# Urban Form

(Comprehensive Plan Chapter 3)

## Urban Form Goals

# **A city designed for people**

Portland’s built environment is designed to serve the needs and aspirations of all Portlanders, promoting prosperity, health, equity, and resiliency. New development, redevelopment, and public investments reduce disparities and encourage social interaction to create a healthy connected city. (Comprehensive Plan Goal 3.A)

# **A climate and hazard resilient urban form**

Portland’s compact urban form, sustainable building development practices, green infrastructure, and active transportation system reduce carbon emissions, reduce natural hazard risks and impacts, and improve resilience to the effects of climate change. (Comprehensive Plan Goal 3.B)

# **Focused growth**

Household and employment growth is focused in the Central City and other centers, corridors, and transit station areas, creating compact urban development in areas with a high level of service and amenities, while allowing the relative stability of lower-density single-family residential areas. (Comprehensive Plan Goal 3.C)

# A system of centers and corridors

Portland’s interconnected system of centers and corridors provides diverse housing options and employment opportunities, robust multimodal transportation connections, access to local services and amenities, and supports low-carbon complete, healthy, and equitable communities.(Comprehensive Plan Goal 3.D)

# Connected public realm and open spaces

A network of parks, streets, City Greenways, and other public spaces supports community interaction; connects neighborhoods, districts, and destinations; and improves air, water, land quality, and environmental health.(Comprehensive Plan Goal 3.E)

## Urban Form Policies

# Citywide Design and Development Policies

**All ages and abilities**: Strive for a built environment that provides a safe, healthful, and attractive environment for people of all ages and abilities. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.4)

# Centers Policies

**Investments in centers:** Encourage public and private investment in infrastructure, economic development, and community services in centers to ensure that all centers will support the populations they serve. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.15)

**Accessibility:** Design centers to be compact, safe, attractive, and accessible places, where the street environment makes access by transit, walking, biking, and mobility devices such as wheelchairs, safe and attractive for people of all ages and abilities. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.18)

**Center connections:** Connect centers to each other and to other key local and regional destinations, such as schools, parks, and employment areas, by pedestrian trails and sidewalks, bicycle sharing, bicycle routes, frequent and convenient transit, and electric vehicle charging stations. Prepare and adopt future street plans for centers that currently have poor street connectivity, especially where large commercial parcels are planned to receive significant additional housing density. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.19)

**Green infrastructure in centers:** Integrate nature and green infrastructure into centers and enhance public views and connections to the surrounding natural features. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.20)

# Central City Policies

**Transportation hub:** Enhance the Central City as the region’s multimodal transportation hub and optimize regional access as well as the movement of people and goods among key destinations. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.25)

**Regional transportation hub:** Strengthen the Central City as the highly accessible and multimodal hub for moving people and goods, reinforcing its regional center roles, enabling successful high density employment and housing development, and thereby affirming its role in Metro’s Region 2040 Framework Plan. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.40)

**Portals**: Manage entry points into the Central City to provide balanced multimodal access to efficiently accommodate the increase in person trips and goods delivery as a result of growth and development. Discourage through trips from using Central City streets. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.41)

**Optimized street network:**. Improve street design and function to increase efficiency and safety for all transportation modes and the ability of the existing network to meet the access needs of businesses, shoppers, residents and visitors. Establish a system and standards that emphasize walking, bicycling, transit use and freight access while continuing to provide automobile access. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.42)

**Transportation system management:** Manage access and circulation to reduce traffic speeds and provide for safe street crossings, while balancing the need for vehicle and freight access to and from the district. Manage the roadway system within the Central City in a way that allows greater levels of traffic congestion. In congested areas, prioritize modes other than automobiles to accommodate travel demand. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.43)

**Regional multimodal access**: Work with the Oregon Department of Transportation on improvements to I-405, I-5 and US26 to enhance regional access to the Central City. Minimize through traffic on Central City streets, improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity across the freeways and create opportunities for capping freeways to lessen the barrier effect of the freeway and open new areas for potential development and/or parks, open space, and recreation opportunities. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.44)

**Mode split:** Strive to achieve the Central City targets set in the most current Transportation System Plan. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.45)

**Street diversity:** Differentiate the character of key streets to offer a diversity of urban experiences and connections, reflect the character of unique districts and expand open space and recreation functions in the right-of-way where possible. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.46)

**Streetscape**: Improve the street environment and pedestrian experience by providing urban greenery, community uses of the right-of-way and by integrating high-density uses to activate the pedestrian environment and encourage community gathering. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.47)

