



# WASHINGTON SQUARE REGIONAL CENTER

## Draft Proposal & Community Feedback Summary

City of Tigard | May 2021

### Overview

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The purpose of the Washington Square Regional Center Plan Update Project is to work with the community and project partners to refine the original 1999 vision for the Washington Square Regional Center (WSRC) with the goal of facilitating more housing, transportation, business, and job options for all members of the community.

Throughout 2020, the project team worked to develop a draft land use and transportation proposal to share with the community after extensive community engagement, technical analysis, and discussions with local and regional service providers and road authorities. Please note that while the WSRC is located in Tigard, Beaverton, and unincorporated Washington County, the draft proposal is for Tigard's planning area only.

In April 2021, the project team launched an English and Spanish online open house and hosted two focus groups—one for Spanish language and one for Swahili language community members—to gather community feedback on the draft proposal.

**More than 800 people visited the open house and 231 submitted responses to survey questions. 21 people participated in focus groups.**

The open house was promoted in a number of ways. A mailing in English in Spanish was sent to roughly 6,500 residents and 1,000 businesses in and around the WSRC. It was advertised in various local publications, through the city's social media channels, and on bilingual yard signs. Emails were sent to interested parties and neighborhood associations, and presentations were made to six community groups. Focus groups attendance was promoted by the project's Stakeholder Working Group members within the Spanish and Swahili language communities.

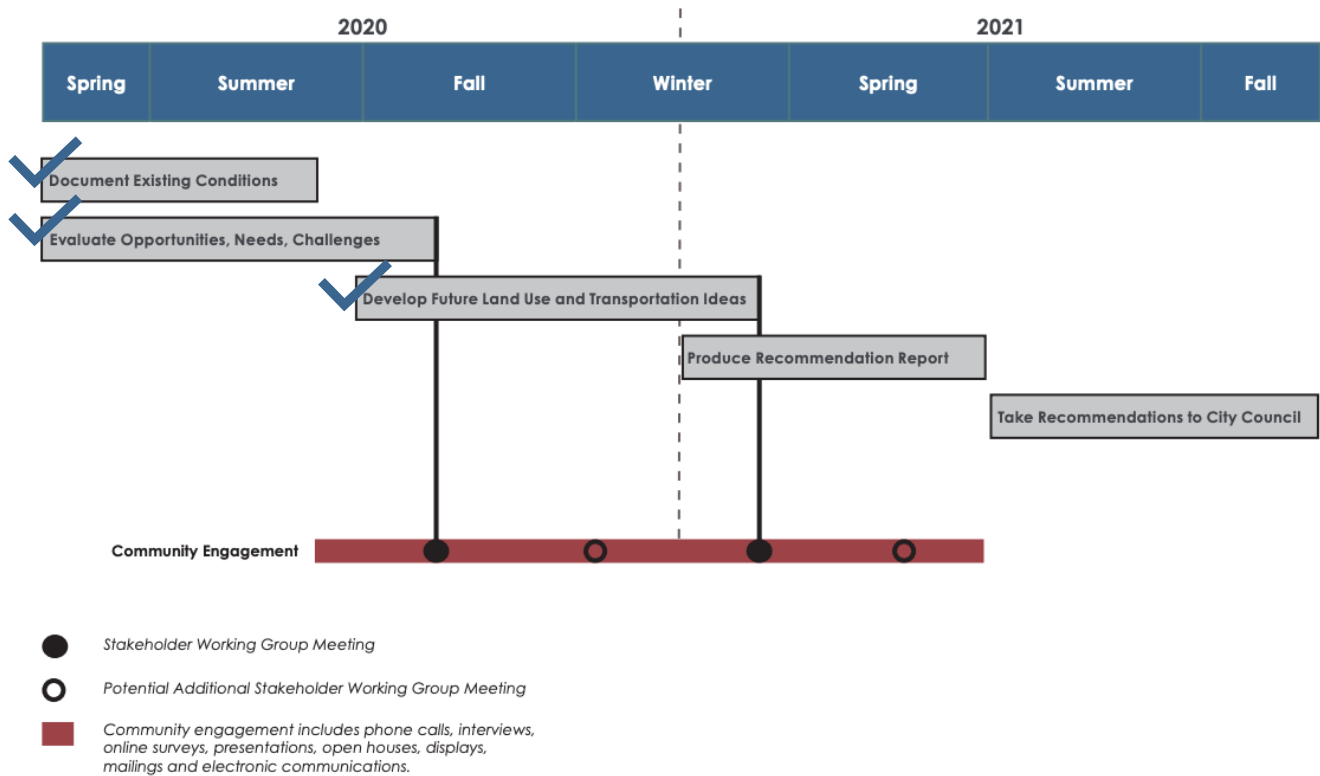
Questions asked in the focus groups mirrored those asked in the online open house and were organized around the following topics:

