedestrians. This width also provides adequate clear distance for emergency vehicles.

FIGURE 3.4: EXISTING CIRCULATION & OPPORTUNITIES

Other large vehicles such as delivery and service trucks would be encouraged to use parallel streets such as 172nd Avenue SE. The proposed Town Center Main Street in Covington, 171st Ave, would not be a primary cycling thoroughfare and it would be advisable to locate bike facilities on parallel streets. On-street parking could be parallel or angled parking.

Town Center Streets (Collector/Secondary)

This street type applies to the majority of existing and new streets in the Covington downtown and proposed Town Center area. The key considerations for these types of streets are on-street parking, vehicle access to businesses and residences, and the pedestrian environment, although sidewalks need not be as wide as a Main Street. A 7' wide through-sidewalk and 5' planting/street furniture zone (12' total) is typically considered a minimum preferred size for a pedestrian-oriented retail district. Town Center Streets would have two 11' to 12' travel lanes, in addition to on-street parking. In some cases there may be a center turn lane.

Collector Arterial Minor/Secondary Street (such as SE Wax Road)

For minor arterial or collector streets, such as SE Wax Road on the edge of the Town Center, the street must facilitate efficient movement of motor vehicles as well as non-motorized travel modes, while still providing access to destinations and frequent pedestrian crossings. The concept for SE Wax Road includes one travel lane in each direction, with possible pockets for turning. As a street defining one edge of the Town Center, it would accommodate on-street parking and a sidewalk on the west side (Town Center side) and a two-way bike path on the east side. It would thus meet travel needs while fitting into the blended character of the Town Center to the west and the natural Jenkins Creek corridor to the east. Such a road could also have two travel lanes and bike lanes, with a sidewalk on one side and a gravel path on the other.

Parking Strategy

An integrated, shared parking system is envisioned to be developed in phases. For the near term, parking will be located both on-street and in surface parking lots. Over time, parking lots will be redeveloped, and parking will transition to a system of both structured and surface parking. Structured parking would be part of the shared parking system.

Transit System

In the long term, transit options, such as bus, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and potentially a community rail connector to the regional transit system, will provide more frequent service and transportation choices to the community for both local and regional travel. At that

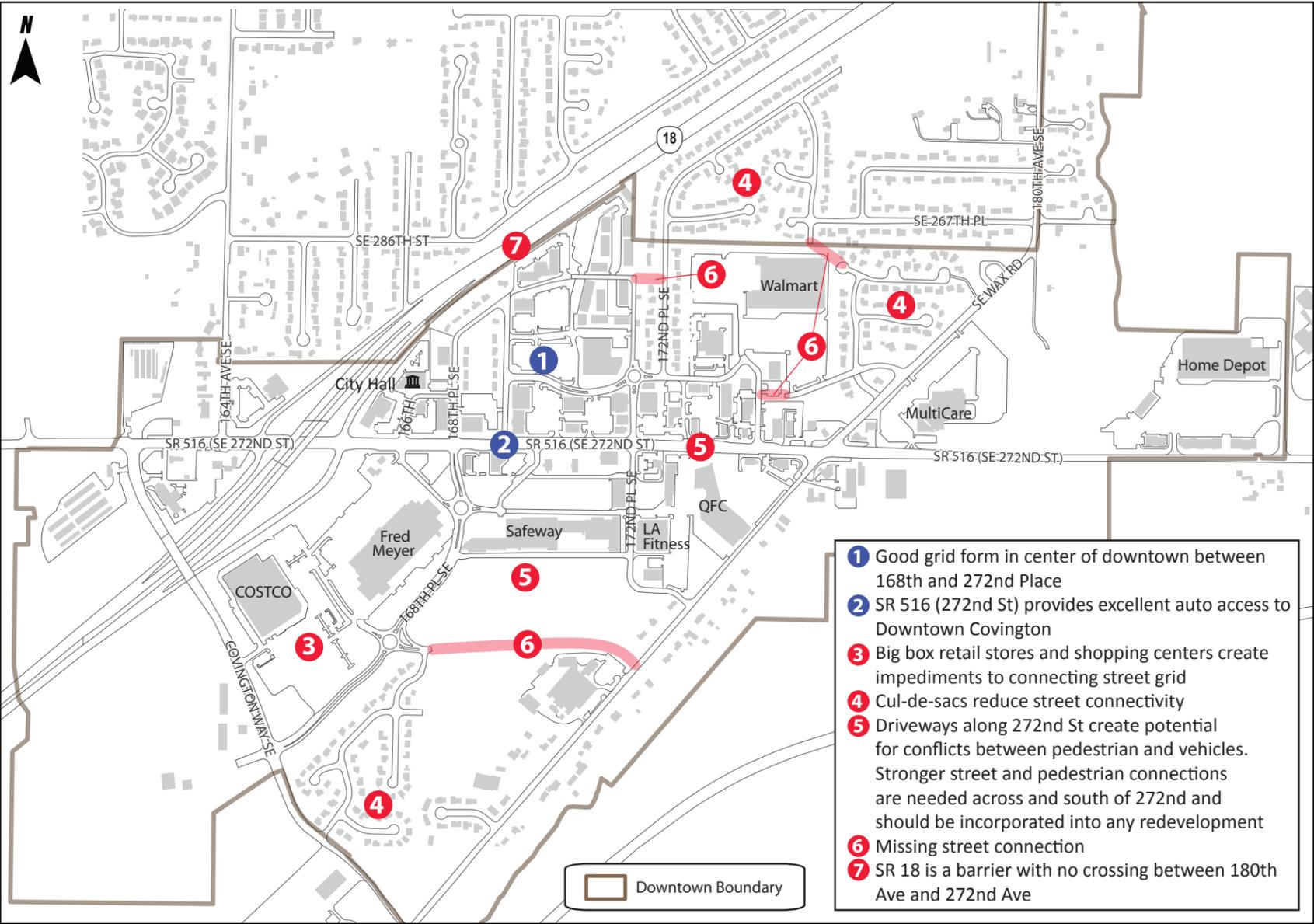
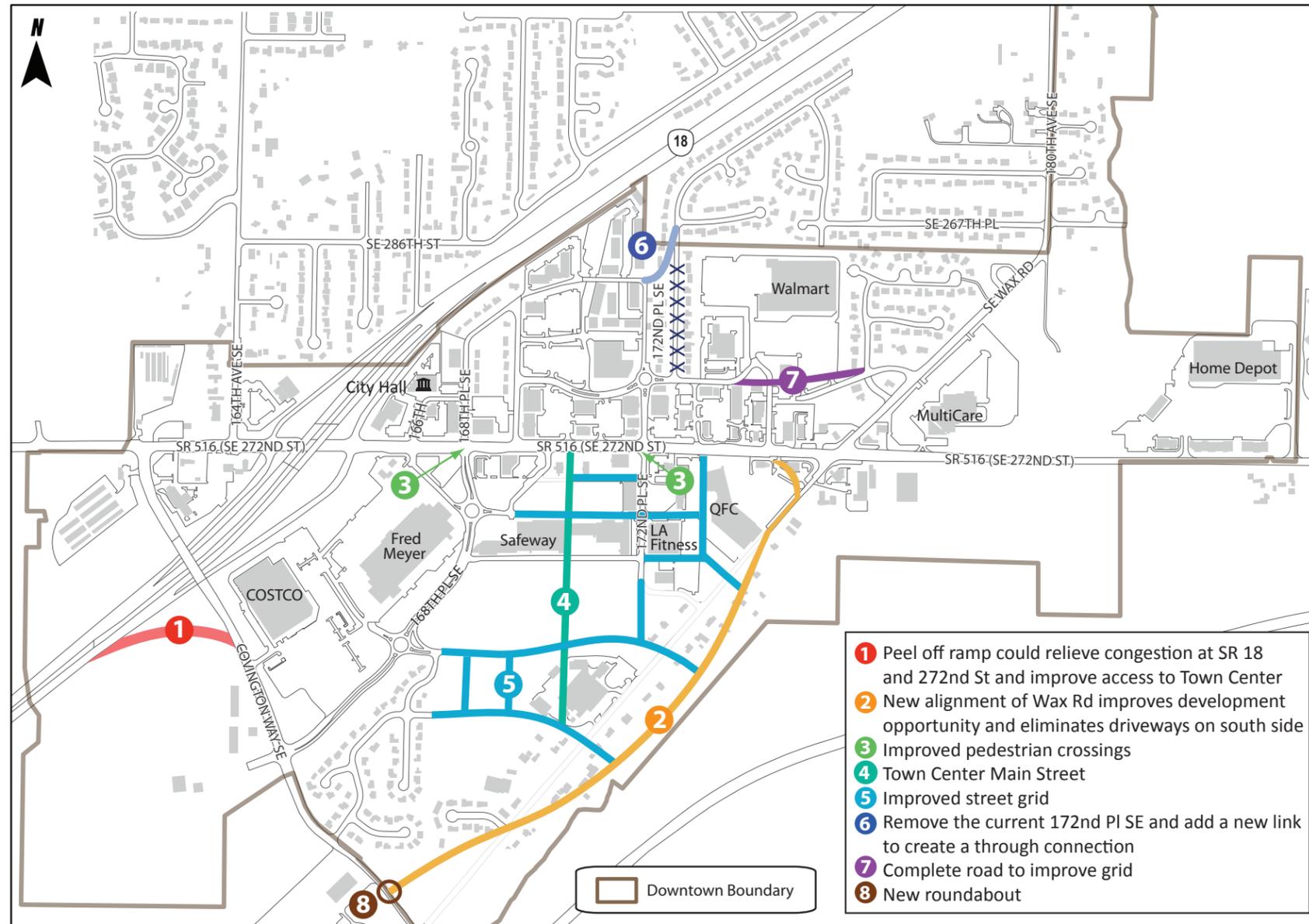


FIGURE 3.5: PROPOSED CIRCULATION & IMPROVEMENTS



future phase, a complete, safe, and comfortable pedestrian and non-motorized network will also provide choices for local and regional travel. The potential use of the BNSF rail corridor for a rail link to the Auburn Sound Transit station is currently under study by the State and the cities of Covington and Maple Valley. How that rail link would be integrated into downtown will be determined in that and future studies.

Branding/Identity Strategy for the Town Center

Establishing a clear, unique and compelling identity for the Town Center which has meaning to the community will be a critical implementation step for realizing the vision for the Covington Downtown. Developing a brand based on this genuine identity will intentionally place the Covington Town Center in the marketplace and begin to develop the desired image in the minds of future businesses, residents and customers.

An effective brand will reflect the natural assets of this particular community and the specifics of the place being created. The brand for the Town Center will need to convey its value to customers, its current market position and its future potential. The brand will need to be rooted in community character, such as Covington history, as well as what people value today. Some common themes brought up during the planning process are Covington's rail history, views of Mt. Rainier, and the fact that Covington is a new City populated by young families. One key to establishing a successful brand for the Town Center will be to merge the traditional suburban assets, position and values, with a new modern identity associated with active urban living.

Such a branding effort would need to be done in phases, with an initial phase that involves the residential and business communities, in some way. The initial concept will need to be further developed for different uses and will need to be infused into all aspects of Town Center implementation, including: marketing, infrastructure, design of public spaces, signage, and art.

Key Aspects of the Brand

Key aspects of the Town Center brand should include:

- Incorporation of suburban values, assets and market position to emphasize the natural setting, near creeks, parks, trails and forest,
- Location near medical services,
- Location near affordable and unique shopping in a park-like setting,



Generous sidewalks are an important component of a vibrant retail street.



Bicycle lanes will be a key component of Covington's Downtown circulation system.

- The best of both worlds - a new kind of urban living with room to breathe,
- A modern community of new homes close to nature,
- Healthy, active, sustainable lifestyle community,
- Urban living for young adults, seniors and families,
- Intergenerational opportunities – simplify but live close to family,
- The steam train and the concept of forests – old and new – continue to be strong identifiable brand elements for Covington and could be used to symbolize the connection between the past and present, renewal, and the analogy of this new urban place that blends the two, and
- These icons could be incorporated into public space and public art design, signage, advertising, etc.

