



# ***CENTRAL AREA PLAN, PART 2 DRAFT STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW REPORT***

Prepared for the City of Bend by:

## **Parametrix**

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## Background

The City of Bend is undertaking Part 2 of the Central Area Plan (CAP) which will build on work done by the City during CAP Part 1 in 2005. Efforts during CAP Part 1 resulted in an overall vision for the Central Area, one in which it is seen as:

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 part 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.”

As part of the vision, four distinct districts were identified. These Central Area districts are:

- The Historic Downtown Core
- The Third Street/Railroad District
- The North Central Residential Area
- The South Central Residential Area (including the Old Bend Neighborhood)

The Central Area Plan focuses on the fundamental elements of quality urban design, access and mobility, and development and redevelopment opportunities. These elements are the nexus for maintaining and further developing the vibrant character of central Bend and can be implemented as:

- Urban Spaces, Open Spaces, Transitions, and Gateways
- Great Streets, Access, and Mobility, Key Pedestrian Links and Alleys
- Key Redevelopment Opportunity Sites

As part of the Bend Central Area Plan – Part 2, the City of Bend, working in conjunction with a team of private consultants, will build on work currently underway to create a long-term land

use, redevelopment, and transportation plan for Bend's central area. The study area includes the existing, historic downtown core and adjacent areas while focusing on the Third Street Corridor and neighborhoods to the north and south.

Prior to a kick-off workshop for CAP 2, the public was engaged by interviewing stakeholders from a variety of public and private interests. The goal of these interviews was to identify overall opportunities and challenges in the central area, while also collecting information that aid in the study of the CAP Part 2 focus areas. These stakeholders will continue to play an important role in the development of the Central Area Plan during our studio work and in the development of our test ideas.

The information gathered through these interviews and summarized below was used to guide the planning of the January 23, 2007 Public Workshop. Primary questions asked at the workshop were a refinement of the questions asked of the stakeholders during the interviews, with the added benefit of visual interaction and group discussion to promote further discovery and refinement of viewpoints.

### ***Key Findings and Conclusions***

The stakeholder interviews produced a wide range of information and elicited varied opinions. Some of the key stakeholder comments included:

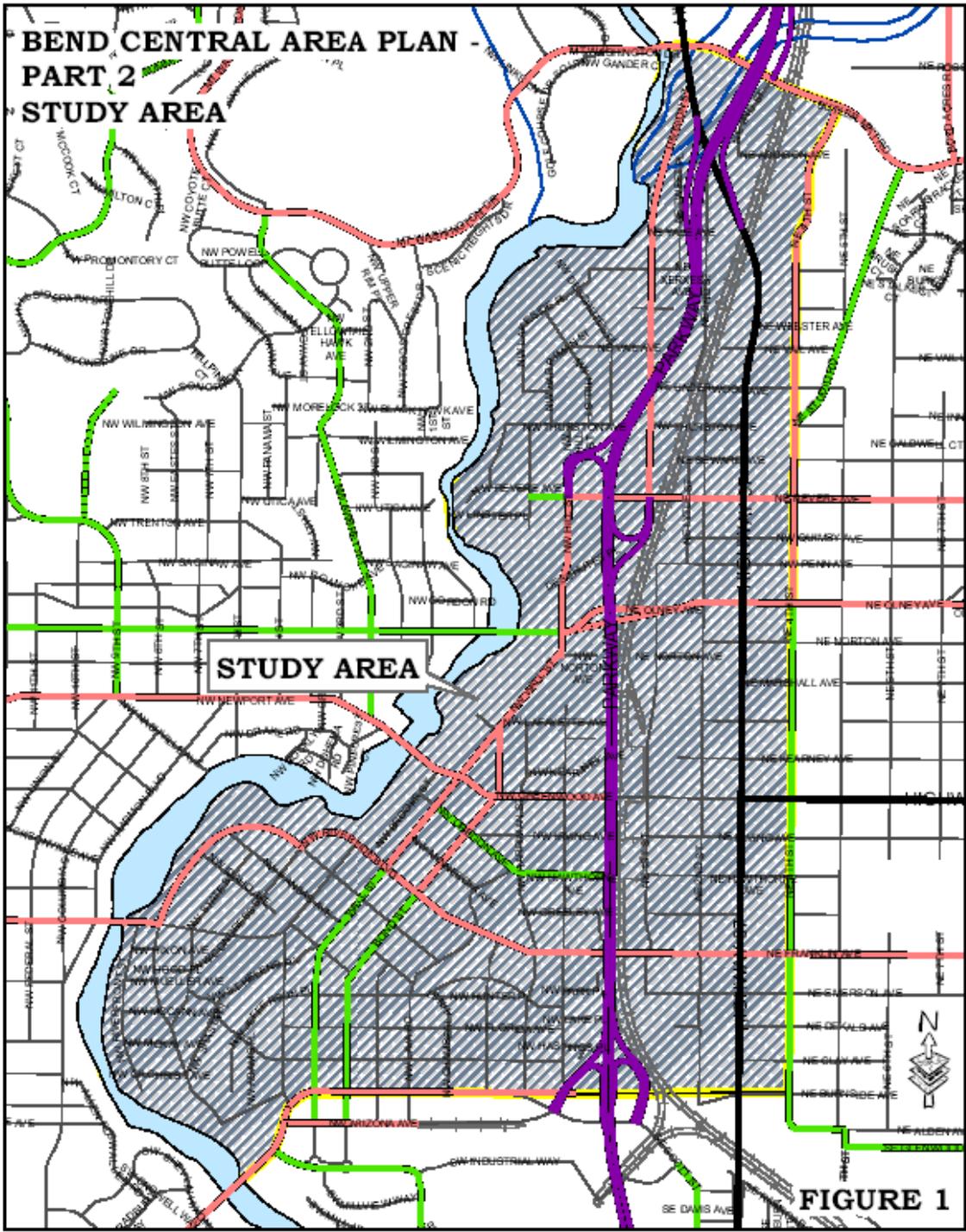
- There is a need to encourage and enhance pedestrian and bicycle travel in the Central Area. River trails for pedestrians and bicyclists are needed throughout the area.
- Automobile traffic on Third Street presents the greatest challenge to revitalization. Streetscaping and physical changes to Third would have to occur before it could become more pedestrian friendly.
- Public transit should be encouraged and further developed.
- Third Street is a large area and it should be approached as a sum of smaller parts.
- Visual blight and sign pollution are a major problem along Third Street; the area needs visual improvements such as façade treatments, trees, and art.
- Franklin and Greenwood Avenues are the primary way to connect to the Historic Core and need better way finding mechanisms or a continuity of theme to tie the two areas together. These areas must be addressed for a successful Third Street transformation.
- Urban style plazas should be the primary open space along Third Street, followed by green spaces.
- The southern neighborhoods are functioning well, are protected by their historic designation, and no major changes are desired.
- Traffic along Franklin, as well as Wall and Bond threaten the character of the southern neighborhoods. Connectivity between downtown and the Old Mill District is both an opportunity and a challenge.
- A Heritage Square type-area or a civic area south of Franklin Avenue is still desired.
- Commuters from outside of Bend are creating traffic impacts in the Central Area; carpooling or transit use should be encouraged.
- Division Street needs revitalization and should include neighborhood commercial.
- The northern neighborhood needs an identity and better connectivity to downtown.