- Regional Center – Proposed Vision
- Subarea 1 – Mall
- Subarea 2 – Metzger
- Subarea 3 – Nimbus/Cascade
- Regional Center – Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections

This document summarizes the draft proposal and the feedback received from the community from the online open house and focus groups. The project team will use this feedback—and what we learn from our Stakeholder Working Group members on May 26—to refine the proposal before bringing it to the Tigard Planning Commission and City Council for consideration later this year.

Figure 1 below shows the Project Schedule and the tasks completed to date for reference.

Figure 1. WSRC Update Project Schedule



# Summary of Draft Proposal

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## The Original Vision

The original 1999 vision for the WSRC was ambitious. It envisioned the area as a dense and walkable commercial hub, with lots of housing and mixed-use development served by high-quality transit. However, this vision has yet to become a reality.

See Figure 2 below for an image of the main elements of the original vision. It included:

- Adding four new bridges over Highway 217 (yellow and green bridges)
- Adding a new loop trail that connects to Fanno Creek Trail (dashed green line)
- Extending Nimbus Drive to the south (dashed white line)
- Adding a new WES transit stop (purple train) that connects to an upgraded transit center (purple bus)
- Allowing buildings up to 20 stories tall in many locations (pink area on both sides of Highway 217 and Greenburg)
- Keeping the single-family housing area mostly the same (yellow area) and allowing high-density housing elsewhere (purple area)
- Keeping the employment areas mostly the same (blue area)

Figure 2. Original Vision for the WSRC



## Proposed Vision

The proposed vision can be summarized as follows:

- Maintain the original vision for the Washington Square Mall
- Right-size the original vision for all other areas
- Refine the original transportation vision
- Focus on near-term, financially achievable outcomes

See Figure 3 below for an image of the main elements of the proposed vision. It includes:

- Potentially adding a multimodal bridge (yellow bridge) and/or a ped/bike bridge (green bridge) over Hwy 217 in lieu of four bridges, and locating them in slightly different places to improve their financial feasibility and usefulness.
- Adding a different connection to Fanno Creek Trail (solid and dashed green arrows) in lieu of the loop trail.
- Adding transit service throughout the mall property (dashed white line) in lieu of a centralized transit center to better serve the whole area as the mall redevelops.
- Improving bike and pedestrian crossings of Greenburg Rd and Hall Blvd (blue figures).
- Shrinking the area where very tall buildings are allowed and reducing the maximum height from 20 stories to 12 stories (pink area).
- Shrinking the area where high-density housing is allowed (purple area) and adding a medium-density housing area (orange area) between high- and low-density housing areas.

Figure 3. Proposed Vision for the WSRC



## What We Heard (Proposed Vision)

### **54 percent of open house respondents say they like the proposed vision.**

The most common reason cited is the focus on pedestrian and bicycle improvements, including new crossings over Hwy 217. There is a lot of support for reducing building heights and the area where taller buildings can be located. People also appreciate the fiscally responsible and incremental approach that focuses on community needs. Other items that people support include more housing and housing options, expanded opportunities for businesses, improved access to transit, and connections to Fanno Creek Trail.