Physical Brand – Infrastructure

- Make explicit use of the setting to create the image of the place, framing views and landscapes and incorporating natural images and themes into design,
- Establish signature infrastructure, including streetscape look and feel, landscaping, specific signage standards and a wayfinding system,
- Green the Downtown; establish canopy cover goals for the area, including streets, Low Impact Development, parking lots, etc,
- Develop and establish a streetscape planting plan that complements the focus of creating an urban Town Center; develop strategies for stormwater management (raingardens); encourage use of pervious types of paving,
- Provide consistent street furnishings, such as lighting and seating that provide a sense of continuity to an area or street; however encourage special and artful site furniture offering a uniqueness and serendipity to the Town Center,
- Actively involve the arts community in streetscape design,
- Develop the actual linkages to parks and trails for walking and biking,
- Develop a palette of street typologies and hierarchy ranging from the “Main Street” to pedestrian mews and alleys,
- Develop a clear and legible way-finding system; connectivity to outlying neighborhoods is important – encourage walking and biking to the Center providing safe crossings and bikeways to and through the Town Center; make clear routes to major destinations such as “big box” retail, library, City Hall and post office, and
- Manage existing and future commercial signage to form a consistent system.

Public Spaces

- Public spaces are emphasized, including the public plaza and streets, where the needs of people come first,
- Create a public gathering space that is the ‘living room’ to the community – flexible to accommodate a variety of uses and/or events - a place that feels comfortable with only a few people taking an early morning stroll or larger celebratory crowds,
- Provide a hierarchy and finer grain of urban squares, plazas, parks and promenades,
- Program public spaces for children,
- Create a balance of hardscape and softscape for active use by children,
- Create public spaces that become symbols of the community; what is the “story” being told; build upon existing assets, historic and cultural,
- City must take the initiative of programming the space, including temporary uses – (example: Portland’s Pioneer Courthouse Square),
- Involve the arts community to enliven the Town Center, and
- Enliven street life: permit and encourage street vendors and areas for coffee carts and such – potential location for farmer’s market.

Marketing to Business and Development

- Convey the brand to business owners, property owners, and developers,
- Clearly convey the City’s commitment to the Town Center and emphasize public-private partnerships,
- Develop strategies for thinking ahead – phasing/temporary uses – as to how projects can evolve; the richness of a town center comes from a layering of textures and designs,
- Emphasize mixed-use development; increase residential density; activate the edges,
- Screen parking structures and surface lots with generous and attractive landscaping or by wrapping them with small-scale, pedestrian-oriented retail and community service uses, and
- Promote a Town Center that satisfies everyday needs in a more intimate way that encourages people to linger and relax in a public park setting.

IV. Comprehensive Plan Policy Recommendations

This chapter describes the recommended City of Covington Comprehensive Plan amendments to be consistent with the findings of the 2009 Downtown Plan and Zoning Study. Included in this chapter are:

- Key revision objectives for the revised Downtown Element,
- A recommended outline for the Downtown Element,
- Basic concepts that should be included,
- Recommended goals, policies and land use designations, and
- General recommendations regarding revisions to other Comprehensive Plan elements, including recommendations related to the Calhoun Pit Site, located just outside of the Covington Downtown.

Additional recommendations and specific potential policy language are contained in the *Comprehensive Plan Technical Memo* in Appendix H.

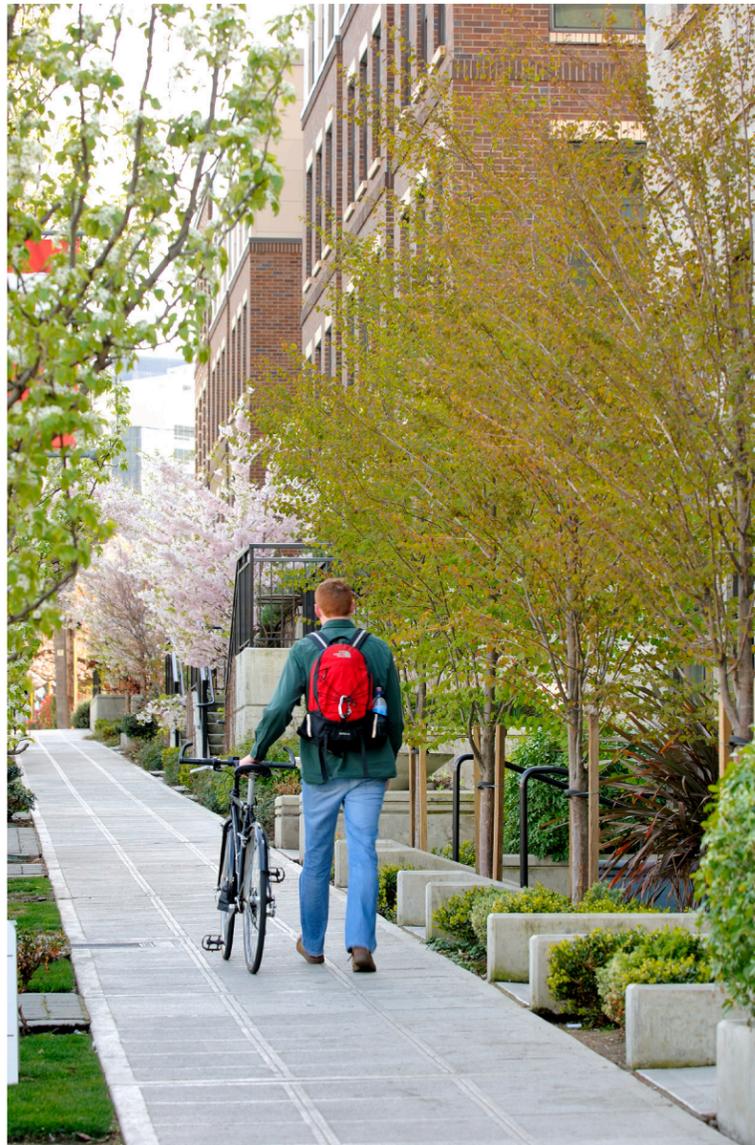
Downtown Element Revision Objectives

The objectives of updating the Downtown Element are to:

- Significantly reduce the length of the Element,
- Describe process and background for Downtown planning,
- Focus on concise and specific policy statements and eliminate much of the existing narrative,
- Delete information that is or will quickly become outdated,
- Replace the existing discussion of “districts” with land use designations and related policies, and
- Provide policy direction for all major aspects of the Downtown, with an emphasis on the Town Center vision and implementation.

Downtown Element Outline

Below is a recommended outline for the Downtown Element. Because the purpose and goals of Downtown planning and the vision for the Downtown have changed considerably since the existing Downtown Element was written, deleting the majority



of the adopted element and replacing it with a new element is recommended. The Covington Municipal Code should be revised consistent with the Zoning Framework Recommendations in Chapter 5.

I. Introduction

- A. Purpose and intent: the Element contains the complete plan for Downtown and the Town Center
- B. 2009 Downtown Planning Process: when planning was done and why; public and stakeholder involvement; Guiding Principles for development of the Downtown plan
- C. Brief Description of Existing Downtown: land use, circulation, and development history

II. Downtown Vision Summary

- A. Overall Land Use and Form
- B. Town Center
- C. Areas Outside of the Town Center
- D. Transportation and Parking

III. Downtown Goals and Policies

- A. General Goals and Policies
- B. Land Use Designations – *Includes Downtown Future Land Use Map*
 - 1. Town Center Goal and Policies
 - 2. Mixed Commercial Goal and Policies
 - 3. General Commercial Goal and Policies
 - 4. Mixed Housing/Office Goals and Policies
- C. Town Center Development – *with Town Center Diagrams (Development Concept and Perspective Drawing)*
 - 1. Preferred Development Goal and Policies
 - 2. Public Space Goal and Policies
 - 3. Pedestrian Emphasis Goal and Policies
 - 4. Implementation Goal and Policies
- D. Downtown Transportation – *with Downtown Circulation Map*
 - 1. Street Network Goal and Policies
 - 2. Non-Motorized Goal and Policies
 - 3. Town Center Transportation Goal and Policies
 - 4. Transit Goal and Policies
 - 5. Parking Goal and Policies
- E. Downtown Parks and Green Infrastructure Goals and Policies
- F. Downtown Implementation Goals and Policies

Basic Concepts for the Downtown Element

Following are recommended basic concepts that should be included in the Downtown Element. It is intended that the following points be addressed in the context of goals and policies of the element in order to provide the needed Comprehensive Plan support for achieving the desired Downtown urban form and Town Center development. Please also see the Vision Statements in Chapter 1, Introduction.

- *Overall Land Use Pattern:* center of economic activity; place for community events; vibrant, active streetscapes with sidewalk vendors and street trees; intensification over time with re-use of parking lots for building development; high quality development with a scale and form that is comfortable for pedestrians; pedestrian and bicycle connections to area parks and natural spaces; distinctive landmarks especially in the Town Center; people can easily find their way
- *Town Center:* community-oriented public space at the heart of Downtown; mix of uses including multi-story residential; short block sizes that are conducive to walking; a main street and central avenue with sidewalk cafes and ground floor retail uses and a place where Covington residents come to shop, socialize, attend events, etc.
- *Areas Outside of the Town Center:* broad range of economic activity compatible with a mixed-use, pedestrian-orientation; a mix of infill development and redevelopment; focus on retail/commercial, residential, and office with compatible light manufacturing uses in some areas; some parts of Downtown have large-format retail with a street edge and building form that is conducive to walking; multi-story buildings in the core of Downtown; small office developments and innovative residential uses such as cottages in areas with existing small parcel patterns; western portion of Downtown includes auto-oriented commercial development; development in all parts of Downtown is compatible with residential uses both within and adjacent to Downtown
- *Transportation:* people can get to and around Downtown easily using all modes of travel; there are a variety of connections both north-south and east-west; pedestrians, bicycles and transit are well-used; residents and visitors park once and walk to shopping and other activities; main street and central avenue in Town Center connect to major arterials; new peel-off ramp from SR 18 onto Covington Way

FIGURE 4.1: RECOMMENDED FUTURE LAND USE/ZONING DISTRICTS

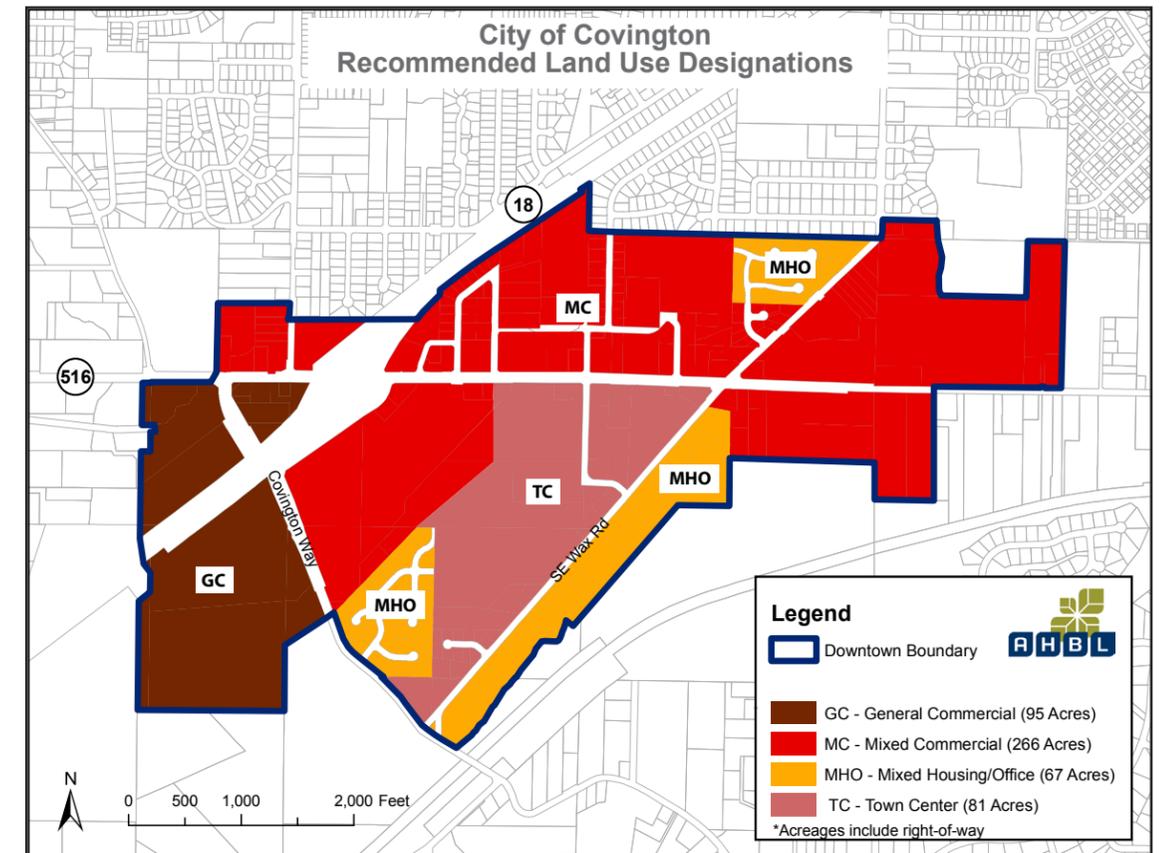
Recommendations for Downtown Goals and Policies

Recommended content for the Downtown Element, including ideas that could be further refined into goals and primary policies, is provided below. Additional policy recommendations are contained in the *Comprehensive Plan Technical Memo* in Appendix H. The key points follow the Downtown Element outline shown above. These statements are intended to be starting points for the City to use as it crafts goals and policies with the input of the City Council and the stakeholders.

