

# Today's planning determines Portland's future

by Chuck Goodmacher

The creation of a "pre-planning" committee for a Central City Plan is being hailed as a bold step toward coordination of scattered development efforts throughout the core, inner-city areas of Portland. Praise for the concept of a new "central city" planning effort came from politicians, neighborhood activists and developers alike. Each of these groups also has expressed concern over just what direction the Plan itself will take the City and what means will be proposed as the vehicle(s) to take us there.

As envisioned by the Plan's prime sponsor, Commissioner Margaret Strachan, the Central City Plan will update the Downtown Plan and "develop a vision for the Central City, augmented by appropriate policies...and implementing tools to support the vision." That vision will include expanding current development funds favoring large projects if the Central City Plan reflects the current political balance, contend critics and advocates alike.

The pre-planning committee created last week will determine the scope of the plan as well as who will participate in its creation over the expected two- to three-year planning process. The pre-planning committee is subject to some restraints, however. Both a Technical Advisory Committee (consisting of City agency chiefs) and a Citizens Advisory Committee are to be created to participate in shaping the plan.

Commissioner Strachan has called the pre-planning stage crucial and has agreed to allow for citizen input during this time.

Since both the full scope of the Central City Plan and the process for allowing different groups within the city to share in the power of creating it are not determined yet, knowledgeable observers are reluctant to speculate about the impact of the plan on the city as a whole and on specific neighborhoods in particular.

Most experts do agree however that future development activities will be shaped largely by the economic state of the city during the planning period. Development projects and trends today are shaped by opportunities and constraints handed down from the past. And most urban planners and observers agree, today's projects create new problems and possibilities for tomorrow.

## Major Facelift

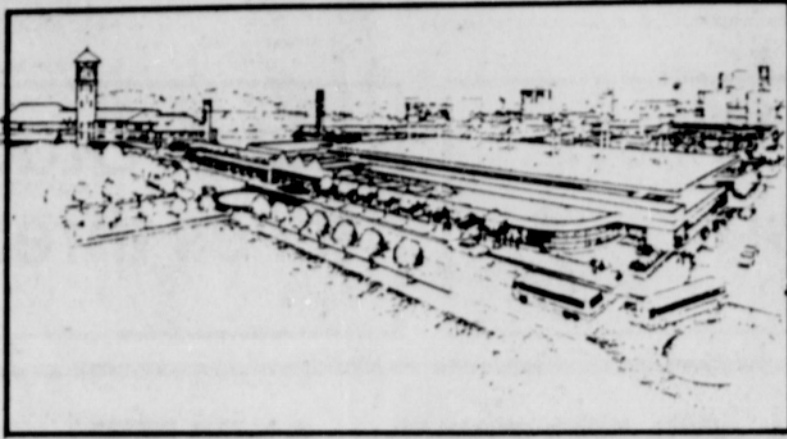
Portland's central city now is undergoing a major facelift—even as many neighborhoods, especially in inner Northeast, continue to decay. A large number of projects, many of which are underwritten with enormous sums of public money, are currently shaping the Portland of tomorrow. Some minor projects are under way in the neighborhoods, but the bulk continue to be in or near downtown. It is this Portland which is the context in which the Central City Plan will take shape.

Perhaps the most conspicuous of today's developments are Fountain Plaza, the Morrison Street Project and the South Waterfront Development Area. Each of these projects is under the auspices of the Portland Development Commission.

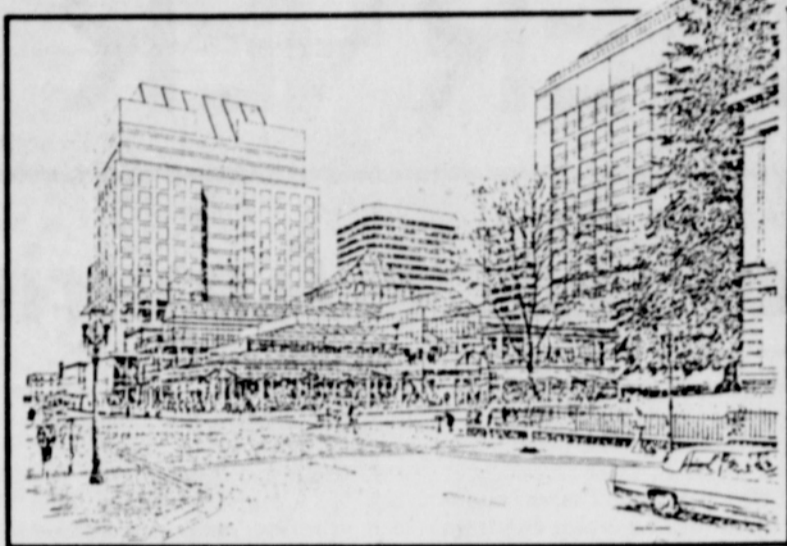
Most Portlanders think of the towering brick and blue-topped KOIN center as an isolated development. Rather, it is just the first of three phases in the development of Fountain Plaza—a two-and-a-half-block mixed-use redevelopment project in the South Auditorium Urban Renewal Area. Total project investment is \$105 million. PDC sold the land to Olympia and York at market rates (\$40 a square foot).