### **17 percent of open house respondents say they do not like the proposed vision.**

The most common reason cited is the loss of the “loop trail” and an associated concern over the lack of access to Fanno Creek from the Metzger neighborhood. Other reasons are as follows: concern that more housing will increase traffic and parking problems, a desire for more bridges by some and no bridges by others, a desire for no building height limits by some and lower building heights by others, too much focus on the mall, and not wanting the transit center to go away.

### **Focus group participants are supportive of the vision.**

They want to see better and safer sidewalks and street crossings to places like the Mall and Fanno Creek. Walkability and access to transit are identified as being very important since many families in these communities do not have cars. Participants generally like the idea of a pedestrian bridge and reduced building heights. They would like to see more homes to strengthen the family-friendly nature of the Metzger community.



Open house respondents had the following three options for each question where a percentage is reported: “I don’t like it, I like it, and neutral.” Where percentages reported do not add up to 100, the difference is the neutral responses. In this case, 29 percent of respondents are neutral about the proposed vision.

## Subarea 1 - Mall

The Mall subarea was envisioned with much taller buildings—up to 200 feet tall—and a lot more housing than exists today. However, the market has not supported this kind of development in the past and market conditions are in flux because of COVID. The main purpose of the proposed changes is to facilitate more housing, a broader range of businesses, and better pedestrian, bike, and transit facilities.

The draft proposal includes:

- Aligning regulations with market realities to better support walkable, mixed-use, and transit-supported development.
- Reducing the 200-foot height allowance and lowering parking requirements to facilitate redevelopment of parking lots and reduce the cost of providing parking.
- Helping facilitate the mall's transformation into a dense, walkable, and vibrant place through regulations, partnerships, or incentives.

Figure 4. Mall Subarea



Figure 5 below shows precedent examples of a walkable mixed-use development that could be achieved in the Mall subarea.

Figure 5. Precedent Example of Walkable Mixed-use Development



### What We Heard (Mall Subarea)

When asked what outcomes the city should prioritize as part of the redevelopment of this subarea to make it more walkable and vibrant, **open house respondents say that providing more public amenities and green space is most important**, followed by better sidewalks and bike facilities through the mall property. Less important are more housing and more pedestrian-oriented buildings. Least important is improved transit service through the mall property and a modern transit center.

**Focus group participants want better sidewalks and bike lanes to improve access to the mall and transit.** They also want more green areas for people to enjoy and to reduce pollution. They say that more affordable housing is needed but want new apartment buildings to provide structured parking. Participants also want to see more diverse businesses and a community center.

## Subarea 2 - Metzger

Parts of the Metzger subarea were envisioned with and currently allow much taller commercial and residential buildings than exist today – up to 200 feet tall or about 20 stories. For comparison, Lincoln Tower is 12 stories tall and was built 40 years ago. Other parts of this subarea only allow single-family housing.

The main purpose of the proposed changes is to provide a medium-density residential buffer between high- and low- density areas and expand opportunities for more and different housing types, including options for “missing middle” housing (such as duplexes and rowhouses) that help keep housing affordable and stable. See Figure 6 on the next page for more detail.

The draft proposal includes:

- Allowing lower residential densities in some areas and somewhat higher densities in other areas to enable more medium-density housing that fits with market demand, housing needs, and the scale of existing housing in the area.
- For properties along Greenburg Rd next to the mall, aligning regulations with market realities to better support walkable, mixed-use, and transit-supportive development. This means reducing the 200-foot height allowance and lowering parking requirements to reduce the cost of providing parking.
- Reducing allowed heights and densities in parts of the subarea that are now planned for high density.