A. Downtown— General goals and policies

- a. Goal - Plan for and create a Downtown land use pattern and intensity that will encourage Covington residents to gather for community events, shop, walk and bicycle, and where a growing number of people will live and work as Downtown land uses intensify.
- b. Policy - Provide a Downtown circulation pattern conducive to pedestrians that encourages people to park once and walk, thereby encouraging healthy activity, contributing to a vibrant, active streetscape, and reducing traffic and the overall need for parking.
- c. Policy - Develop a Town Center with a public space that forms the heart of Downtown and has the greatest level of pedestrian-orientation.
- d. Policy - Encourage economic activity and a broad range of uses in Downtown that contribute to a vibrant streetscape and healthy economy.
- e. Policy - Prohibit heavy industrial uses throughout Downtown, in order to reduce the potential for noise, odor, air emissions, freight loading and truck trips that impact the planned mix of uses and pedestrian orientation.
- f. Policy - Emphasize compatibility with existing and future residential uses both within and adjacent to Downtown through zone specific controls on height, bulk, intensity, form and design.

B. Land Use Designations – purpose, location and basic idea of each designation. *This section includes the Downtown Future Land Use Map.* The recommended land use designations mirror the recommended zoning designations. Recommendations include removing the area currently zoned DN7C from the Downtown; it would be designated for multifamily residential land use. The Downtown designations are described in the recommended policy content/key points below.



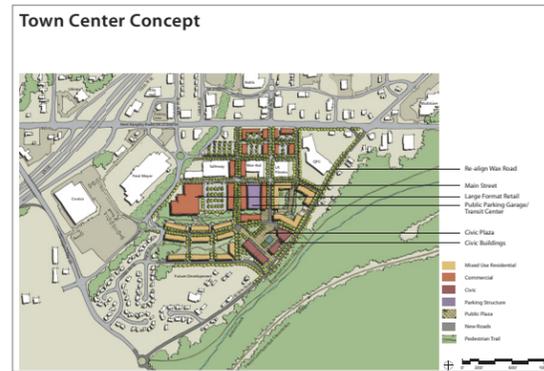
Note: Recommended land use designations are the same as proposed zoning districts.

1. Town Center Designation:

- a. Goal: The Town Center is the heart and core of downtown and is characterized by an intensive mix of uses, a vibrant and active streetscape, the finest-grained land use and circulation system in the downtown area and a significant public space.
- b. Policy: Use the Town Center designation to proactively implement walkable, pedestrian scale mixed-use development that emphasizes the public realm at the heart of Downtown.
- c. Policy: Apply the Town Center designation to a single area comprised of large parcels suitable for development that are central to Downtown and accessible from highways and major arterials.

2. Mixed Commercial Designation:

- a. Goal: The Mixed Commercial designation accommodates a diverse mix of uses, emphasizing retail and employment uses and increased walkability and connectivity for all modes of travel. Mixed use buildings that include commercial and multi-family residential uses are



Town Center Diagram



Town Center Bird's Eye View.

encouraged. Large format retail, auto-oriented uses and public uses are accommodated, provided they meet pedestrian oriented design goals. Certain uses, such as outdoor storage and manufacturing are generally not compatible with this designation.

- b. Policy: Apply the Mixed Commercial designation to areas close to SR 516 (SE 272nd Street) that have a mix of parcel sizes, are dominated by large format retail, and have the potential for more large-format retail.
- c. Policy: Apply zoning in the Mixed Commercial designation that establishes allowed uses and development standards, and require improvements to the pedestrian and street network with new development or redevelopment. Required features should include a portion of the building fronting the street, and corner architectural treatments in key areas.

3. General Commercial Designation:

- a. Goal: The General Commercial designation accommodates the broadest range of uses of any Downtown zone, including commercial, light manufacturing, office, transportation and utility uses, as well as residential uses that are buffered from more intensive uses to ensure compatibility. Future development may include improved access from SR 18 through a future peel-off ramp.
- b. Policy: Apply the General Commercial designation to the portion of Downtown that is west of Covington Way and south of SR 516 (SE 272nd Street).
- c. Policy: Auto sales, storage and service uses should be encouraged to locate in this designation.
- d. Policy: Heavy industrial uses should be prohibited to ensure compatibility with the mix of uses, proximity of uses, and pedestrian orientation in the Downtown.

4. Mixed Housing/Office Designation:

- a. Goal: Encourage infill housing and office development and redevelopment that is designed to be compatible with existing and surrounding residential uses; development and design standards should emphasize compatibility through limits on intensity, height, bulk, and scale.
- b. Policy: Use the Mixed Housing/Office designation to encourage infill development and redevelopment of a variety of housing types such as townhouses, cottages, and multi-family; professional offices; and medical offices.

- c. Policy: Apply the Mixed Housing/Office designation to areas with a pattern of small parcel sizes and existing development, including areas adjacent to the Town Center south of Wax Road and existing single-family residential developments located within the Downtown boundaries.
- d. Policy: Apply zoning in the Mixed Housing/Office designation that encourages small infill development which will ultimately fit with larger redevelopments, by establishing tiered standards for projects of different sizes.

C. Town Center Development. *(This section includes the Town Center Diagrams (development concept, perspective drawing).*

- 1. **Preferred Development Vision:** The goal and policies that make up the Preferred Development Vision provide the basis for discretionary review criteria that will be included in the code.
 - a. Goal: The Town Center is envisioned as a walkable, mixed-use development that forms the heart of Downtown, with a public space and buildings that front the street providing a comfortable and visually interesting realm for pedestrians, and a variety of public amenities including connections to parks and natural areas within and surrounding Downtown Covington by a network of sidewalks and urban trails.
 - b. Policy: The Town Center may be implemented in phases, with a civic space expected in an early phase, and retail, office, residential and entertainment uses growing over time. Development will transition over time from generally single-story retail with surface parking located behind buildings, into a multi-story area with the majority of parking located in structures. All uses are designed with pedestrians in mind.
 - c. Policy: The Town Center should include the following (policy should refer to Town Center Diagrams):
 - A civic/community center and/or city hall,
 - A public park that features an urban plaza,
 - A Main Street and a Central Avenue that direct people to the urban plaza and connect to other parts of downtown. (Streets may have different names when developed.) These two streets must have an active streetscape and pedestrian-oriented ground-floor retail uses,
 - Special street design standards, including requirements for travel lane width, street parking and sidewalk and amenity zone placement and width,

- City should consider establishing a maximum block size/street spacing, and
 - Truck traffic and loading should be accommodated on streets other than the designated “Main Street”.
- d. Policy: Encourage the following in the Town Center (policy should refer to Town Center Diagrams):
- Mixed use buildings with ground-floor retail uses,
 - Multi-story residential uses, with residential buildings having a minimum of 24 units per acre,
 - Entertainment and cultural uses,
 - Sidewalk seating and/or sidewalk cafes, and other sidewalk retail uses that activate the public realm, and
 - Multi-story office uses.
- e. Policy: Prohibit auto-oriented retail or service development from the Town Center, and provide limits on the number, location and size of large-format retail to ensure that it is designed consistent with the Town Center vision.
- f. Policy: Allow a park-and-ride facility and/or transit center to be located within the Town Center provided it is designed consistent with the Town Center Vision.

2. Public Gathering Space Design:

- a. Goal: Establish a public gathering space as the “heart” of the Town Center where residents, shoppers, employees, and visitors are comfortable to gather and spend time.
- b. Policy: Ensure that the primary public space in the Town Center is located and designed to (policy should refer to Town Center Diagrams):
- Be adjacent to a civic building such as a new City Hall or community center,
 - Be visible from and be a focal point on the Town Center’s Main Street,
 - Be visible from Wax Road or another major arterial that provides access to the Town Center,
 - Be part of a network of public spaces that extends to natural areas outside of downtown and is connected by sidewalks and urban trails,
 - Include seating, walking paths and an area suitable for community activities such as a farmers market, with a mixture of hard and soft/landscaped surfaces,

- Create an urban feel, with edges defined by buildings and walkable streets,
- Include a focal feature such a water feature, public art or community-oriented sculptural element, for example an antique train car, clocktower, fireplace, large-scale chess set, etc.,
- If possible, have a mountain view, preferably of Mount Rainier, framed by buildings or other design elements. If a view from the ground is not possible, the view may be obtained from an outdoor structure/sculptural feature, and
- Include design features such as unique paving and other elements that respond to Covington’s small-town, Northwest character.

- c. Policy: The City should aim to program the public space with activities for people of all ages.

3. Implementation of Town Center Vision:

- a. Goal: Use zoning, development review procedures, phasing, City investment and public-private partnerships to ensure the Town Center Vision is achieved.
- b. Policy: Require a discretionary review process, e.g. Master Development Permit with binding site plan, and/or Development Agreement, for new development or redevelopment within the Town Center designation.
- c. Policy: Development standards in the Town Center should be more specific, more aggressively promote a pedestrian environment and provide additional authority for the City to require that proposals be designed consistent with the Town Center vision, goals and policies.
- d. Policy: To encourage new development, economic activity, and an active urban streetscape, development standards within Downtown should emphasize the form of buildings and site design, including a strong relationship between buildings and the street to create a lively pedestrian environment. This should be emphasized to the greatest degree in the Town Center designation.
- e. Policy: To encourage an emphasis on form, use regulations should focus on broad use categories and rely on an administrative use determination process when further distinction is needed.
- f. Policy: The City will play an active role in implementing the Town Center Vision, by proactively working with land owners and prospective developers, providing financial incentives, facilitating

public-private partnerships, prioritizing Capital Improvement Program spending to make strategic investments that attract quality private investment, and other appropriate means.

