



# CORNELIUS TOWN CENTER PLAN

## Project Advisory Committee Meeting #3

Wednesday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018, 4:00 pm

Dev. & Operations Conference Room, 1300 S Kodiak Cir.

### MEETING SUMMARY

PAC Members: Matt Wellner, Crandall Group; Rafael Pineda, Baseline Market; Dave Schamp, Cornelius City Council; Ralph Brown, Property Owner/Cornelius Public Works Advisory Board; Carol Brown, Cornelius Boosters; Joseph Auth, CPO12C; Seth Brumley, ODOT; Howard Sullivan, Forest Grove/Cornelius Chamber; Dan Riordan, City of Forest Grove; Jonathan Williams, Metro; Neal Knight, Cherry Auto Body.

Staff/Consultants: Tim Franz, Terry Keyes and Ryan Wells, City of Cornelius; Steve Faust, 3J Consulting.

#### **Design Week Summary**

Steve Faust reminded PAC members that Design Week consisted of two drop-in days on Monday, October 8 and Tuesday, October 9, and a community workshop on Saturday, October 13. More than 75 community members participated in Design Week. Some of the key themes that came out of Design Week include:

- Cluster Town Center activities into three focus areas: health and wellness, culture and community, shopping and dining.
- Prioritize development of the Town Center first in the blocks immediately adjacent to Virginia Garcia and the new Library.
- Install splash pads or a water play park at Water Park, or as part of a redevelopment of the Grande Foods lot.
- Encourage public art, like painted murals on buildings.
- Build a multi-use path along the abandoned northern rail tracks.
- Maintain a "village scale" with a building height similar to the new Cornelius Place development.

#### **Town Center Plan**

##### Town Center Concepts

Steve went on to talk about how the consulting team has translated the outcomes from Design Week into concepts for the Cornelius Town Center. The consultant team started with the following best practices for town center/downtown design:

1. Cultivate a compelling mix of uses
2. Accommodate density

3. Prioritize people over cars
4. Provide safe and effortless connectivity
5. Enhance and integrate natural elements
6. Offer places to gather and linger outdoors
7. Design for human scale
8. Establish a unique and authentic identity

The design concepts for Cornelius' Town Center begin with a look at “neighborhoods” identified by a ¼-mile radius, which is a 10 to 15-minute walk. By this measure, Cornelius has approximately 8-9 neighborhoods. These neighborhoods surround the Town Center core area, identified with a 1/8-mile walking radius, approximately 10<sup>th</sup> Street to 14<sup>th</sup> Street extending to either side of Baseline and Adair Streets.



Within the current Town Center study area boundaries, there are two main commercial districts: the town center core area and the area surrounding Fred Meyer. These two areas came to be during different times, and are different in character, each with its own set of challenges. Each requiring a distinct set of planning objectives to address these conditions and achieve distinctly different outcomes. The Town Center core area is located where the original town plat was developed and is a walkable grid of streets. This type of grid is a proven foundation for revitalization efforts. The Fred Meyer area is more of a car-oriented suburban district. It lacks an existing street network to provide multi-modal connectivity. The challenge here could be labeled “suburban retrofit”.