**Walking:** Encourage walking as the principal way to get around the Central City, with improved on-street and off-street infrastructure that enhances safety and closes access gaps to areas within, and adjacent to, the Central City. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.48)

**Bicycling:** Prioritize bicycling by implementing world-class on-street and offstreet infrastructure that is safe, comfortable and convenient for people of all ages and abilities. Augment capital improvements with robust encouragement, education and enforcement efforts. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.49)

**Transit:** Continue to strengthen the regional role of transit in the Central City. Support increased frequency, span-of-service, reliability and safety, as well as expansion of the rail, bus and streetcar systems. Explore river transit opportunities. Facilitate safe, pleasant and efficient access and transfer opportunities for transit riders via a clear, intuitive and convenient transit network that consolidates fragmented routes and provides high standards of transit amenities. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.50)

**Transportation demand management:** Foster the development of business and property owner supported programs, incentives and activities that encourage employees, residents, students and visitors to use walking, cycling, transit, carpool and car-share, as well as telecommuting and traveling outside the hours of peak congestion. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.51)

**Auto parking:** Support Central City parking needs, particularly for retail, employment and residential growth, as well as for access to major attractions such as universities and event venues. Continue to limit the growth of the overall auto parking supply, and maximize the joint use of existing and new stalls to manage parking in a more efficient and dynamic manner, lower the costs of construction and meet mode split and climate action goals for the city. Maintain no auto parking minimum requirements in the Central City and set maximum auto parking ratios to encourage other modes and allow new long-term parking only if associated with new development or to serve buildings with little parking. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.52)

**Bicycle Parking:** Encourage the provision of bicycle parking to serve the expected increase in bicycle trips in the Central City. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.53)

**Public Parking**: Continue to manage public parking on the street system and in public garages to support Central City parking needs, prioritizing short trips and turnover to serve retail and visitor needs. Develop a performance-based parking program that manages Central City public parking to meet performance targets via dynamic pricing and other parking management tools and by providing clear and transparent parking information. Balance the need for on street parking with other uses of the curb zone. In managing the supply of on-street parking, the first priority is for short-term parking, followed by carpool and finally long-term parking. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.54)

**Loading:** Support the delivery of goods in the Central City. Pursue strategies that bring new ways of delivering goods to the Central City in a way that optimizes loading and freight access and makes efficient use of limited urban space. (Central City 2035 TSP Policy 9.55)

# Gateway Regional Center Policies

**Transportation:** Enhance Gateway’s role as a regional high-capacity transit hub that serves as an anchor for East Portland’s multimodal transportation system. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.29)

# Town Centers Policies

**Transportation:** Improve Town Centers as multimodal transportation hubs that optimize access from the broad area of the city they serve and are linked to the region’s high-capacity transit system. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.33)

# Neighborhood Centers Policies

**Transportation:** Design Neighborhood Centers as multimodal transportation hubs that are served by frequent-service transit and optimize pedestrian and bicycle access from adjacent neighborhoods. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.37)

# Inner Ring Districts Policies

**Corridors:** Guide growth in corridors to transition to mid-rise scale close to the Central City, especially along Civic Corridors. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.40)

**Active transportation:** Enhance the role of the Inner Ring Districts’ extensive transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks in conjunction with land uses that optimize the ability for more people to utilize this network. Improve the safety of pedestrian and bike connections to the Central City. Strengthen transit connections between the Inner Ring Districts and to the Central City. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.43)

# Corridors Policies

**Growth and mobility:** Coordinate transportation and land use strategies along corridors to accommodate growth and mobility needs for people of all ages and abilities. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.44)

**Connections:** Improve corridors as multimodal connections providing transit, pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle access and that serve the freight needs of centers and neighborhood business districts. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.45)

**Design:** Encourage street design that balances the important transportation functions of corridors with their roles as the setting for commercial activity and residential living. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.46)

**Green infrastructure in corridors:** Enhance corridors with distinctive green infrastructure, including landscaped stormwater facilities, extensive tree plantings, and other landscaping that both provide environmental function and contribute to a quality pedestrian environment. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.47)

# Civic Corridors Policies

**Integrated land use and mobility:** Enhance Civic Corridors as distinctive places that are models of ecological urban design, with transit-supportive densities of housing and employment, prominent street trees and other green features, and high-quality transit service and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.48)

**Design great places:** Improve public streets and sidewalks along Civic Corridors to support the vitality of business districts, create distinctive places, provide a safe, healthy, and attractive pedestrian environment, and contribute to quality living environments for residents. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.49)