D. Transportation. *(This section includes the Downtown Circulation Map.)*

1. Downtown street network: increased connectivity and criteria for new connections:

- a. Goal: Provide a hierarchy of connected public streets for all modes of travel in the Downtown, including pedestrians, bicycles, cars and transit.
- b. Policy: Designate appropriate facilities in the Downtown as primary pedestrian streets
- c. Policy: Require street dedication, improvements and connections for development consistent with the Downtown Circulation Map and adopted criteria. While these connections are encouraged to be public streets, where appropriate, they may include easements across private property when designed to street standards
- d. Policy: Establish locational and spacing criteria for east-west and north-south street connections

2. Town Center Streets: Main Street, pedestrian emphasis, and connectivity:

- a. Goal: Ensure the Town Center includes a system of pedestrian-friendly streets, with east-west and north-south connections and pedestrian connections to all parts of the Town Center, as well as other areas in Downtown, adjacent trail systems and natural areas.
- b. Policy: In the Town Center, the north-south Main Street or Streets should be located between SE 169th Place and 172nd Avenue SE, and the east-west Central Ave. should be located at the northern edge of the Elementary School property or the southern edge of the Ashton property. Both of these streets should connect to SE Wax Road.
- c. Policy: City should consider establishing additional location and spacing criteria for streets.
- d. Policy: Street connections should be made as part of future developments, consistent with the Town Center Diagrams. While these connections are encouraged to be public streets, where appropriate, they may include easements across private property where access drives are designed to street standards.
- e. Policy: Approved Master Development Permits in the Town Center should be designed to achieve the street grid shown in the Town Center Concept and Downtown Circulation Map or a grid that provides similar pedestrian and vehicle connectivity.

f. Policy: Ensure that Town Center development includes a Main Street, which should be the focus of pedestrian activity and have the highest level of pedestrian-oriented design.

g. Policy: As part of the circulation system, establish pedestrian linkages from the Town Center to future high quality transit, regional trails and the system of existing and planned parks and natural areas that ring the Downtown (policy should refer to Town Center Diagrams)

3. Non-motorized Improvements: sidewalk completion and design, priority pedestrian connections within developments:

- a. Goal: Provide enhanced street design and development standards and additional implementation tools to ensure the construction of a non-motorized system consistent with downtown area objectives.
- b. Policy: Ensure sidewalks are provided on both sides of all new streets and with new development and redevelopment of existing street frontage. Sidewalks should be a minimum of 12-foot wide, with 15-foot wide sidewalks along the Town Center's "Main Street" and should include street trees. Sidewalk widths are intended to provide adequate space for benches, a planting street/landscape amenity area, and in some areas, outdoor dining opportunities (sidewalk café style).
- c. Policy: Establish thresholds that require pedestrian improvements during minor renovations of existing uses on streets with no sidewalks. The goals of these improvements should be to improve pedestrian circulation and comfort and to serve a similar function to sidewalks.
- d. Policy: Over time, ensure that redevelopment along SR 516 (SE 272nd Street) is designed and located to transform the street into a comfortable environment for all modes of travel.

4. Transit: park & ride, potential rail connection, goals for improved service:

- a. Goal: Plan for and promote additional transit service to the downtown area
- b. Policy: Explore the possibility of a future rail connection or other high-quality transit that connects Downtown to the regional rail system.
- c. Policy: Work with transit agencies to increase the frequency and coverage area of service within Downtown, between Downtown and other parts of Covington and between Downtown and regional employment centers.

5. Parking: comprehensive parking strategy, shared parking, reduced parking requirements:

- a. Goal: Develop a comprehensive Downtown parking strategy

- b. Policy: Specific techniques may include managed parking, shared parking, maximum parking requirements, reduced minimum parking requirements, future structured parking provided through a public-private partnership, and short-term on-street parking that, combined with an improved pedestrian environment, encourages people to park once and walk to shopping and amenities.
 - c. Policy: Use the Comprehensive Downtown parking strategy to encourage re-use of existing surface parking lots for new buildings as structured parking is developed, thus improving the pedestrian environment over time.
- 6. SR 18 peel off ramp:**
- a. Goal: Improve freeway access to the Downtown and Town Center
 - b. Policy: Work with WSDOT to explore the potential for an additional ramp from SR 18 into Downtown, such as a peel-off ramp to Covington Way
 - c. Policy: Work with WSDOT and property owners, to design such a ramp, ensure that nearby uses allow for it as new uses are permitted, and to facilitate its future development.

E. Parks and Green Infrastructure

1. Parks: key priorities for Downtown:

- a. Goal: Increase parks and open space area in the Downtown.
- b. Policy: Prioritize parks and trails planning and capital spending to establish a public park/urban plaza in the Town Center.
- c. Policy: The public space in the Town Center should contain a mix of urban plaza features and greenscape, as well as specific activities for families and children, such as an interactive water feature.
- d. Policy: Consider the potential for a future park and/or open space along the Jenkins Creek corridor and connections to the Downtown area.

2. Connections: trail system goals, and use of landscaped streets as extensions of parks:

- a. Goal: Establish a system of urban trail and sidewalk connections between parks within and surrounding the Downtown.
- b. Policy: Provide trail connections from the Town Center to Big Soos Creek and Jenkins Creek natural areas.
- c. Policy: Use landscaped streets with street trees as urban trail connections between parks and treat them as extensions of parks.

3. Low Impact Development and Stormwater Management:

- a. Goal: Use public rights of way and other public spaces to demonstrate the use of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques.
- b. Policy: Use the public plaza in the Town Center, the system of streets throughout Downtown, and new or redesigned parking lots to demonstrate low impact development (LID) systems and techniques where possible, in order to encourage the use of these techniques in private development, with the goal of reduced impact on local natural systems.

F. Implementation of Downtown Vision:

- a. Goal: Use regulations, incentives, City investment and public-private partnerships to ensure the Downtown Vision is achieved.
- b. Policy: The City will play an active role in implementing the Town Center Vision, by proactively working with land owners and prospective developers, facilitating public-private partnerships to fund key improvements, prioritizing Capital Improvement Program spending to make strategic infrastructure investments that attract quality private investment.

Recommendations for Other Elements

Add a goal and policies for the Planned Community Development Designation to the **Land Use Element:**

- Planned Community Development Designation:
 - a. Vision: more intensive redevelopment for urban uses; including but not limited to areas previously in resource extraction use; high degree of flexibility; focus on compatibility with surrounding residential development.
 - b. Goal: Use the Planned Community Development designation to allow for flexibility of use and development standards through a Development Agreement.
 - c. Policy: Apply the Planned Community Development designation to the Calhoun Pit site, located at the western edge of Downtown north of SR 516 (SE 272nd Street).

The following changes should also be made in other elements in the Comprehensive Plan:

- Delete information/policies that are based on or refer to outdated downtown concepts, e.g. discussion of land use districts, as well as revise outdated figures and maps, which show old designations, outdated road connections, etc.

- Land Use Element – revise future land use categories, future land use plan, development capacity, goals and policies and design standards sections to be consistent with and refer to the Downtown Element. For example, this Element should reflect the proposed new Downtown land use designations.
- Housing Element – update housing needs discussion, goals and policies to be consistent with and reference the Downtown Element and to reference any incentives that may be offered as part of the Downtown implementation strategy (e.g. capital improvements, tax abatement, etc.).
- Transportation Element - The City should update the Transportation Systems Plan, Pedestrian and Bicycle Element, Transit discussion, Transportation Financing Strategies, identified street improvements, and include the location and specific details of pedestrian street designations. Narrative and figures should be consistent with the revised discussion of transportation improvements in the Downtown Element and reference key items, e.g. future street network.
- Parks Element should reference key improvements proposed for the downtown area, e.g. Town Center open space, trail connections to Big Soos and Jenkins Creek, potential for green infrastructure connections, etc.
- Capital Facilities Element should consider any concurrency issues related to the new types of development and levels of growth anticipated for the Downtown, as well as the financial implications of capital improvements and incentives recommended.

V. Downtown Zoning Recommendations

This chapter describes a recommended zoning, development and design standards framework for the Covington Downtown, including the Town Center. Following a brief description of the recommended zones is a proposed Zoning Map. Included in this Chapter are recommendations for:

- A set of new consolidated Downtown zones,
- Recommended code structure and outline,
- Key development standards, and
- Key design standards.

In addition, recommendations are provided for the Calhoun Pit Site, located just outside of the Covington Downtown.

Rather than provide specific code language, this chapter provides a framework and key substantive content for future development of the revised Downtown Development and Design Code. Key recommendations are summarized in this Chapter. Additional information, including a more detailed outline of the recommended substantive code standards and sample recommended code visual formats, is provided in the *Zoning Framework Technical Memo* in Appendix I.

Specific recommendations are provided on regulations related to:

- Residential Density,
- Maximum Height,
- Building Setbacks,
- Allowed Uses, and
- Special Standards.

These standards should be considered a starting point for additional discussion between City staff, the City Council and stakeholders. An outline of the basic topical sections of the Downtown Development and Design Standards is provided later in this Chapter.



FIGURE 5.1: EXISTING DOWNTOWN ZONING DISTRICTS

Zoning Map

It is recommended that the existing Downtown zones be consolidated and redefined to correspond to, and directly implement, the proposed Comprehensive Plan land use designations. Existing and recommended zones are shown in Table 5.1 below and in Figures 5.1 and 5.2. The purpose of each individual zone is discussed further in this Chapter.

TABLE 5.1: SUMMARY OF NEW DOWNTOWN ZONES

New Downtown Zone	Consolidates these Existing Zones	Approximate Acreage
Town Center (TC)	DN 1 and DN 6	81
Mixed Commercial (MC)	DN2 (except the portion south of 272nd), DN4, DN8 and DN 9	266
General Commercial (GC)	DN2 south of 272 nd and DN3	95
Mixed Housing/Office (MHO)	DN5, DN7A, DN7B and DN10	67
TOTAL		509

Additional zoning map recommendations include:

- Remove DN7C from Downtown and rezone it to the new R-12 zone (see Existing Zoning Map). This zone currently serves as a transition zone and this purpose would continue in the proposed framework, but the area would not be considered as part of the Downtown and no significant commercial uses would be allowed.
- Establish a new Planned Community Development (PCD) zone for the Calhoun Pit site. This site is currently located outside of the Downtown boundaries, and would continue to be located outside of Downtown.

Zone Purpose Statements

Purpose statements are an important development code component. Purpose statements clearly distinguish the key characteristics and desired development in a particular zone. The Development Code should include a clear and specific purpose statement for each zone and either describe or provide a link to comprehensive plan policies describing:

- Desired building form and uses,
- Goals for pedestrian-oriented design, pedestrian connections, sidewalk completion and street connections,
- Objectives for public spaces, trails, parks and natural areas, and
- Unique aspects of the decision or development review process.