When completed in 1986, the project will consist of over one million square feet of development—principally office space. The "thin" top part of the KOIN tower will be used for luxury condominiums priced from \$295,000 to \$340,000. KOIN-TV is also to be provided a new office and broadcast facility in the tower, as well as a new cinema. Phase II of Fountain Plaza will be a 250- to 270-room hotel and phase III another office tower with limited retail use.

Though further from completion, the Morrison Street Project will bring even greater changes to the busy heart of downtown Portland. This project involves the development of a \$130 million, 3-block retail/hotel/office project near Pioneer Square. Twenty million dollars



Greyhound Terminal



Morrison Street Project

of public funds are allocated for this project alone. The City expects to recoup these funds eight to ten years after the project enters the tax rolls through a tax increment financing program.

PDC and the Rouse Company of Portland are currently negotiating the final agreement for Morrison Street so the illustration presented here only approximates the final design. The centerpiece of this project is a glass-domed central pavilion with covered access to three retail levels on all three blocks.

One of the adjoining buildings will be 22 stories high and will include a hotel, a major department store and small specialty shops. Another tower, 19 stories high, completes the project. It will include office space in addition to another department store and small retailers. According to Chris Kopca, PDC Project Coordinator, the department stores will be "higher quality—fashion oriented" anchors to draw wealthy shoppers into downtown. As such, they are not designed to compete with suburban shopping malls.

The 73-acre South Downtown Waterfront area, bounded by the Hawthorne and Marquam Bridges, Front Avenue and the Willamette River, will soon be home to a mixed-use commercial-residential center valued at \$83 million. Cornerstone Development Co. of Seattle, a Weyerhaeuser subsidiary, will begin phase I of the project very soon. Phase I includes: 270 luxury condominiums, a 75-room luxury hotel, restaurants and retail space, an athletic club, a 270-ship marina and parking space. This at a time when the luxury condominium market is glutted: only 82 of 384 units now on the market have been sold and four of seven major projects have been repossessed by banks.

Pacific Power and Light will build mid-rise office buildings adjacent to South Waterfront and the Zidell property between the Marquam and Ross Island bridges in the next decade, according to Kopca.

Pioneer Square is still another example of major public involvement in the development of downtown Portland. Due for completion this April, the square is designed as an open public space where residents and visitors can relax amidst the bustle of downtown.

The Performing Arts Center, being built at a cost of \$30 million, will shape the future of the South Park Blocks area for years to come. As with most of the major new projects, it is hoped the Center will draw people downtown after-hours.

The U.S. Bank building symbolizes the move northward of high-priced real estate previously associated only with downtown. One Pacific Square, the steel mirror-like office tower near the Steel Bridge, is only the first of four to be developed by Hayden Island Development Company.

The controversial relocation of Greyhound from the bus mall to a new \$7 million, two-block terminal located between N.W. Fifth and Sixth Avenues and N.W. Irving and

Glisan near Union Station also will bring many changes to the area. Rumors about some of the rail lines in N.W. Portland being removed in favor of new projects are also now flying.

The PDC is also in the business of actively promoting private business downtown. An eight-page glossy multi-color flyer entices tourists and Portlanders alike to the areas known as the Yamhill, Skidmore, and Old Town Historic Districts. Renovations in the area were made possible largely by the City's use of Federal Urban Development Action Grant money. The flyer focuses on businesses specializing in high-priced goods catering to the upper-middle class and the extremely wealthy. Twenty-nine businesses and their goods are described in detail and their specific locations and hours of business listed in the flyer.