### What We Heard (Metzger Subarea)

**50 percent or more of open house respondents like all three recommendations.**

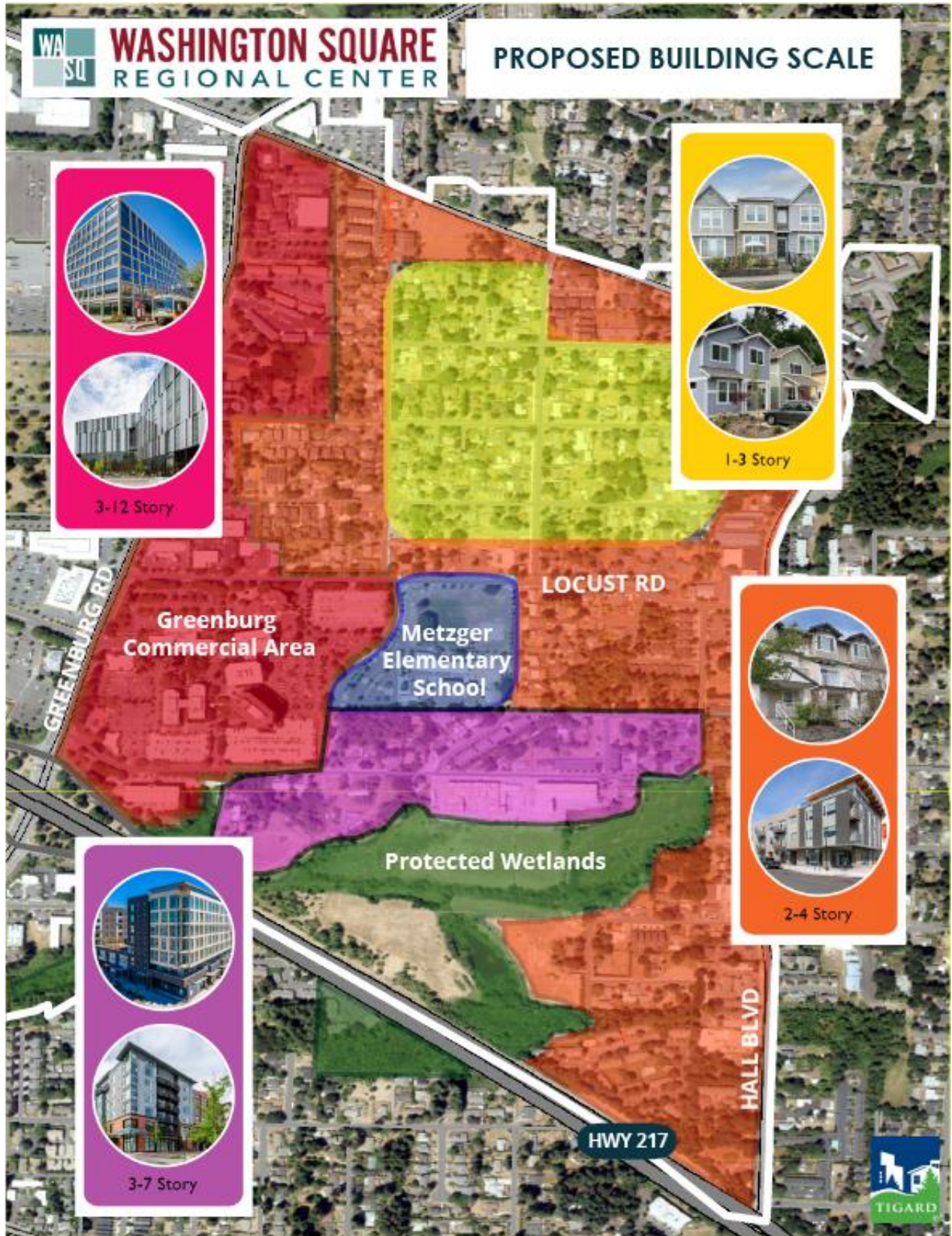
- Expand opportunities for more and different housing types (50%),
- Allow taller buildings next to Washington Square Mall and reduce building heights in the rest of Metzger (56%), and
- Support housing affordability and stability (65%).

**17 percent or less do not like any of them.**

**Focus group participants support all three recommendations and one person noted that they had to move out of Tigard to find more affordable housing options.**



Figure 6. Proposed Building Scale in Metzger Subarea



## Subarea 3 - Nimbus/ Cascade

The Cascade area was envisioned with and currently allows much taller buildings—up to 200 feet tall—and a lot more housing than exists today. The vision for the Nimbus area was more modest. However, many businesses that are well-suited to locate in existing buildings in this subarea are not allowed. Car dealerships are not allowed either, though they are allowed in parts of the Mall subarea. The main purpose of the proposed changes to the Nimbus/ Cascade subarea is to increase flexibility for new and existing businesses, with less emphasis on tall-mixed-use development.