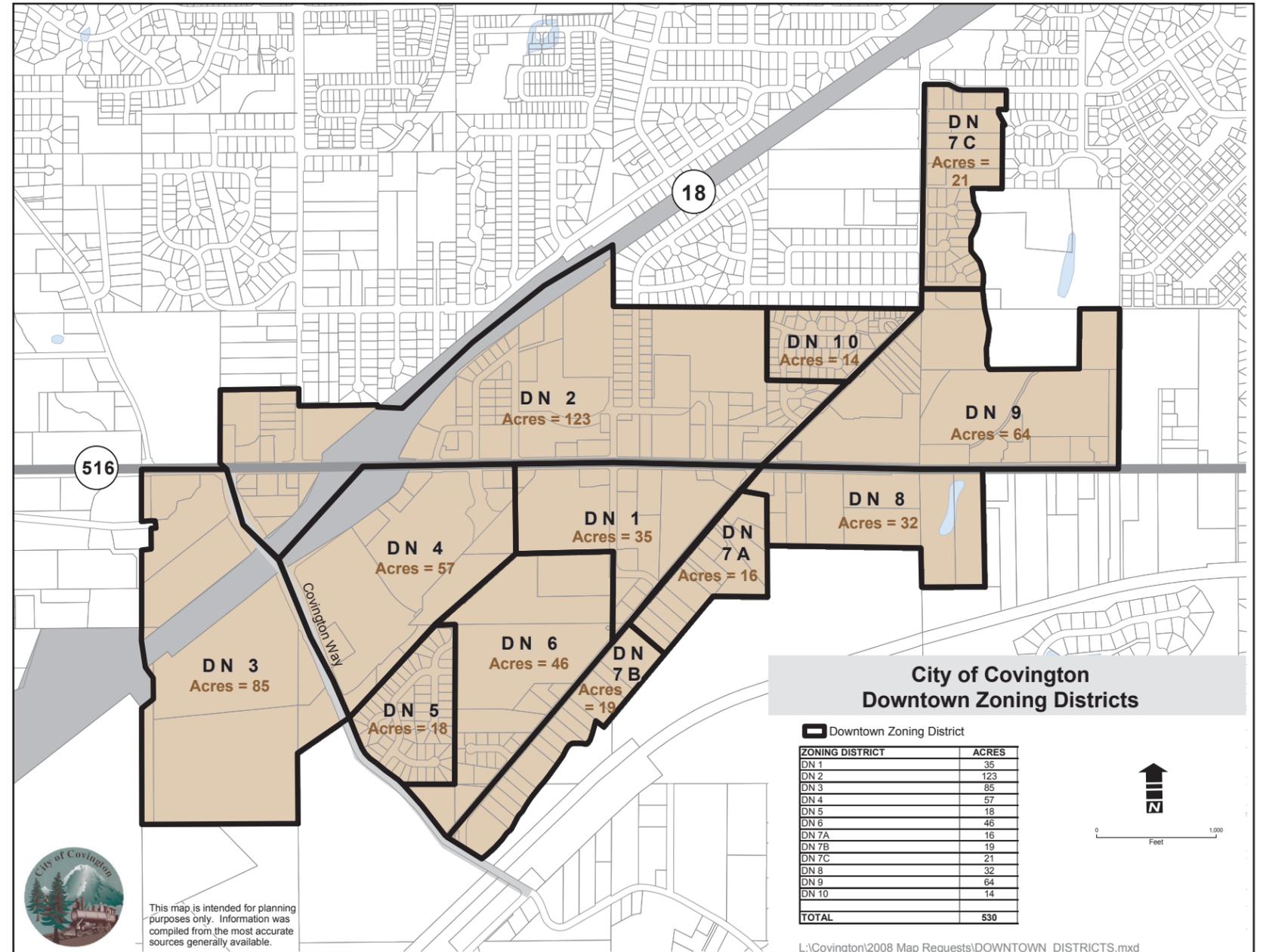
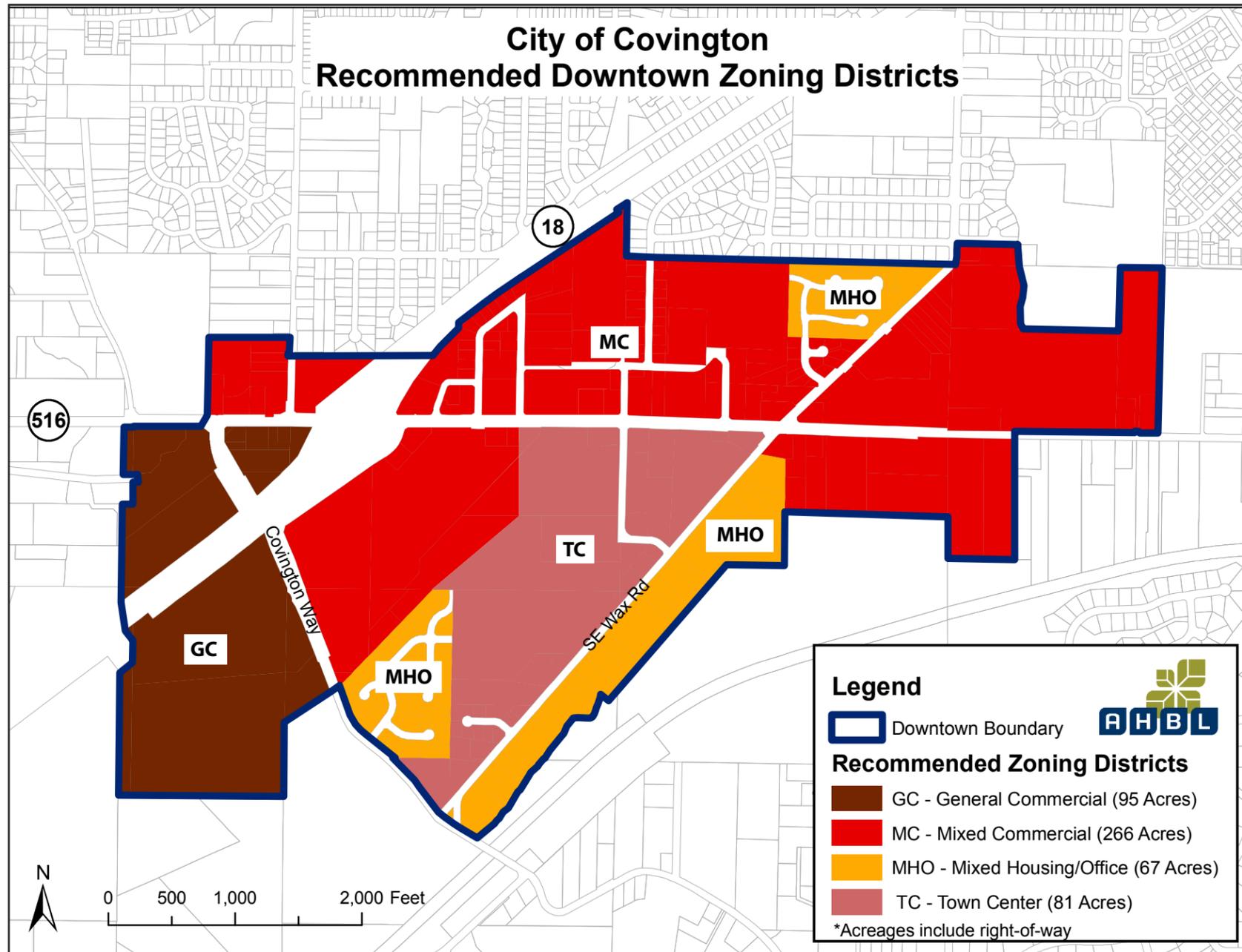


FIGURE 5.2: RECOMMENDED DOWNTOWN ZONING DISTRICTS



Please see Chapter IV, Comprehensive Plan Recommendations, for a complete description of the key concepts that should be included in the goals and policies for the Downtown and for each of the Zones. Below are some key concepts that should be considered when crafting purpose statements in the code for each new zone.

- **Town Center** is the pedestrian-oriented core of Downtown and allows the most intensive level of development in Downtown. The provision of an urban public space is the key need, preferably adjacent to a civic building. The emphasis here is on mixed-use development, pedestrian oriented retail and high density residential development. This zone also allows limited large-format retail that is designed to meet Town Center goals. The development of a walkable street grid is a key objective in this zone. This zone has a slightly more prescriptive approach to building standards (i.e., requiring rather than allowing a building form and site design that meets Town Center goals), and the most stringent pedestrian-oriented design standards.
- **Mixed Commercial** is applied to the majority of the Covington Downtown Area and allows a broad range of commercial and residential uses. This zone encourages a mix of commercial and multi-story residential uses such as mixed-use buildings, public uses and compatible food-related uses, and allows for large-format and auto-oriented retail provided they meet pedestrian-oriented design goals. Key goals include improving the pedestrian environment, providing a visual orientation of the building to the street, and a high level of connectivity for all modes through new and improved streets and trails.
- **General Commercial** is applied to a limited area of the Downtown and is intended to allow the widest range of uses, coupled with more limited design standards than other areas of the Downtown. Allowed uses include all commercial and some light manufacturing uses, as well as offices, major transportation and utility facilities, and residential uses that are buffered to ensure compatibility. Like all areas of the Downtown, heavy industrial uses are prohibited because they are not compatible with the Downtown vision. Development standards in this zone are less prescriptive and provide greater flexibility to accommodate the intended uses. Auto sales, storage and service uses are encouraged in this zone. Key transportation goals include providing pedestrian and trail connections to Big Soos Creek, the enhancement of Big Soos Creek, and a future SR 18 “peel-off” ramp onto Covington Way.
- **Mixed Housing/Office** is applied to areas where infill development and redevelopment of low intensity areas with multifamily housing and office is encouraged. A variety of housing, including townhouses, cottages, and low rise multi-family are encouraged. Office development and size-limited neighborhood retail is also allowed. Development and design standards in this zone require buffers, lower height limits and building area limits to increase

compatibility with adjacent residential development and maintain the desired scale. Trail connections are also emphasized in this zone. Modest minimum size thresholds may be required to ensure compatibility with adjacent areas, but these thresholds should not constitute a significant barrier to near term investment and implementation of the vision for this area. Small infill residential projects may also be allowed through a demonstration project or other means to provide incremental near term development opportunities of limited scale, if significant size thresholds are required.

The **Calhoun Pit site** is not within the Downtown boundary, but the purpose statement should address the following key aspects:

- **Planned Community Development** is intended for those areas where redevelopment for urban uses is desired. This zone allows for a high degree of development standards flexibility to accommodate a wide range of commercial, multi-family and limited light manufacturing uses, including (but not limited to) large format retail, clean energy business or flex-tech uses. Mixed-use and Commercial uses are emphasized, and heavy industrial uses are prohibited. Buffers between this zone and adjacent single family development are required, and connections to surrounding development should be provided. A development agreement is required in this zone to maximize this redevelopment opportunity. New development must provide intersection improvements and enhancements to the ecological function of Little Soos Creek.

Recommended Code Structure

The Development and Design Standards could be formatted in a variety of manners. The specific format of the code will be developed in a subsequent implementation phase as the standards are being drafted. The goal of this section is to provide direction on the basic code structure and an outline for consideration and further refinement.

The City should continue with a traditional Euclidean (use and zone based) code that provides all the key development standards applicable for the Covington Downtown in one Chapter. The code could begin with a section containing purpose statements for the entire downtown, followed by purpose statements for each zone and a map of downtown zones. The code should include a clear matrix containing the basic standards (dimensional, parking, street network, etc.) applicable across all Downtown zones and specific references to all development and design standards that apply to the Downtown. A simple matrix with allowed uses could be combined with the standards matrix or provided separately. Following the summary of Downtown development standards across all zones, separate sections of the code can provide more detail on general downtown standards

and zone specific standards for such things as building placement/setback, building envelope/height, public space location and size, special use restrictions, and required frontage improvements and connections.

The final section of the Downtown Development and Design standards code chapter (or a subsequent chapter, or a separate guidelines document incorporated by reference) should be devoted to downtown design standards. There is a tendency to blur the line between design and development standards. A key distinction of the design standards component is that it should not impact development yield, building placement, height or other basic factors considered during the development feasibility process. The Director should have the ability to waive or modify design standards when the applicant demonstrates that the proposal provides equal or better compliance with explicit intent statements contained for each design standards subsection. This can be provided through a typical “design departure” provision in the code to give needed flexibility. Illustrations should be used extensively to provide examples and clarification of design standards.

Basic Downtown Code Outline

A basic outline of the Downtown Code is provided below. There is no one right way to organize a code, but the standards should be presented in an order that is logical to most readers with the needs of both the technical and non-technical user in mind. Key standards should be consolidated and easy to find and the code should provide cross references to all other requirements that apply so the user can be confident that they have found all standards relating to a particular site or use. Please note that the approval process and the decision criteria have not been included in the outline below because it is generally recommended that they be consolidated with similar information for other zones in an administration chapter, but they could also be repeated in the sections indicated below to provide all Downtown Standards in one chapter.

- I. Downtown Development Standards
 - a. Purpose Statements
 - i. General purpose statements
 - ii. Zone specific purpose statements
 - b. Downtown Zoning
 - i. Zoning Map
 - ii. Zone Designation: Town Center, Mixed Commercial, General Commercial, Mixed Housing and Office
 - c. Downtown Development Standards Summary
 - i. Visual Matrix With Key Code Standards, Heights, Density, Setbacks, etc.
 - ii. References to All Other Applicable Substantive Standards
 - iii. References to Town Center Decision Criteria
 - iv. References to Downtown Decision Criteria
 - d. Simplified Consolidated Use Table
 - i. Use Table
 - ii. Use Determination
 - e. Town Center Special Standards
 - i. Building Build-to Lines
 - ii. Public Plaza Requirements
 - iii. Main Street Special Standards
 - iv. Other Special Standards
 - f. Downtown General Development Standards Details
 - i. Building Placement
 - ii. Maximum and Minimum Building Setbacks
 - iii. Residential Density
 - iv. Non-residential Intensity
 - v. Height Determination
 - vi. Exceptions
 - vii. Landscaping
 - viii. Other General Standards
 - g. Parking Standards
 - i. Parking Location
 - ii. Maximum and Minimum Parking Ratios
 - iii. Parking Plan Requirements
 - iv. Exceptions
- II. Downtown Design Standards
 - a. Site Specific Design Standards
 - i. Town Center Zone
 - 1. Main Street
 - 2. Public Plaza
 - 3. Parcels Adjacent to MHO
 - ii. Mixed Commercial Zone
 - 1. Parcels Adjacent to TC
 - 2. Parcels Adjacent to MHO
 - 3. Design Near Proposed Street Connections
 - iii. General Commercial Zone
 - 1. Consideration of Future SR 18 Connection
 - 2. Trail Connections
 - iv. Mixed Housing and Office Zone
 - 1. Demonstration Project Design Flexibility
 - 2. Parcels Adjacent to Existing Single Family
 - v. Design Standards for Key Corridors
 - 1. Kent-Kangley Road
 - 2. SE Wax Road
 - 3. SE Covington Way
 - b. Site Design (Applies in all of Downtown)
 - i. Sidewalks and Pedestrian Connections
 - ii. Parking Design
 - iii. Street Landscaping and Furnishings
 - iv. Lighting
 - v. Screening
 - vi. Signage
 - c. Building Design
 - i. Entrances and Floor Height
 - ii. Corners
 - iii. Transparency
 - iv. Ground Level Details
 - v. Massing/Articulation
 - vi. Roofline



Transparency of ground-floor and office uses is an important component of strengthening the building-street relationship.