## On the East Side

Across the Willamette, on the East Side, some major changes are in the works as well. A controversial heliport, opposed by Southeast residents, to be built on the river bank by the Hawthorne Bridge, is being championed by the City. So too are future developments in the central East Side industrial area—especially the sale of land cleared by the PDC for an ill-fated central warehouse facility. PGE will announce this spring an industrial development proposal for 35 acres it owns under the Marquam Bridge's east ramps.

Looming even larger for the East Side is a planned addition to the Memorial Coliseum complex of facilities for "moderate size" conventions. "We're not kidding ourselves that we can compete for major conventions," said PDC's Kopca. The convention facilities carry an estimated \$40 million price tag, but, said Kopca, the project has "direct and obvious benefits" for the city and especially the East Side. The City hopes to generate new business for the hotel and food industries, industries which are labor intensive and have a large amount of "break-in" jobs for previously untrained workers. This project may be as much as a decade from completion.

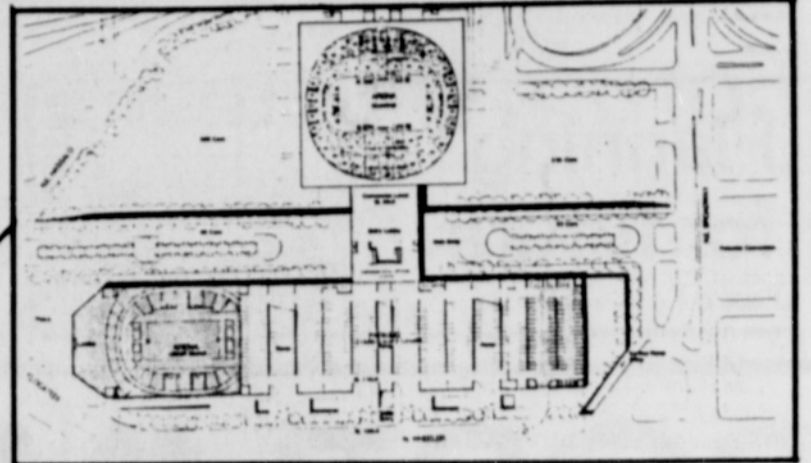
The Central City Plan clearly will be coming on the heels of development projects which are the result of long-term trends shaping the uneven development patterns of Portland. Regardless of who is appointed to the Citizen Advisory Committee (and how much power is accorded that body by the "pre-planners"), the Central City Plan is expected by most simply to draw together under one "vision" the disparate projects already being shaped.

For Commissioner Margaret Strachan, and many others downtown, the central city planning effort is also crucial to the neighborhoods. Pointing to Eastern cities with decaying downtowns, Strachan commented, "A viable central city is important to every citizen in Portland."

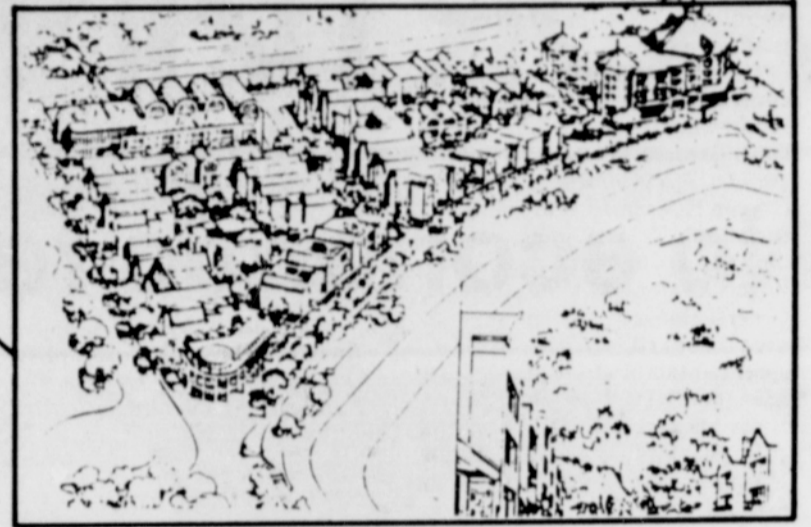
*Next week: A look at the outcome of the nearly two-year-old Economic Development Program for the Northeast Target Area.*



Central City Plan Area



Convention Center



South Waterfront Development

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