



# Bend Central Area Plan

## ***REDEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK REFINEMENT***

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## **Introduction**

This Redevelopment Framework Refinement technical memorandum updates the redevelopment strategy (“Large Scale Development Opportunities” technical memorandum) for the Central Area based on the latest economic and market research compiled for the project. It also evaluates whether the framework concept elements originally envisioned are still relevant given what is now known about existing conditions and market and economic trends. Based on these findings, the memorandum discusses specific issues that warrant special consideration.

### *Central Area Vision*

For reference, the vision identified in the 2005 Phase 1 Central Area Plan is repeated:

*The economic leader and social focal point of the region, the Bend Central Area is comprised of several districts with their own distinct identity, character and unique collection of uses.*

*These districts represent a land use, transportation, and economic system that preserves and enhances the best parts of the Central Area while supporting revitalization where needed. Each district contributes to the overarching identity and overall sense of place for what is “Bend.”*

Specifically in regard to the Third Street Corridor, the Plan states:

The Third Street Corridor and the area between it and the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railroad is a new, mixed-use, east side downtown neighborhood connecting area residents and other users to Third Street and the Historic Downtown Core. The district supports the Historic Downtown Core’s civic, cultural, and retail uses by providing a close-in location accommodating commercial, residential, and other uses demanded by Bend's rapid growth. This stylish, urbane district is characterized by higher density uses and taller structures than found elsewhere in the Central Area. A diversity of housing opportunities for all income levels is balanced with moderate scale employment and retail uses. A fusion of unique greenspace features and civic spaces for area residents provides opportunity for play, relaxation, and interaction within the neighborhood’s built environment.

Third Street itself serves as a model for how a commercial strip can be “reclaimed” and woven back into the fabric of the community: an active and attractive boulevard, with a high-quality streetscape and useable public spaces that invite pedestrians, employees, and shoppers into the district. While Third Street still serves as a major north/south corridor, its environment is organized into a series of “rooms” or nodes of activity that add spatial depth and provide definition and identity for certain segments of the corridor, with more intense urban uses between the nodes. These “rooms” or nodes are defined by a series of

east/west connections that provide access to the Historic Downtown Core and to neighborhoods to the east.

**Figure 1. Central Area Development Framework**



Source: StastnyBrun Architects

## Issues

In retrospect, the vision and framework for the Central Area presented above is still valid. It speaks to a more urban character for the Central Area, which is clearly supportable by the growing population in Bend and its role as the economic hub of the Central Oregon region. Therefore, from an urban framework point of view (types of uses, scale, character), the vision is achievable. The following section discusses some areas where

the plan could be refined to add more specificity and clearer direction for implementation.

### *District boundaries*

As has been discussed in the Economic and Real Estate Analysis technical memorandum, the vast majority of new development in the Central Area will take place in the Third Street Corridor, with relatively less development in the Southern and Northern neighborhoods. The established single-family development in the Southern Neighborhoods will restrict significant redevelopment, while there are more, but still a limited number of, potential infill opportunities in the Northern Neighborhood. For that reason, the focus of this technical memorandum is on the Third Street Corridor.

While the Third Street Corridor has been considered a singular place (a corridor), it is in fact a series of different districts, each of which will redevelop on a different time schedule and at a different scale. The Railroad District (the area immediately east of the Historic Downtown Core) will see a higher level of redevelopment and change in both the short- and long-term timeframes. Other areas along Third Street will see much more gradual change. Therefore, a more appropriate way of looking at the Third Street Corridor would be to see it as a series of east-west districts that go from the Parkway to Fourth and may be anywhere from three to six or more blocks long (north to south). In that context, redevelopment in each area is likely to occur as follows:

- **North of Olney:** This area would retain its existing character of lower density uses, with a focus on light industrial and non-retail commercial uses. Redevelopment in this area is likely to be of a similar character to what is there today. Due to its distance from Downtown and physical disconnection from residential neighborhoods, it is not a good location for dense urban development.
- **Between Olney and Greenwood:** In early years (next 10 years), this area will retain its existing retail and light industrial character as “urbanizing” market forces will be focused in the area to the south, closer to Downtown. However, in later years (10+ years), as the area south of Greenwood intensifies, there will be spillover market demand that will drive increased densities and more mixing of uses in this area.
- **Railroad District (Between Greenwood and Franklin):** This district should be the area with the most intense urban development, including mid-rise (3 to 6 stories) and possibly high-rise (7+ stories) buildings. With its proximity to Downtown and easy walking distance to the residential neighborhood east of Fourth, it is well suited to become a major employment and residential hub. It is also at the heart of Bend’s growing transit system.
- **South of Franklin:** This area is particularly disconnected from Downtown due to the railroad and Parkway. However, its location immediately south of Franklin will enable it to capture spillover growth from the Railroad District and

it should intensify shortly in later years. It also has significant large and underutilized sites that give good potential for large-scale redevelopment.

*Redevelopment Opportunity Site Locations*

The large-scale redevelopment sites identified in the Large-Scale Development Opportunities technical memorandum (Figure 2) are generally in appropriate locations given market pressures. Indeed, the opportunity sites were selected in part based on market criteria (e.g., visibility, access), so they are already places that development will tend to gravitate toward. No recommended changes in the location of selected opportunity sites is warranted.