Mid-block pedestrian connections help to break up large blocks and create a more walkable downtown.



Major developments should be required to prepare a coordinated parking strategy.

Standards Common to All Downtown Zones

The following section provides an overview of key recommended standards that would apply to all Downtown zones:

- Prohibit heavy industrial uses in Downtown. Downtown should be a place where Covington residents like to gather for community events, shop, walk and bicycle, and where a growing number of people live and work as the uses intensify. To reduce the potential for noise, odor, air emissions, excessive freight loading and truck trips that may negatively impact the planned mix of uses and pedestrian orientation of Downtown, heavy industrial uses should be prohibited in all Downtown zones.
- Group allowed uses into broad use categories with an administrative use determination process for uses that do not clearly fit within the new categories. The use determination could be appealed to the Hearing Examiner. A more detailed discussion is provided later in this chapter, under the Use Regulations heading.
- Spell out specific objective oriented permit decision criteria for development review in individual zones. These criteria will play a key role in the discretionary review process in the Town Center zone, and in gaining new street and trail connections, street improvements and integration with adjacent sites in all Downtown zones.
- Establish specific requirements for street connectivity, new streets, sidewalk completion, and street and sidewalk improvements. These would be based on the revised Downtown Element policies and maps, and would include a main street and central avenue within the Town Center as well as other new connections. Standards requiring wider sidewalks and generous amenity/planting zones will play a key role in implementing the Downtown vision.
- Require a stronger building-to-street relationship. Specific requirements would vary by zone. The most stringent requirement would be in the Town Center zone, where 80% of building frontage would need to be oriented towards the street or a public plaza, rather than towards a parking lot. Special requirements for large format retail uses may be included to allow greater flexibility, e.g. designing the parking lot drive aisle in front of the store to look and function more like a street, with landscaping, sidewalks and potentially parking.
- Require major development to prepare a parking strategy that responds to the vision in the Downtown element, with greater coordination and integration of parking areas between sites and uses, reduce minimum parking standards, maximum parking ratios and standards that encourage shared parking and elimination of off-street parking requirements for small retail uses when street parking is available.
- Enhance parking design and location standards, including restrictions on new surface parking lots along the street frontage, enhanced landscaping and amenities where allowed along the street, and other standards to increase pedestrian orientation.

- Require a maximum impervious surface coverage standard of 70% to 90% depending on zone, with credit given for pervious pavements and other Low Impact Development features in both engineering and zoning standards.

Key Zone Specific Standards

An annotated outline of the recommended substantive code standards and sample recommended code visual formats are provided in the *Zoning Framework Technical Memo* in Appendix I. Key standards include:

- Allow heights of up to 65 feet in the Town Center Zone to clearly establish this area as the center of the Downtown.
- Allow heights of up to 55 feet in the Mixed Commercial Zone and General Commercial zone for mixed-use of transit oriented development.
- Restrict heights to no more than 45 feet in the Mixed Housing/Office Zone (MHO), with a maximum of 35 feet within 50 feet of an existing single family structure to ensure compatibility with adjacent uses.
- Establish a maximum Floor Area Ratio of 2:1 (Building Square Footage : Site Area) in the MHO Zone to maintain appropriate development scale, except along Jenkins Creek where the FAR limit of 1:1 with a maximum building size of 10,000 to 20,000 square feet may be more appropriate.
- Require a 10 to 20 foot landscaped setback in the MHO Zone between new development and single family areas.
- Within the MC, GC, and TC zones, residential density for mixed-use projects should only be constrained by height limits and any other required restrictions on the building envelope.
- Within the MC, GC, and TC zones, a minimum residential density should be established to prevent conversion of high value land to low-intensity residential uses such as townhomes.
- Establish a maximum residential density of approximately 32 units per acre in the MHO Zone to provide a transition zone and compatibility with surrounding uses.

Use Regulations

Covington currently regulates uses through very specific categories based on Standard Industrial Classifications (SICs). It is recommended that regulation of uses in Downtown zones be de-emphasized, in favor of an increased focus on building form, improved building/street relationship and encouraging a vibrant mix of uses that contribute to the urban vision for the Downtown and Town Center. Nuisance uses and uses that are not compatible with the Downtown Vision, such as Heavy Industrial, or the particular vision for a Zone, such as large retail in the MHO Zone, would continue to be restricted.

Uses Defined by Broad Categories

Rather than defining uses based on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) or the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), uses could be defined in terms of broader, more flexible categories. Uses that are generally recognized to fall within these categories would be considered a permitted use. Uses that do not clearly fit within one of the defined categories would be subject to an administrative use determination process—this process would be used in exceptional circumstances only. Most accessory uses (less than 50% of the floor area) would also be allowed if the primary use is a permitted use, unless the use would result in air emissions, noise, transportation or other impacts that the City determines are not compatible with the emphasized commercial and residential uses in the zone. Recommended use categories for Downtown zones under this approach are shown below.

- Residential
- Lodging
- Retail – Pedestrian Oriented
- Retail – Large Format
- Eating and drinking establishment
- Office and professional/personal services
- Utility
- Light Manufacturing
- Recreation

Administrative Use Determination Process

An administrative use determination process should be provided as a back-up to address proposed uses that do not fit within the defined general use categories. Such a process would provide flexibility for allowing uses that contribute to the vibrancy of Downtown, as well as a check against uses that could create nuisance situations or detract from the purpose of the zone. This use determination process would only be used to address special situations and unique uses.

An example of a use that does not clearly fit within broad categories would be a combination of food-related retail and small food manufacturing operation (e.g., an artisan candy business), where the manufacturing component exceeds 50% of the floor area.

Such a use might have traffic patterns most similar to retail, and might fit well within the Town Center, but because of its manufacturing component would be prohibited where light manufacturing uses are prohibited. The use determination process would determine whether the overall traffic-generation patterns and potential impacts of the proposed use fit with the intent of the zone. If so, it would be allowed.

The process would consist of a review of the use by the Director, based on a set of criteria. Appeal of the determination would go to the Hearing Examiner. Below are potential criteria:

- The use is determined by the Director to reasonably fall within one of the allowed use categories because all of the below criteria are met:
- The use is consistent with the zone's purpose statement and the comprehensive plan policies,
- The use can be accommodated in the existing structure in which it is proposed without requiring substantial modification to the form of the structure,
- The use does not have noxious impacts (excessive noise, odor, vibration, dust, truck traffic, etc.) on other nearby properties and uses, and
- The use will not result in significant transportation impacts that would not be addressed by the required development standards.

Downtown Design Standards

Portions of the City of Covington Design Manual pertaining to the Downtown should be formally repealed to avoid confusion with other design-related requirements for the Downtown.

While Development Standards should include all standards that define the building location, envelope, yield and/or placement of major structures, Design Standards should focus on how development contributes to the pedestrian environment and overall aesthetic quality and identity of the community. They should also include any additional standards for building and site design elements that impact the visual quality and pedestrian orientation of the Downtown, such as for façade modulation and articulation, pedestrian amenities, etc. The goal is to achieve a specific built form and visual character in the Downtown area.

The existing Downtown Design Standards address many of the topics that are important to consider for the development of a pedestrian-oriented Downtown; however, some modifications are recommended in order to reflect the vision and intent of the updated Downtown and Town Center Plan, including the consolidated Downtown zones. The basic structure of the existing standards, which begins with standards common to all Downtown



Maximum building setbacks, transparency, and overhead weather protection are among the elements that should be emphasized in the Downtown development and design standards in order to strengthen the building-street relationship.

zones followed by zone-specific standards could be maintained, or the structure could be adjusted to reflect the outline previously provided, which we generally recommend.

Key items common to all Downtown zones that should be added or strengthened include:

- Upper story setbacks should be eliminated from the design standards.
- Street frontage improvements, including pedestrian-scale lighting standards, street furniture, and street trees and tree wells.
- Parking area design should include standards for integrated drive aisles that appear more like streets with sidewalks, landscaping and lighting, in order to have a more integrated pedestrian circulation system rather than only requiring pedestrian walkways connecting to the principal customer entrance of buildings.
 - Masonry walls should be used strategically, i.e. to accent a corner or provide a screen for headlights, rather than as a substitute for shrubs under any circumstance,
 - Consider augmenting existing parking lot landscaping standards to include low impact development techniques, and
 - Include a minimum dimension for perimeter landscaping strip, i.e. five feet.
- Pedestrian circulation standards should emphasize a strong connection between the urban walkway/sidewalk system and natural trail systems associated with Jenkins and Soos Creeks.
- Common area and plaza standards should include minimum dimensions, pavement treatment options, and area required should be recalibrated to reflect updated Downtown Plan.
- Stronger standards for placement and design of garbage/service/recycling and mechanical equipment areas. Storage and collection points for waste and recyclables should be architecturally integrated with the building rather than stand alone features, particularly within the Town Center.
- Minimum sidewalk standards for the entire Downtown should be 7-8 feet clear width plus a 4-5 foot amenity/planting zone for a total of 12 feet. Tree wells may intrude into the sidewalk zone by 2 feet to provide adequate room for healthy tree growth. Tree grates are to be used in the Town Center. Sidewalks on the “Main Street” within the Town Center should be required to be wider, i.e. 10 foot sidewalks and 5 foot amenity/planting zone.
- Lighting standards should be more specific in terms of the intent (i.e. safety, visual interest and atmosphere), appropriate lighting types, and address all public areas where pedestrian activity occurs, including walkways, sidewalks, common areas and plazas, and building entries.

- Landscaping standards should emphasize urban landscape types that are intended to enhance the pedestrian environment, soften development, and potentially manage stormwater. Landscaping standards for the Downtown should focus on areas that are visible and accessible to the public, i.e. public spaces, building entries, streetscapes, and parking areas. Using an approach similar to Seattle’s “Green Factor,” which has been adopted by other smaller jurisdictions, may be a more effective approach than the prescribed landscaping standards currently found in Covington’s code and design standards.

Zone specific design standards, particularly those tied to specific Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project numbers, should be deleted and additional standards should be added or strengthened to reflect the recommended new Downtown zones. However some standards may still have applicability to the recommended new Downtown zones, including:

- Roof forms and façade modulation standards for buildings with footprints larger than 50,000 square feet.
- Perimeter buffers and landscaping standards for zones that abut lower intensity residential areas.
- Design departure process is fine, but reference to City of Covington Design Manual should be deleted.

Clear intent statements should be crafted for each design standard topic, i.e. landscaping, parking lot design, ground floor façade treatments, etc.

Other zone specific design standards that should be added or strengthened include:

- Increase ground floor window transparency within the Town Center, e.g. 75% of ground floor façade with principal building entrance.
- Increase overhead weather protection requirement within the Town Center, e.g. 80% of ground floor façade with principal building entrance.
- Include a minimum 15 feet finished floor to ceiling height for ground floors of commercial and mixed-use developments within the Town Center.
- Prohibit use of freestanding pole signs and encourage pedestrian oriented signage throughout the Downtown.
- Within the Town Center, generally require architecturally-integrated, pedestrian-oriented sign types, e.g. blade, awning and window signs. Minimize visual impact of signs in all other Downtown districts by allowing monument signs in the Downtown, with an emphasis on smaller joint tenant signs where feasible. Note: amendments to the sign code should also be made.