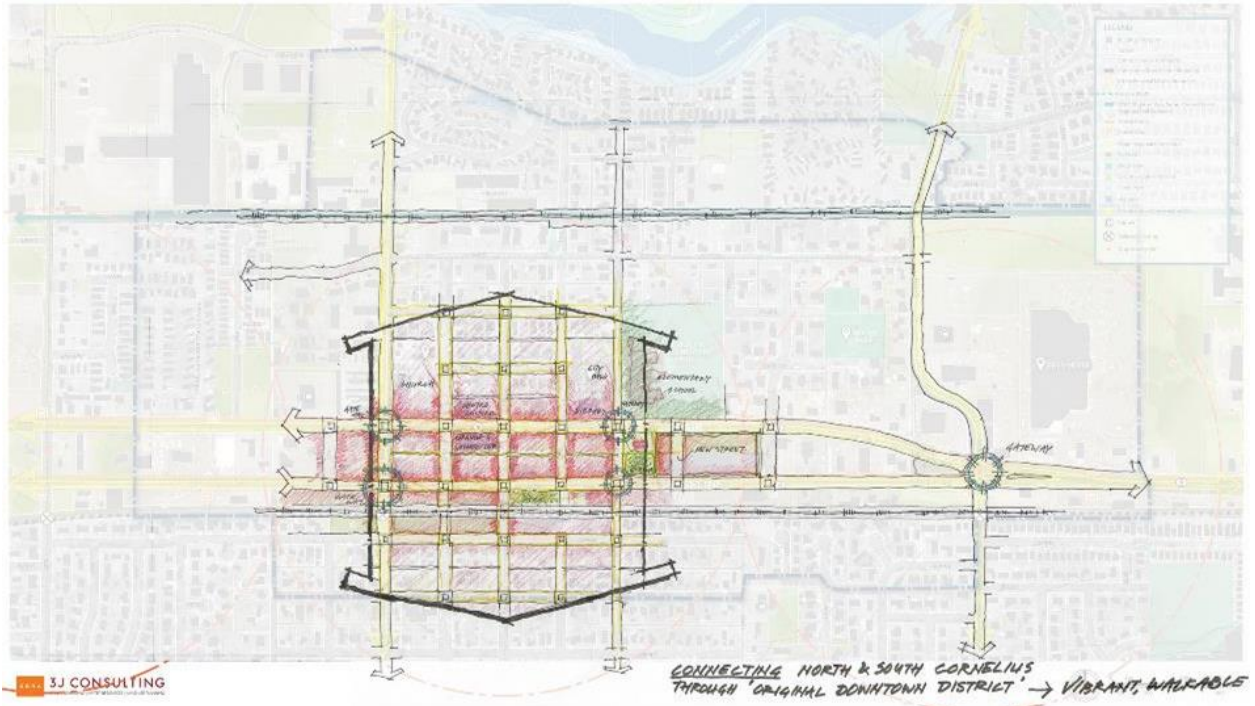


Over time, Cornelius' original multi-directional fine-grained street grid has been dominated by the east-west highway (couplet) primacy: Its importance for regional transportation has claimed dominion over local north south connections. Large volumes of traffic and high speed dissect Cornelius in separate south and north parts of town. The two east west railroads exacerbate this phenomenon.

It is hard to imagine that this process of east-west prominence will be reduced without a strong stand from Cornelius. This is a common occurrence and dichotomy in small towns in Oregon that are often simultaneously served and severed by ODOT highways. ODOT recognizes this and is allowing for transformations that are more sensitive to context.

We recommend that Cornelius continues to work with ODOT to recognize the Town Center as an original and authentic place that preceded the highways, and reclaim its sense of place, at a minimum between 10th and 14th, where the fine-grained street network and highest density of railroad crossings exist. This diagram illustrates this concept. The highway couplet continuous through the town center, but the highway character is replaced by a downtown character, where every street is multimodal and equal.





Additional sketches attempted to identify the subdistricts that exist within the Town Center and examine the connectivity between them.



### Town Center Guiding Principles

Based on the outcomes of public involvement throughout the summer and Design Week, the consultant team developed the following guiding principles as a framework for town center plan concepts:

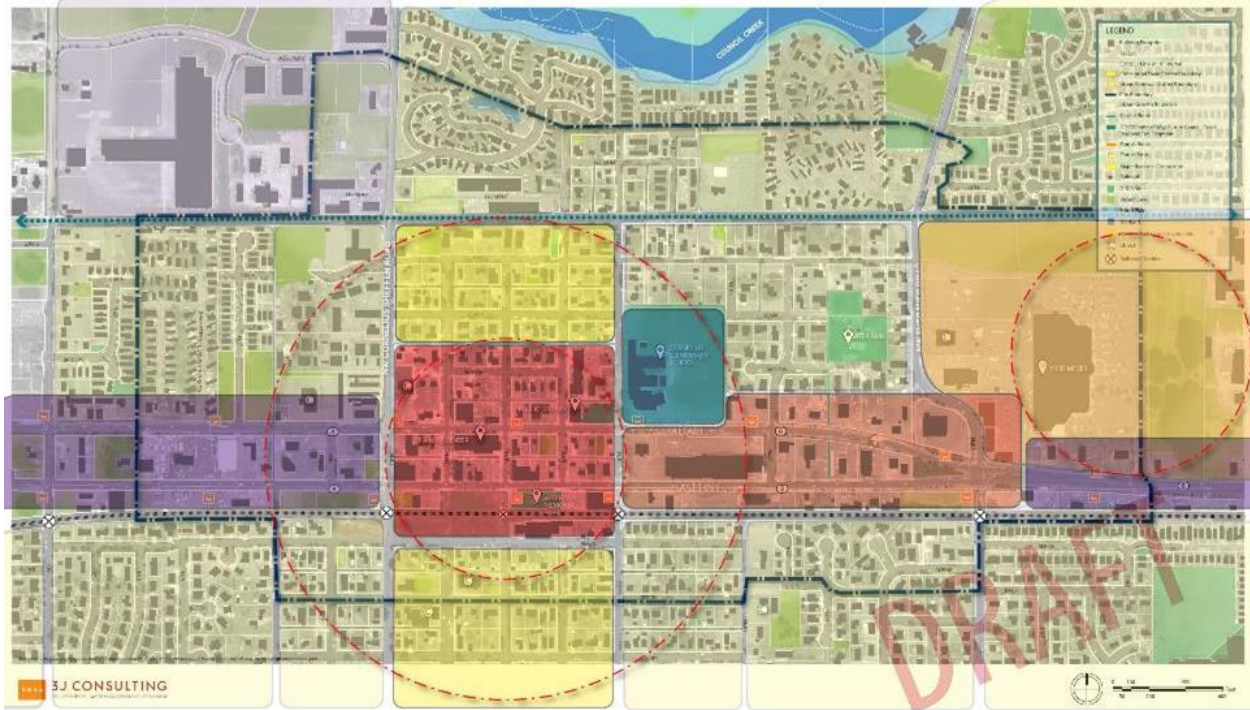
1. Celebrate and reconnect with the **natural context**
2. Strengthen/redefine/rediscover “**Old Town**” as the Heart of Cornelius
3. Re-establish **core** as the cultural, emotional, civic heart of Cornelius
4. Create a community **gathering space**; civic plaza
5. Revitalize **close-in neighborhoods**
6. Improve **context sensitive highway couplet** character
7. Provide **gateways** to signal Cornelius as a distinct and walkable place
8. Create a **contemporary mixed-use village** around Fred Meyer
9. **Connect** to future Council Creek Regional Trail and potential future regional transit
10. (Establish an annual Cornelius **Festival!**)

A PAC member pointed out that one of the Guiding Principles should recognize that Cornelius is a diverse community and the Town Center should celebrate that diversity.

A digitized diagram of Town Center subdistricts includes the following:

- Red = historic core from 10<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> streets and from Alpine to just north of Barlow
- Yellow = close-in neighborhoods to the north and south of the historic core that were part of the original plat and provide the homes and access to support the Town Center; they provide an opportunity to increase densities around the core
- Orange = defined by the Grande Foods site; it may be part of the core area but may be an area of transition from the highway corridor to the historic core
- Purple = highway corridor with auto-oriented uses
- Gray = newer, suburban neighborhoods that also can support the Town Center and provide opportunities to increase residential density

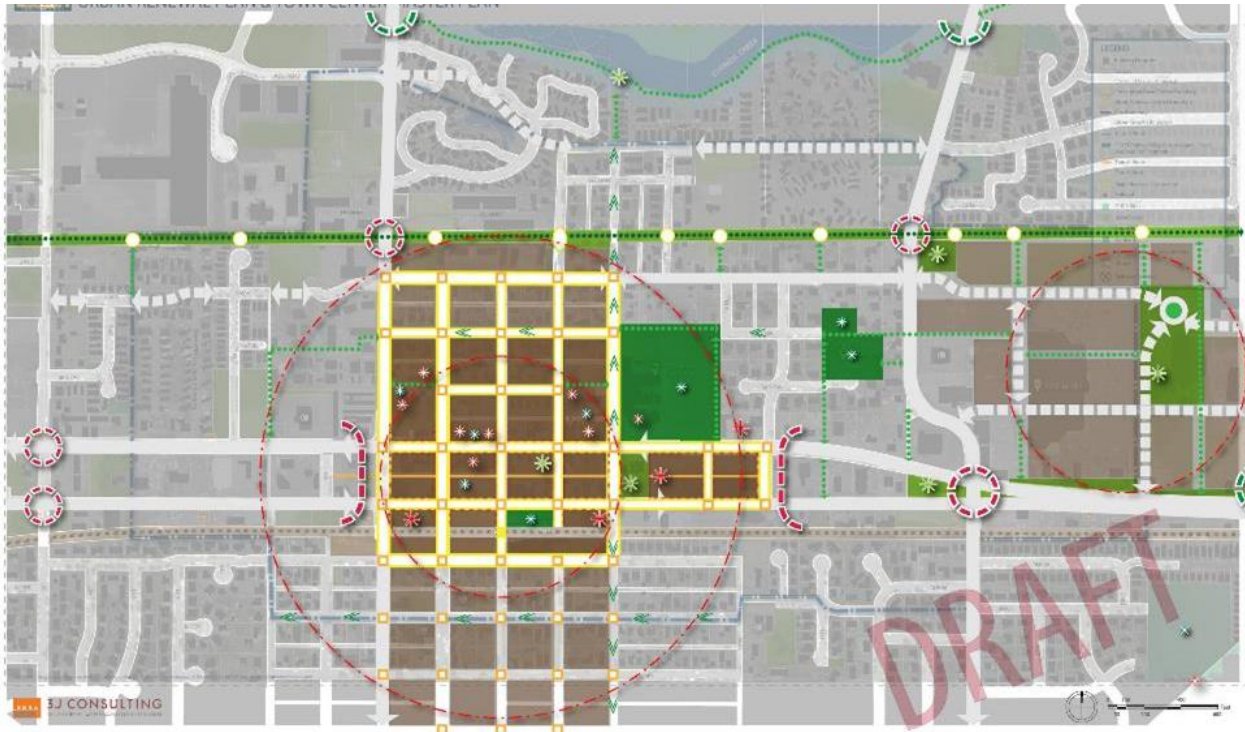
The PAC discussed whether the core area should stop at the southern railroad tracks. They also questioned the advantages and disadvantages of having an elementary school in your Town Center. It is not a traditional town center use, but it does bring people to the Town Center and a school building along Adair would help create a lot of energy at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Adair Street. There also will be synergies with activities and a potential splash pad across the street on the Grande Foods property (or potentially associated with the school's redevelopment connected to a potential FGSD bond in 2020).