**Mobility corridors:** Improve Civic Corridors as key mobility corridors of citywide importance that accommodate all modes of transportation within their right-of-way or on nearby parallel routes. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.50)

**Freight:** Maintain freight mobility and access on Civic Corridors that are also Major or Priority Truck Streets. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.51)

# Neighborhood Corridors Policies

**Neighborhood Corridors:** Enhance Neighborhood Corridors as important places that support vibrant neighborhood business districts with quality multi-family housing, while providing transportation connections that link neighborhoods. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.52)

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# Transit Station Area Policies

**Transit-oriented development:** Encourage transit-oriented development and transit-supportive concentrations of housing and jobs, and multimodal connections at and adjacent to high-capacity transit stations. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.53)

**Community connections:** Integrate transit stations into surrounding communities and enhance pedestrian and bicycle facilities (including bike sharing) to provide safe and accessible connections to key destinations beyond the station area. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.54)

**Transit station area safety:** Design transit areas to improve pedestrian, bicycle, and personal safety. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.55)

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# City Greenways Policies

**Connections:** Create a network of distinctive and attractive City Greenways that link centers, parks, schools, rivers, natural areas, and other key community destinations. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.60)

**Integrated system:** Create an integrated City Greenways system that includes regional trails through natural areas and along Portland’s rivers, connected to neighborhood greenways, and heritage parkways. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.61)

**Multiple benefits:** Design City Greenways that provide multiple benefits that contribute to Portland’s pedestrian, bicycle, green infrastructure, and parks and open space systems. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.62)

**Design:** Use design options such as distinctive street design, motor vehicle diversion, landscaping, tree plantings, scenic views, and other appropriate design options, to create City Greenways that extend the experience of open spaces and nature into neighborhoods, while improving stormwater management and calming traffic. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.63)

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# Employment Areas Policies

**Regional Truck Corridors:** Enhance designated streets to accommodate forecast freight growth and support intensified industrial use in nearby freight districts. See Figure 3-7 — Employment Areas. Designated regional truckways and priority truck streets (Transportation System Plan classifications are shown to illustrate this network). (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.68)

## Pattern Areas

Portland has five distinct Pattern Areas. The development patterns and characteristics of these areas are influenced by the natural landscape and how and when these parts of the city were developed.

1. **Rivers**
2. **Central City**
3. **Inner Neighborhoods**
4. **Western Neighborhoods**
5. **Eastern Neighborhoods**

Each Pattern Area has unique physical, social, cultural, and environmental qualities that differentiate them and create their sense of place. To maintain and enhance the positive qualities and sense of place in each pattern area, it is desirable to have policies and regulations that respond to each area’s unique natural and built assets.

The following policies identify key positive characteristics of each of Portland’s Pattern Areas that are relevant to decisions related to future development in these areas. Area and neighborhood plans should be consulted for more detailed guidance on design priorities in different parts of the city.

# Rivers Pattern Area Policies

**River transportation:** Recognize and enhance the roles of the Willamette and Columbia rivers as part of Portland’s historic, current, and future transportation infrastructure, including for freight, commerce, commuting, and other public and private transportation functions. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.70)

**Recreation:** Improve conditions along and within the Willamette and Columbia rivers to accommodate a diverse mix of recreational users and activities. Designate and invest in strategically‐located sites along the length of Portland’s riverfronts for passive or active recreation activities that are compatible with nearby land uses, historically and culturally important sites, significant habitat areas, restoration sites, and native fish and wildlife usage. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.71)

**Industry and port facilities:** Enhance the regionally significant economic infrastructure that includes Oregon’s largest seaport and largest airport, unique multimodal freight, rail, and harbor access; the region’s critical energy hub; and proximity to anchor manufacturing and   
distribution facilities. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.72)

**Commercial activities:** Enhance the roles of the Willamette and Columbia rivers in supporting local and regional business and commerce, including commercial fishing, tourism, recreation, and leisure. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.74)

**River access:** Enhance and complete Portland’s system of river access points and riverside trails, including the Willamette Greenway Trail, and strengthen active transportation connections between neighborhoods and the rivers. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.76)

**River management and coordination:** Coordinate with federal, state, regional, special districts, and other agencies to address issues of mutual interest and concern, including economic development, recreation, water transportation, flood and floodplain management and protection, regulatory compliance, permitting, emergency management, endangered species recovery, climate change preparation, Portland Harbor Superfund, brownfield cleanup, and habitat restoration. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.77)