- Add distinctive architectural features i.e. for building corners at gateway points to the Town Center or buildings adjacent to public gathering space.
- More specific standards for common areas and plazas should address connections to overall system of public spaces and menu of treatment options.
- Principal building entrances within the Town Center and Mixed Commercial districts should be oriented towards the street and made distinctive using architectural features and signage. Secondary entrances, i.e. from parking areas, should also be made distinctive using architectural features and signage and should be directly accessible via an internal pedestrian circulation system. Building entrances within the General Commercial District should be visually connected to the street.

In addition to the Design Standard recommendations listed above, there are several existing design requirements that are part of the City's development standards, which are inconsistent with the vision of Downtown, particularly for the Town Center, and should be revised.

- Existing open space requirements may be too high to achieve the desired built form. Balconies, roof top spaces, or accessible public spaces should be allowed to fulfill at least a portion the requirement.
- On-site recreation requirements may be too specific to achieve the desired built form.
- Provisions pertaining to covered pedestrian walkways through surface parking areas should be eliminated from the standards because they do not positively contribute to the desired built form for the Town Center and the overall Downtown.

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VI. Implementation

This Chapter provides a summary of implementation needs, recommendations and strategies to achieve the Preferred Town Center Alternative and Circulation Plan. These include recommendations for:

- Evaluation of existing capital improvements and proposed new capital improvement projects,
- Prioritization of capital improvement projects and phasing,
- Potential incentives such as public-private partnerships, provision of infrastructure, code provisions, and financing strategies, and
- Other priority implementation actions.

Existing Capital Streets Project Evaluation

Table 6.1 lists the transportation improvements to which the City of Covington plans to allocate funding between 2010 and 2015. Below the dashed line, it also lists projects from the City’s long-range capital improvements plan. All projects are listed in the order they are currently prioritized – from 1-5 in the 6-year TIP and from A-H in the 20-year CIP. The far right column of the table assesses their relative priority for the preferred Town Center alternative and circulation plan. The two projects programmed for the next five years that would most directly contribute to the town center are improvements to SE 272nd Street (SR-516) just east of Wax Road (CIP #1039) and just west of SR-18 (CIP #1063 - partial), along with improvements along 180th Ave (CIP #1149 – partial).

Of the improvements listed below the dashed line in Figure 6.1, which are only in the City’s long-range plan, several are relevant to the Town Center. Two particular projects correspond to priority improvements for the Town Center alternative:

- Reconstruction of SE Wax Road from 272nd to Covington Way (CIP #1085), and
- Improvements along SE 272nd Street from 160th Avenue to 172nd Avenue (CIP #1063).

Prioritized Town Center Transportation Improvements

A number of opportunities to improve downtown streets and circulation were identified as part of the downtown Covington planning process, shown in Figure 6.1 (Covington



TABLE 6.1: PLANNED TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS AND TOWN CENTER PRIORITIES

Downtown Circulation and Street Improvements map). Table 6.2 lists the proposed improvements and assesses the relative priority for achieving the guiding principles for the Downtown Plan and Zoning Study and the Preferred Town Center Alternative. Each improvement is discussed in additional detail.

Capital Improvements in the Public Realm

A number of capital improvements for parks and public space were also identified in the Covington Parks Plan or the downtown Covington planning process, as shown in Table 6.3.

The most significant benefits appear to come from the following improvements:

- Creating a public gathering space/plaza in the Town Center to provide a place for civic events, a farmer’s market, and other activities would provide a core or heart for the community as a focus for initial investment.
- Creating a pedestrian-oriented Main Street is a key element of the Town Center and should be the highest priority. A Main Street on SE 171st would clearly demonstrate the City’s commitment to the Town Center and help stimulate private investment in that area.
- SE 272nd is the major east-west connection through Covington’s downtown. Providing safe pedestrian crossings at regular intervals would capitalize on its strengths and prevent it from acting as a barrier between the north and south parts of downtown. It would also encourage parking once and walking between different destinations in Downtown.
- Improving the street grid south of the Town Center would reinforce the Main Street and further support development of the Town Center.
- Locating the transit center in a central location would maximize transit access to the Town Center and contribute to a pedestrian-friendly Downtown.
- Realigning SE Wax Road and the creation of a Jenkins Creek Trail would strengthen a key north-south connection on the eastern edge of the Town Center, establish a major linkage between the Town Center and natural systems, and provide continuous non-motorized routes to the new Town Center.
- Creating landscaped “gateway” connections to the Jenkins Creek Trail.
- Constructing a roundabout at SE Wax Road and Covington Way SE could logically be incorporated into the Wax Road realignment and would help link existing bike lanes on Covington Way to possible bike lanes on a reconstructed Wax Road.

CIP #	Project Location	Description	TIP Funding Year	TIP/CIP Priority	Relative Priority Assessment for Town Center
1039	SE 272 nd St, Wax Rd to Jenkins Creek	Access control, pedestrian improvements, signal revisions	2009-10	1 / B	Medium
1127	SE 272 nd St, Jenkins Creek to 185 th PI	Widen to 5 lanes & reconstruct, 8’ sidewalks, new stream crossing	2010-11	2 / B	Medium
1128	SE 272 nd St, 185 th PI to 192 nd Ave	Widen to 5 lanes & reconstruct, 8’ sidewalks, new signal	2011-12	3 / B	N/A
1063 (Partial)	SE 272 nd St, 160 th Ave to 164 th Ave	Signal modifications, turn lanes, stream crossing, 10’ sidewalks/street trees	2012-13	4	Medium
1056/1149 (Partial)	SE 256 th St (172 nd Ave to 180 th) and 180 th Ave (Wax to 256 th)	Safety improvements, sidewalks, signal modifications, add right turn lane	2014-15	5	N/A
1124	185 th PI Extension, Wax Rd/ 180 th Ave Roundabout to 272 nd St	New route, new Alignment, access management	N/A	A	Low
1041	SE 256 th St, 148 th Ave to 160 th Ave	Widen & reconstruct, sidewalks, new signal	N/A	C	N/A
1085	SE Wax Rd, 272 nd St to Covington Way	Widen & reconstruct, sidewalks, new signal	N/A	D	High
1084	Covington Way SE, 165 th PI to Wax Rd	Widen & reconstruct, sidewalks, new stream crossing	N/A	E	Medium
1060	180 th Ave SE, 256 th St to 261 st St	Widen & reconstruct, sidewalks, modify signal	N/A	F	Low-Medium
1061	180 th Ave SE, 261 st St to 262 nd St	Widen existing bridge for sidewalks, modify signal	N/A	F	Low-Medium
1149	180 th Ave SE, Wax Rd to 256 th St (see also 1056/1149 partial)	Widen & reconstruct, sidewalks, modify signal	N/A	F	Low-Medium
1063	SE 272 nd St, 160 th Ave to 172 nd Ave	Not given	N/A	G	High
1056	SE 256 th St, 168 th PI to 180 th Ave (see also 1056/1149 partial)	Widen & reconstruct, sidewalks, new stream crossing	N/A	H	Low

Data Sources: City of Covington 2010-2015 Transportation Improvement Program [TIP], adopted 6/9/2009; Draft 20-Year Capital Improvement Program [CIP], 20 Year Plan 2010-2029 Subject to Impact Fees, 8/20/2009

The other proposed improvements would likely have a lesser immediate contribution to

TABLE 6.2: ASSESSMENT AND PRIORITIZATION OF CIRCULATION AND STREET IMPROVEMENTS

Map Key*	Project	Guiding Principles - Transportation					Other Overall Benefits	Relative Priority Assessment
		Multimodal Connectivity	Comfortable Walking Environment	Design to link to Transit Trails	Redesign SR-516 Attractive/Inviting	Parking Strategy e.g. Park Once		
4	Create Town Center Main Street on SE 171 st	✓	✓			✓	Essential Town Center plan element	Highest
3	Improve pedestrian crossings along SE 272 nd	✓	✓		✓	✓		High
5	Improve street grid south of town center	✓	✓			✓		High
2	Realign Wax Road	✓	✓	✓		✓		High
8	Add roundabout at SE Wax Road and Covington Way SE	✓	✓					Medium
1	Study peel-off ramp from EB SR 18 to EB Covington Way SE	✓			✓		More direct Town Center access	Medium-Low
6	Remove current 172 nd Pl SE and add new link to create a through connection	✓				✓		Low
7	Complete SE 270 th Pl to improve grid	✓						Medium-Low

* Map key refers to map shown to the right (Covington Downtown Circulation and Street Improvements Map)

the overall goals and to achieving the Town Center development and would have longer term benefit:

- A peel-off ramp from eastbound SR 18 to eastbound Covington Way SE would improve auto access to the Town Center and possibly alleviate congestion on other routes,
- Removing the current 172nd Place SE and creating a new through connection would improve the east-west street grid and connectivity north of 272nd St, but the benefits are more localized than other proposed improvements,
- Completion of SE 270th Place in the northwest part of downtown would improve the street grid, but the benefits are more localized than other proposed improvements,
- Connections to the Soos Creek Trail, and
- Connections to the regional trails system.

It is recommended that Covington prioritize the improvements that are most critical for realizing the Town Center and achieving its overall goals for Downtown in the initial phase of implementation. These include the Public Gathering Space/Plaza, the Town Center Main Street and improvements to the adjacent street grid, pedestrian crossings along SE

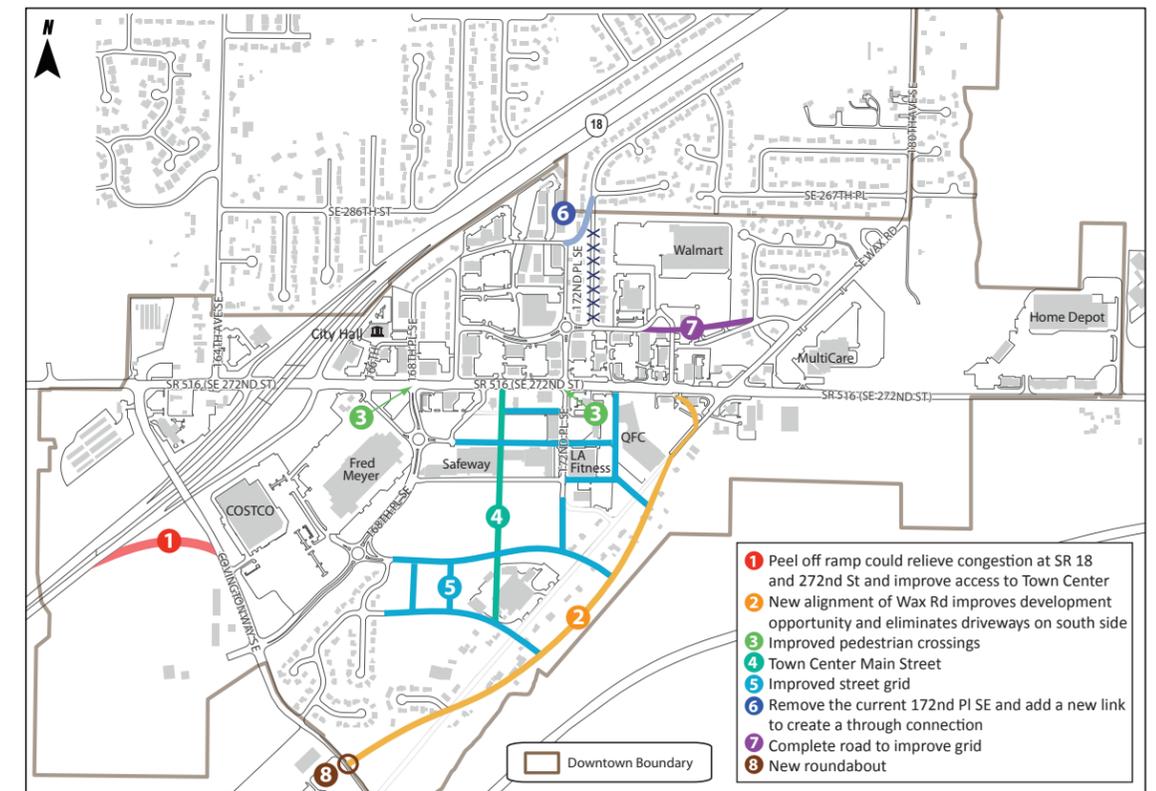


TABLE 6.3: CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS IN THE PUBLIC REALM

Project	Create a Public Space in the Town Center for Active Uses	Design Town Center for Trails and Transit Linkages	Provide Public Realm of connected streets & plazas	Make Strategic Investments to Attract Quality Investment	Other Overall Benefits	Relative Priority Assessment
Public Gathering Place/Plaza	✓	✓	✓	✓	Initial Investment in Building the Core of Downtown	Highest
Jenkins Creek Trail		✓	✓	✓	Links Town Center to Natural Systems	High
Linkages from Plaza to Jenkins Creek		✓	✓	✓	Links Town Center to Natural Systems	High
Connections to Soos Creek Trail		✓	✓		Longer Term Asset	Medium
Connections to Regional Trails System		✓	✓		Longer Term Asset	Medium

272nd Street, and realignment of Wax Road. Several of these improvements are already defined (or similar to) projects in Covington’s long-range capital plan, but are not currently scheduled or funded for implementation. If priorities can be rearranged or additional funding sources identified, advancing the completion of these projects would help create the infrastructure necessary to advance Covington’s aspirations for its Downtown.