### *Ownership and Site Size*

A constraint to capturing a share of Bend's future growth and the realization of the Central Area vision is that in the Railroad District, where the most intense level of development is projected to occur, there are relatively few large or contiguous development opportunity sites. This will not necessarily inhibit redevelopment, but it will tend to make infill development at a smaller scale in this area, since land assembly adds time and expense to development. This condition has a couple of consequences:

- Implementation of the plan may need to include efforts at property assembly to create better development opportunity sites that will allow more intense development in keeping with the vision.
- Large-scale users or institutions may not be able to locate in the Railroad District without larger sites. Such users could include medical facilities, schools, theaters, shopping centers, and other multi-block land uses. These large-scale uses could potentially serve as anchors that better define the district and attract other ancillary development.

### *Flexibility*

In 2007, the housing market in Bend is slowing, while the office market remains strong. Real estate development moves in cycles, and often housing and commercial development move in different cycles. In order to maintain momentum and sustain progress steadily over the next 20 years, the Framework should be flexible enough to allow for a mix of uses so that property owners and developers can make investments that are economically feasible in a wider range of economic climates. Thus, in some years, the focus of development may be heavily oriented to office uses, while in other years, Bend may see more residential development. What is important is to create an atmosphere of continuous change, investment, and dynamism, without creating a neighborhood that is entirely commercial or entirely residential in nature.

### *Parking*

Parking is one of the single greatest limiters to increased density, as structured parking can increase development costs tremendously.<sup>1</sup> In the Railroad District, structured parking will be necessary to achieve the densities and urban scale that is envisioned. This has implications in terms of development economics (sales and lease rates must support the much higher costs of structured parking) and land availability (larger sites will be needed in order to configure efficient parking structures). Also important to consider is that office uses have significantly higher parking requirements than residential uses. An office building may require between two and four parking spaces per 1,000 square feet, whereas a 1,200 square foot condominium may only require a single space. With Bend's rocky geology, underground parking is particularly costly. Thus, a parking strategy

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<sup>1</sup> For example, surface parking can cost around \$3,000 to \$5,000 per stall, while above ground structured parking ranges from \$15,000 to \$30,000 per stall. Underground parking costs even more, ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000 per stall.

should be considered as part of the framework in order to better facilitate new investment. A parking strategy could include the following elements:

- Identify locations for public parking facilities that can serve multiple projects and can reduce the overall need for parking within a district by encouraging shared use (e.g., office users parking during the day and residents or retail on evenings and weekends).
- Consider modified parking standards that reduce parking requirements in urban neighborhoods that will encourage more trips by foot.
- Encourage a greater mix of land uses in urban districts to allow for shared parking (e.g., office parking during the day and retail parking in the evening and on weekends).

### *Retail Emphasis*

Retail uses will always need good visibility and access in order to thrive. Thus, so long as Third Street maintains its role as a north-south arterial and the east-west streets serve as gateways, they will be the preferred location for retail uses east of the Parkway. However, as development intensifies in the area between Third Street and the Parkway, small-scale retail may become feasible in the ground floor of larger residential and office buildings. This retail should be limited so as to not dilute the strength of retail elsewhere in the Central Area.

If the arterial role of Third Street changes by becoming a couplet or some other form, then the location of retail should be reconsidered. Potential configurations could include a redirection of retail emphasis from Third Street to the east-west streets of Greenwood and Franklin – thereby helping implement the Framework element of “pulse points” while simultaneously strengthening the east-west streets.

### *Place Making and Public Spaces*

Great urban neighborhoods are the combination of private development (residential, retail, and employment) and public spaces (streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas). Locations for urban plazas, and possibly even parks, should be identified for the Railroad District and other areas of the Central Area where greater intensity of land use is envisioned.

Urban plazas, pocket parks, and other public spaces help create a sense of place for a neighborhood and set the tone for quality against which private development should be judged. Without these unifying themes, a neighborhood may end up merely as a collection of projects rather than a community. Quality parks, plazas, and open spaces create value for adjacent real estate and give certainty to the development community, which encourages investment.

### *Implementation*

Implementation of the Central Area Plan will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent technical memoranda, but it is important to note that significant coordination of public and private investments will be necessary in order to achieve the vision. Truly realizing the vision will require a broad range of funding tools, public facilities, transportation improvements, open space improvements, parking improvements, land assembly, marketing efforts, and other joint public-private initiatives. The whole of the Central Area Framework Concept is greater than the sum of its parts, but this can only be achieved through careful coordination of public and private investments. As the project moves closer to the implementation phase, this connection should not be forgotten.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the project team's research of market conditions and economic forecasts, Bend will see significant growth over the next 20 years. Capturing just a small fraction of that growth in the Central Area is very achievable and would bring with it the kind of investments that would transform it into the collection of urban districts described by the vision and framework concept. No significant changes to the redevelopment strategy are needed in order to make this happen, although the issues described above should be incorporated into the implementation strategy in later phases of the project.