The next diagram looks at connectivity throughout the Town Center:

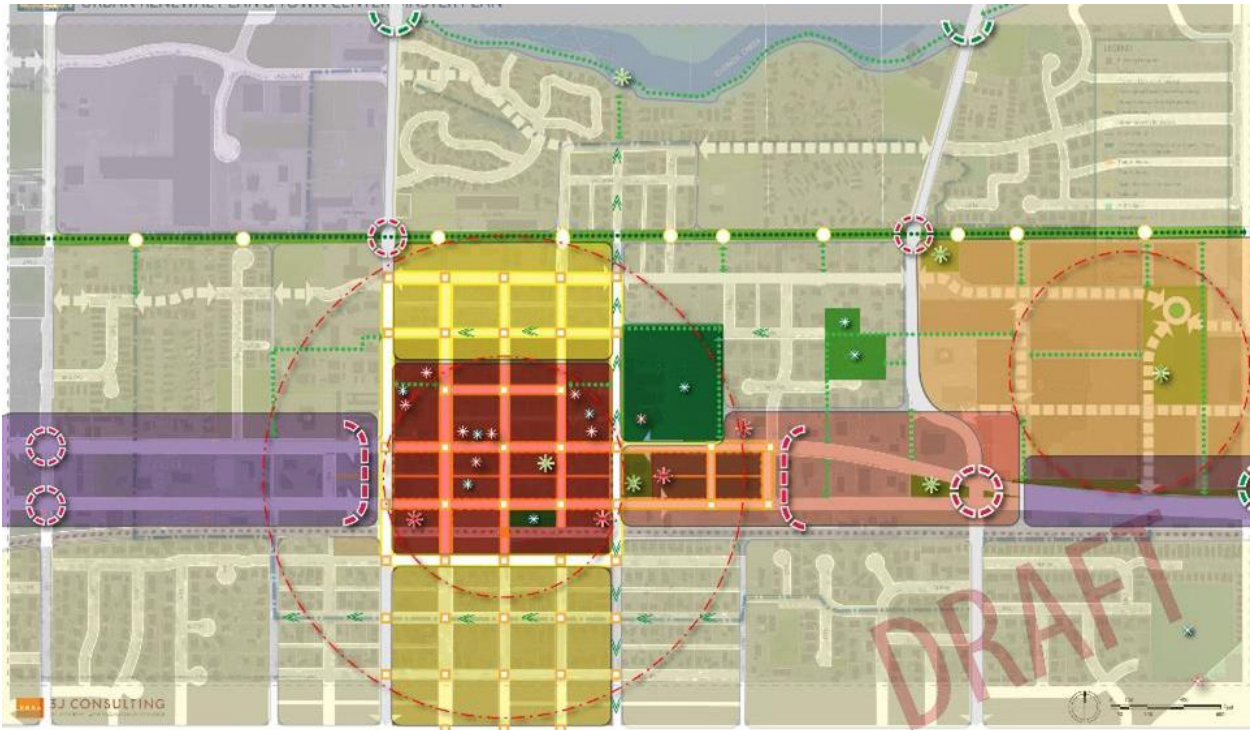
- The historic grid pattern is at the heart of the Town Center.
- Gateways:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> tier gateways will direct people towards the Town Center from a future trail network along Council Creek
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> tier gateways at the intersections of the future Council Creek Regional Trail and 10<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> avenues welcome traffic from the north and trail users to the Town Center
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> tier gateways at 4<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> avenues note a transition from highway suburban to urban
  - 4<sup>th</sup> tier gateways at 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> avenues demark entrance into the town center core
- Potential easements or walkways along the edges of the school property would strengthen north-south and east-west connectivity.
- When connected west to 26<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Davis Street will provide an important east-west connector and aid a network of streets to connect new development in the Fred Meyer area.
- A designated greenway along 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue begins to provide a multi-modal connection from the Tualatin River north through the Town Center to the Council Creek Regional Trail and ultimately to a trail network along Council Creek.