The draft proposal includes:

- Allowing a broader range of businesses and uses.
- Allowing larger incremental improvements to commercial properties over time.
- Allowing development of new 1-2 story commercial buildings and reducing the 200-foot height allowance to align regulations with market realities.
- Prohibiting residential-only buildings, but continuing to allow mixed-use residential buildings.
- Reducing the size and location of the area that allows car dealerships. Allowing car dealerships to locate near Highway 217 where there is no potential for pedestrian-oriented development.

Figure 7. Nimbus/Cascade Subarea



### What We Heard (Nimbus/Cascade Subarea)

**More than 60 percent of open house respondents like all three recommendations:** increase flexibility for new and existing businesses (66%), preserve the area for businesses with less emphasis on tall mixed-use buildings (64%), and limit car dealerships to areas without potential for pedestrian-oriented development (63%). **Focus group participants like the ideas for supporting businesses and want to see mixed-use development too, so that homes, jobs, and shopping are close together.**

## Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections

Highway 217 is a barrier for travel, especially for those traveling by foot or bike. A Highway 217 project is underway that will improve the existing crossings on Hall Blvd and Scholls Ferry Rd for pedestrians and cyclists. However, it will leave the crossing at Greenburg Rd unimproved. Many other streets in the regional center also lack sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes.

The main purpose of the proposed pedestrian and bicycle connections is to improve pedestrian and bicycle crossings over Highway 217, improve pedestrian and bicycle facilities to local destinations, and increase access to parks and green spaces.

Figure 8 below shows current and planned destinations and pedestrian and bicycle connections. It also shows conceptual locations for two potential future crossings over Highway 217.

Figure 8. Pedestrian and Bicycle Connections



## What We Heard (Ped and Bike Connections)

### Highway 217 Crossings

When asked what the city should prioritize to overcome the Highway 217 barrier, **open house respondents say that building a new crossing over Hwy 217 for pedestrians and cyclists, if feasible, is their number one choice for connecting neighborhoods and providing access to trails and parks.** Their second choice is improving the existing pedestrian and bike facilities on Greenburg Rd over Hwy 217. Least important to respondents is building a new crossing over Hwy 217 for cars, pedestrians, and cyclists connecting commercial areas.

**Focus group participants support improving existing pedestrian and bike facilities on Greenburg Rd over Hwy 217 because it would be the most efficient use of city resources and may be more likely to happen than a new bridge.** They also note that safety improvements, including better lighting, are generally needed on Greenburg Rd. If a new crossing is built, participants differ in whether they prefer a multi-modal crossing to commercial areas or a ped/bike bridge to parks and trails.

### Ped/Bike Improvements

Open house respondents say that filling in missing sidewalks and bike lanes on Hall Blvd and Greenburg Rd are the most important pedestrian and bicycle projects to complete. Adding or improving crossings on these roads is slightly less important, and filling in missing sidewalks on neighborhood streets is the least important. Focus group participants feel it is most important to fill in missing sidewalks on Hall Blvd and neighborhood streets.

### Destinations

If a new crossing over Hwy 217 is built, open house respondents are most likely to travel by foot or bike to the Fanno Creek Trail, Downtown Tigard, and the Washington Square Mall. Focus group participants are most likely to travel to the Tigard Heritage Trail, Metzger Park, and Bagan Park.

Open house respondents say that Fanno Creek Trail, Downtown Tigard, and the Washington Square Mall are the destinations they wish were safer or easier to visit by foot or bike from the Metzger neighborhood. Focus group participants say that the Mall and Transit Center are the destinations they wish were safer or easier to access by foot or bike.

87 percent of respondents like the recommendation to increase access to parks and green space. All focus group participants support this recommendation.