**Columbia River:** Enhance the role of the Columbia River for river dependent industry, fish and wildlife habitat, subsistence and commercial fisheries, floating‐ and land‐based neighborhoods, recreational uses, and water transportation. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.78)

**Willamette River Central Reach:** Enhance the role of the Willamette River Central Reach as the Central City and region’s primary riverfront destination for recreation, history and culture, emergency response, water transportation, and as habitat for fish and wildlife. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.80)

**Willamette River Greenway:** Maintain multi-objective plans and regulations to guide development, infrastructure investments, and natural resource protection and enhancement within and along the Willamette Greenway. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.82)

# Central City Pattern Area Policies

**Central City pedestrian system:** Maintain and expand the Central City’s highly interconnected pedestrian system.(Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.85)

**Central City bicycle system:** Expand and improve the Central City’s bicycle system.(Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.86)

# Inner Neighborhoods Pattern Area Policies

**Inner Neighborhoods main streets:** Maintain and enhance the Streetcar Era pattern of street-oriented buildings along Civic and Neighborhood corridors. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.87)

**Inner Neighborhoods street patterns:** Preserve the area’s urban fabric of compact blocks and its highly interconnected grid of streets. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.88)

**Inner Neighborhoods active transportation:** Use the extensive street, sidewalk, and bikeway system and multiple connections to the Central City as a key part of Portland’s active transportation system. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.90)

**Inner Neighborhoods residential areas:** Continue the patterns of small, connected blocks, regular lot patterns, and streets lined by planting strips and street trees in Inner Neighborhood residential areas. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.91)

**a:** Support development of, access to, and service enhancement for North-South transit. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.91.a)

**b:** Promote and guide the implementation of alley improvements that result in alleys that are safe, well maintained, and an asset for the community. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.91.b)

# Eastern Neighborhoods Pattern Area Policies

**Eastern Neighborhoods street, block, and lot pattern:** Guide the evolving street and block system in the Eastern Neighborhoods in ways that build on positive aspects of the area’s large blocks, such as opportunities to continue mid-block open space patterns and create new connections through blocks that make it easier to access community destinations. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.92)

**Eastern Neighborhoods site development:** Require that land be aggregated into larger sites before land divisions and other redevelopment occurs. Require site plans which advance design and street connectivity goals. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.93)

**Eastern Neighborhoods trees and natural features:** Encourage development and right-of-way design that preserves and incorporates Douglas fir trees and groves, and that protects the area’s streams, forests, wetlands, steep slopes, and buttes. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.94)

**Eastern Neighborhoods corridor landscaping:** Encourage landscaped building setbacks along residential corridors on major streets. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.96)

**Eastern Neighborhoods active transportation:** Enhance access to centers, employment areas, and other community destinations in Eastern Neighborhoods by ensuring that corridors have safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle facilities and creating additional secondary connections that provide low-stress pedestrian and bicycle access. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.97)

**a:** Prioritize new sidewalk connections.Prioritize adding sidewalks where there are none over expanding/ widening existing connections. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.97.a)

**b:** Support development of, access to, and service enhancement for North-South transit. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.97.b)

# Western Neighborhoods Pattern Area Policies

**Western Neighborhoods active transportation:** Provide safe and accessible pedestrian and bicycle connections, as well as off-street trail connections, to and from residential neighborhoods. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.99)

**Western Neighborhoods trails:** Develop pedestrian-oriented connections and enhance the Western Neighborhoods’ distinctive system of trails to increase safety, expand mobility, access to nature, and active living opportunities in the area. (Comprehensive Plan Policy 3.102)

**a:** Explore and emphasize Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies and tools, that function in spite of unique topographic conditions of the West Hills, to provide effective options for commuters while reducing carbon emissions, improving neighborhood livability and cycling safety, and protecting important natural resources. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.102.a)

**b:** Protect the ecological quality and function of natural Forest Park’s natural resources in the design and development of transportation projects in or near the park and avoid, minimize, then mitigate adverse impacts to wildlife, habitat, and riparian corridors. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.102.b)

**c:** Primarily focus sidewalk and bicycle route improvements in (and in close proximity to) the designated Centers and Corridors of the Comp Plan. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.102.c)

**d**: Fill gaps in important access connections, including exploring traditional ROW acquisition and partnerships with other City bureaus. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.102.d)

**e**: Improve accessibility/create parallel routes in some cases (for motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians, and/or both). Explore what existing facilities and connections most merit upgrades or secondary accessible routes. (Transportation System Plan Policy 3.102.e)