The following diagram combines these subdistrict and connectivity concepts. The original town core area provides a character with an authentic historic feel, small in scale with a local character focused on civic uses, wellness and craft food and beverage. The close in neighborhoods provide an opportunity for affordable infill (missing middle) housing.

The area around the Fred Meyer provides a different challenge and opportunity. Here, the bar should be raised for more contemporary retail center design, by mixing in uses (housing, office, parks) and improving connectivity networks. Development regulations should provide guidance to support and create great streets lined with buildings. The district could/should get its own branding and could become a local destination for contemporary living, with all the convenience of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: national chains, easy vehicular access and parking, larger size.



The PAC had a lengthy discussion about the current and potentially revised Town Center boundaries as shown in the diagram below:





Some PAC members expressed concerns that creating a longer Town Center along the highway will dilute potential efforts to strengthen the urban core. ODOT may have concerns about the desire for more walkable, urban treatments along a long stretch of the highway. Others were concerned about potential congestion. Another PAC member asked the City and consultant to think about whether there is a long-term benefit to including manufactured home parks in the Town Center boundary.

## **Town Center Considerations**

### Market Considerations

#### *Urban Renewal Funds*

The project list in the June 2017 UR Feasibility Study totals \$13.7M; the list does not explicitly include investment in the Grande property but does include acquisition of the Western States Fire Apparatus building and general redevelopment incentives. The list does not explicitly include building rehabilitation funds. A more recent forecast of revenue capacity suggests approximately \$16 million over 25 years.

Initial revenue estimates suggest limited revenue availability in the early years of a potential URA, ranging from \$1.1 million to \$3.5 million in the first five years. Urban Renewal is not the only funding source available to support priority projects, but—due to the magnitude of Urban Renewal funds that could be available—it is a key source for investing in priority projects.

#### *Opportunity Sites*

The current version of the design framework identifies an urban core centered roughly at the city blocks occupied by the Centro Cultural and the Virginia Garcia clinic. This location seems appropriate to the scale of Cornelius and its modest resources. It implies a phasing strategy that focuses first on placemaking improvements and redevelopment opportunities in this area.

However, several other potential projects sit outside of proposed core area—improvements to, or redevelopment of, the Grande Foods site and the Fred Meyer site are most prominent among them. The City and the consulting team will face strategic decisions about how and when to invest in these sites, relative to the identified core area.

More work needs to be done on all aspects of the project to better understand the scale of resources available and the impact of various investments. Preliminary thoughts about each of these opportunities and the questions that the remainder of this process should explore include:

- **The Core.** This area already benefits from several developments that serve as a draw to the downtown, including a new library with associated housing, Centro Cultural, and the Virginia Garcia Clinic. Several redevelopment opportunities exist: the parking lot at the Catholic Church (which anchors the west end of the Core), the Western States Fire Apparatus building, and rehabilitation or storefront improvements of smaller stores. Small and medium-scale investments, together

with some strategic partnerships, could help transform the Core Area even with the limited dollars available in the early years of a new URA. Here are several questions to explore:

- What sites/projects/investments present low-hanging fruit or near-term opportunities?
  - Are there property owners that are interested in working with the City?
  - How can economic development/business recruitment efforts support small businesses and start-ups in the area?
- **Grande Foods Site.** This former grocery store serves as an event space for quinceaneras, concerts, weddings, etc., and draws people into Cornelius for evening and weekend events. Redeveloping it would be expensive—the City would probably have to acquire the property, demolish the existing building, and then invest additional dollars in infrastructure and in the vertical development to advance any new redevelopment on the site. This kind of redevelopment would likely require a substantial portion of the URA's near-term resources. However, the site itself is important to successful downtown revitalization. It sits right at the entrance to the identified Core, and at a minimum, the current building would benefit from exterior and potentially interior improvements. Here are some questions to help frame Grande Site decision-making:
    - Could the current building have a more consistent seven-day-a-week draw to support Core businesses?
    - Could the current building serve an economic development function during the day—as a low-cost rental space for small businesses?
    - Is its redevelopment important to the successful functioning of the Core in the near-term?
    - What are the interests of the property owners and lessees in the long-term vision for the space?

A PAC member noted that the property owner is interested in doing something with the site, but further conversations are needed to understand what that “something” is.

- **Fred Meyer (TMT) Site.** This large L-shaped site is controlled by a developer who has already completed some planning work on the property. In its UR feasibility study, the City has already provided some cost estimates for infrastructure to support its redevelopment. The infrastructure estimates total over \$1.1M. The City should be prepared to negotiate with the developer to co-invest in these projects when the site owner is ready to advance with development on the site. But given other near-term UR priorities and uncertainty around the developer's site development schedule, the City should probably resist proactive investment in the site. Questions to help advance Fred Meyer (TMT) Site Pre-development activities:
  - What is the current status of the developer's plans?
  - Do they have any updated timeline?



### Zoning Considerations

Simplify Town Center zoning designations by consolidating the four existing Main Street zones and replacing with a single zone that incorporates standards applicable throughout the Town Center area augmented with geographically specific design standards where needed, such as active street facade requirements along Adair and Baseline.

Significantly revise the Core Commercial-Employment District standards for the Fred Meyer site and surrounding greenfield site to simplify and make more consistent with zoning standards used elsewhere in the city.

Manage development expectations by limiting the amount of upzoning in Main Street and surrounding residential areas, to avoid stagnating development as property owners wait for market conditions to support more intense property development. For example, develop height standards in line with current development trends (~3 stories for much of Main Street area) rather than a dramatic height increase to 50 or 75 feet that might cause property owners to maintain status quo while they wait for market to support multistory development. Similarly, residential areas surrounding downtown provide naturally occurring affordable housing north of Adair, and include older, historically interesting homes south of Alpine, and upzoning could put pressure on these resources. Incorporate accommodations in design standards to support incremental development.

Focus on building form and function from the pedestrian perspective when developing design standards and avoid overly complicated or prescriptive architectural standards. Key features will include main entrance requirements, active facades, moving parking away from the street, and prohibiting drive-throughs. Consider the trade-off of requiring active alley facades, which could activate the alleys for pedestrian use but would increase development constraints and may conflict with need to use alley-loaded parking to remove parking areas along street frontages.

Consider flexibility for ground-floor active use requirements in the Main Street area. While a popular, well-intentioned tool to ensure that ground-floor spaces are developed with active retail and service uses rather than private residential uses, they can add considerable cost and complexity to site development, or simply stymie multistory residential development in favor of single-story commercial development due to development economics. Recognize that vertical mixed-use development is unlikely to pencil in this market in the near-term and consider alternative approaches to support a mix of uses within limited redevelopment sites throughout the Main Street area.

Treat nonconforming uses and development sensitively, particularly ongoing use and adaptive re-use of the Grande Foods site and residential uses throughout the Town Center area, to ensure that existing development remains viable.

PAC members discussed the pros and cons of building heights and of requiring ground-floor active use requirements, looking to learn lessons from Hillsboro and Forest Grove. A commercial requirement in affordable housing projects can make the project infeasible. Parking was raised as another issue that needs to be addressed in the Town

Center Plan. Also, the importance of having entrances or at least attractive facades if you are going to require buildings to be built up to the street.

### **PAC Comments**

Steve asked PAC members if they had thoughts on whether the project is headed in the right direction or if these concepts are off base. Several PAC members expressed their support.

### **Next Steps**

A community meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 9 at 6pm at Centro Cultural. Steve asked PAC members to help spread the word when Ryan provides them with a flyer and the details. Following the public meeting, the consultant team will begin drafting the Town Center Plan. On January 22<sup>nd</sup>, a joint City Council and Planning Commission work session will kick-off the Urban Renewal Plan process. No action will be taken, but Elaine Howard from the consulting team will give an Urban Renewal 101 presentation.

### **Adjourn**