Potential Implementation Incentives

Public-Private Partnerships

Implementation of a successful Town Center will require numerous partnerships between the public and private sectors. There are several potential roles that the City can fill in such a partnership. These roles can be categorized according to steps within the overall development process.

1. Land assembly,
2. Provide public infrastructure improvements,
3. Adopt favorable regulations and financial incentives,
4. Facilitate key catalyst projects, and
5. Retain existing business and solicit new business.

The potential roles and associated tools are described for each step in this section, with recommendations for appropriate actions.

Land Assembly

A city often assists in assembly of a land site for key developments or projects when it already owns one or more parcels, when surplus publicly owned parcels are sold by another agency, when such an action would make a project more feasible, or when the power of condemnation is necessary. The condemnation approach is usually the method of last resort, because of the time and expense of legal action, and is not recommended.

In this case, a likely candidate for the Town Center is the school property owned by the Kent School District. School districts generally surplus property to other governments or to private purchasers. The City could consider purchase of the property in order to gain control of the property and to facilitate the initial and later phases of development of the Town Center. If the City were to purchase the property, it could resell portions of the property to a private developer for an amount that is less than the original purchase price.

Such a write-down in value is commonly done by public agencies, particularly in areas where there are public goals and benefits for redevelopment, such as town centers. The reduced value can make a project feasible when a higher land value would not.

Many cities have chosen to form public development authorities (PDA's) to manage endeavors such as this. Such entities can operate under a public mandate, but enjoy more flexibility. However, there are administrative costs associated with establishing and operating such an entity. If the development activities are a one-time endeavor, the costs likely exceed the benefits.

Provide Public Improvements and Infrastructure

Almost all successful public-private partnerships involve some investment by the public agency in various public improvements. The improvements create value for the private development by sharing costs, and enhancing revenue streams. Several potential types of physical improvements are described below.

Structured Parking

Parking can be an expensive component of a town center development. In many cases, a garage shared by public and private uses can enjoy significant efficiencies. In general, a parking structure is only feasible when it is more cost-effective than surface parking. A stall in an above-ground structure costs a minimum of approximately \$20,000 per stall, or \$55 to \$60 per square foot. With land prices in the commercial areas of Covington in the range of \$15 to \$25 per square foot, it is much more cost effective to develop parking by purchasing land and improving it at a cost of \$10 to \$12 per square foot as a surface lot.

For the Town Center, the plans show a public parking garage which is integral to the Main Street, retail development and the Civic Center. At some time in the future when the land supply is more constrained and values are higher, it might be feasible to redevelop surface parking lots with a parking structure. As such, it will be important to configure near term parking facilities for current needs while also planning the circulation and site frameworks for more dense future development and structured parking.

Streets and Utilities

Streets and utilities are traditional infrastructure items for a public agency. A city can assist a development by providing off-site improvements, or providing on-site improvements with dedication of the right of way to the city. The city can also share in the cost of such improvements with a Local Improvement District (LID).

Civic Center

A civic complex, comprised of multiple public facilities such as a city hall, community center, or recreation center can be attractive components which anchor a town center. The civic facilities attract potential customers to the development, and can also provide a high quality of design and development. They make the surrounding development more attractive for investment, and for businesses, residents, and customers.

Civic facilities are often funded with City Council approved general obligation bonds. Civic facilities can also be developed through a lease purchase arrangement with a private developer (turn-key operation), or through a design build process. Public funds can also be obtained through a public vote for bonds.

It is recommended that the City begin the first phase of the Town Center with the development of the public gathering space/plaza. This space could be financed with voter-approved bonds.

Implementation Financing

Cities can access incremental taxes in an informal way by issuing non-voted debt backed by its general taxing authority. Further, it can enter into interlocal agreements with other jurisdictions to apply their incremental tax revenues to infrastructure improvements. Finally, the City should explore the use of the Washington State Local Revitalization Financing Program (a new infrastructure-funding program that is a combination of a state stimulus package and tax-increment financing) to fund downtown capital improvements as additional funds become available in future years.

Favorable Regulations and Financial Incentives

The City can provide incentives to the developer through development regulations and zoning.

Bonus Incentives

Many cities offer incentives with bonus density in return for public amenities such as affordable housing, public plazas, opens space etc. The value of the density bonus is invested in the cost of the associated amenity features. Another mechanism is transfer of development rights (TDR) in which a developer can purchase additional density from a sending site. In either case, a developer buys density above a base level. Such programs are generally successful only in areas with a scarcity of land and high land prices. In the case of Covington, these are not likely to be effective tools during the early stages of development.

Tax Exemption Programs

The Multifamily Tax Exemption that provides an exemption from property taxes for a period of 8 to 12 years for the value of improvements for qualifying multifamily development has been a very successful tool in stimulating multifamily development in cities in Washington. Covington is currently eligible for this program.

Impact Fees

The City should consider setting impact fees for the Town Center that are lower than the fees elsewhere. Since many new residents of a town center may be young adults without school-age children, the burden on schools will be small, and emphasis on pedestrian activities will reduce the number of automobile trips. This may reduce a source of funding in the near term, but it will stimulate development and hasten collection of revenues from other sources.

Streamlined Development Process

The City should streamline the land use and building permit processes as much as possible to reduce uncertainty and time required for approvals. Completion of a programmatic EIS or even a Planned Action EIS and Ordinance for the Town Center would reduce and could (in the case of a Planned Action) even virtually eliminate the environmental review requirements for individual development proposals. This EIS could potentially be completed as a supplemental EIS to the 2005 Downtown Final EIS.

Traffic Impact Fee Funding Source Adjustment (TIFFSA)

In 2007, the City recently adopted an ordinance that allows it to adjust the funding source for a portion of the City transportation impact fees for new large retail businesses locating in the City. The City recently used this tool to help fund the creation of SE 168th Place. Commonly referred to locally as Traffic Impact Fee Funding Source Adjustment (TIFFSA), this law allows the City to refund a portion of the significant traffic impact fee to a new retail establishment which meets certain criteria, including a total size over 150,000 square feet. This refund is financed by the sales tax revenue generated by the new retail business in the first three years of occupancy. This allows the City to impose significant traffic impact fees that are not as large of a financial burden on, and deterrent to, new development. The City should continue to evaluate this tool, and may want to extend it to other types of development so they are not at a competitive disadvantage to large retail in the competition for available land in the Downtown.

Facilitate a Key Catalyst Project

A catalyst project is one that demonstrates that a new type of development can be

supported within a particular area, or which will stimulate additional investment. The entire Town Center development can be considered a single catalyst project, however the town center is likely to be developed in phases over a period of decades. The public gathering space/plaza is recommended as the first phase. Subsequent phases could then take the form of a civic facility, a combined civic/private facility, or entirely private development built for public use. The key to such a project is to identify the appropriate site, uses, desirable features, and attractive terms for development.

Retain Existing Business and Solicit New Business

The City should continue its ongoing efforts at economic development. Recruitment efforts would be pursued cooperatively with developers in the town center. Businesses that extend the hours of activity beyond 9 AM to 5 PM are particularly important to a town center. Restaurants, cinemas, and other entertainment fit this requirement. Existing businesses throughout Downtown are mutually supportive with a new Town Center. The city can help existing businesses work together to attract new customers and maximize their local spending. Cooperative programs that are effective include joint advertising, coordinated hours, and regular events such as First Thursday (or Saturday, etc.) with businesses staying open late.

Environmental Review

Based on our initial review of the Downtown Plan EIS, we believe that the preparation of a Supplemental EIS is not required because the recommended revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and Development Code outlined in this Study would not result in probable significant adverse environmental impacts that were not disclosed and analyzed in the previous EIS. The City could either prepare an Addendum to the existing EIS or choose to do a separate “stand-alone” analysis through a SEPA Checklist. An Addendum is recommended to build on and incorporate previous analyses. The analysis should include additional traffic analysis to confirm and document that the change in this key impact would not be significant.

The City currently allows mixed-use development and the maximum development capacity analyzed in the EIS was large and generally encompasses the uses and level

of development that would be reasonably foreseeable as part of the recommended policy and regulatory changes outlined in this Study. Traffic generation and other impacts for the revised Downtown Plan envisioned in this Study will, in all likelihood, be less than the extremely large increase analyzed in the EIS Preferred Alternative that considered the addition of more than 3.4 million square feet of development to the Downtown (the size of more than three regional malls) and 1,630 dwelling units. The Preferred Alternative also plans for the development of a civic or school campus.

Mitigation measures identified in the previous EIS should be reviewed in greater detail to determine their relationship to and compatibility with the recommendations presented in this study. Site specific improvements recommended as part of this study, including any proposal to modify the location of Wax Road, would need to be examined closer because they will require a finer level of analysis of environmental impacts that were not considered in the original programmatic EIS. All site specific development proposals (e.g. the Town Center development) will need to be analyzed at the project level or reviewed as part of a Planned Action EIS. Phased environmental review, including but not limited to a Planned Action EIS, as mentioned previously, would reduce the regulatory burden and increase certainty for private investment in the Downtown.

Identity and Branding for the Town Center

Based upon the concepts outlined in Chapter 3, define Covington's brand and identity as an early implementation action. This early effort should focus on defining key themes that define market position and reflect community values. Subsequent efforts would include defining a signage and wayfinding program which reflects the community brand, and identifying defining principles and key elements of a distinctive downtown infrastructure.

Implementation Summary

This document provides a vision and key implementation steps for the Covington Downtown and Town Center. Both Downtown and the Town Center will be developed in phases in the years to come. It is therefore essential that clear policies, regulations and capital improvement plans are established to ensure that incremental development over an extended time period is consistent with a clear and specific vision for the area.

The recommendations and illustrations in this Study establish the fundamental components and relationships of the physical framework which are essential to fulfilling the City of Covington's vision. These include the location of key streets to serve the Town Center (171st or "Main Street", 172nd, and an east-west connector, or "Central Avenue"), the design of a public gathering place, and a strong visual and non-motorized link to the natural systems and future trail along Jenkins Creek. The Study also identifies the preferred urban form with pedestrian-scaled streets with distinctive design and amenities faced by buildings, and a strong building to street relationship along the key streets.

This document, with the Technical Appendices, provides the City of Covington with the content to proceed with initial implementation phases. First steps are to adopt new Comprehensive Plan Policies and revised zoning regulations, followed by capital improvement planning to locate and develop key streets and the public gathering space in the Town Center, and finally, financing strategies to realize this investment. Location and design of these key elements consistent with the recommendations contained in this Study will help ensure that the City's vision for a healthy mixed-use community with pedestrian amenities, enhanced multi-modal access and a public space in the heart of the Downtown is realized.