## *Methodology*

Over 16 key stakeholders were interviewed to allow a variety of individuals to comment on opportunities for sustaining the central area of Bend, and to identify challenges in the Third Street corridor and southern and northern central neighborhood areas. The stakeholders interviewed for this project included: three Bend City Council members, one Bend Planning Commission member, two developers, several property owners, two Chamber of Commerce officers, one neighborhood district representative, and several city employees in various service agencies. Some interviews were conducted in person, while others were conducted by telephone.

The interviews were conducted between early and mid January 2007, by Parametrix staff. The stakeholders were encouraged to frankly and openly express their thoughts on the issues. In order to maintain anonymity, the responses have been summarized collectively. The valuable information gained from talking with a variety of interests has helped us frame the issues for discussion right up front, and will help us attain a deeper knowledge of identified issues.

The interviews consisted of a brief introduction of the scope of the Central Area Plan, Part 2 project as well as a familiarization of the study area and individual districts. As part of telephone interviews, Figure 1 was e-mailed to the participants prior to the interview.



Respondents were asked several questions focusing on urban design, transportation, character and redevelopment opportunities in each of the three study districts. General questions were as follows:

**Third Street Corridor (Old Highway 97):**

The Central Area Vision identified this area as a new, higher density, mixed-use, east side downtown neighborhood centered on the Third Street Corridor. What do you see as the greatest opportunity for making Third Street a “Great Street”?

- What opportunities for open spaces and gateways does this area offer?
- What type of redevelopment along this Corridor might have the greatest potential for “setting the tone” for this part of the Central Area?
- What transportation options would best help ease congestion problems in the Central Area?
- Access to/from the core area is constrained but what do you see as the best way to tie Third Street to the historic downtown core?
- Are there any other challenges or issues that should be addressed if a Third Street transformation is to be successful?

**Residential neighborhoods to the south of the Historic Downtown Core:**

- How should these neighborhoods relate to the downtown area? How? What kinds of activities?
- What are some of the challenges and issues that need to be addressed in preserving the character of these neighborhoods?
- Any specific suggestions about enhancing the transitions from this neighborhood to downtown and Franklin Avenue (a Great Street)?
- How should the transportation system from this primarily residential area interact with the downtown transportation system?

**Residential neighborhoods to the north of the Historic Downtown Core:**

- There are opportunities for infill in these neighborhoods. What are the most important characteristics any new development in these areas should consider?
- How should these neighborhoods relate to the downtown area? How? What kinds of activities?

- What are some of the challenges and issues that need to be addressed in preserving the character of these neighborhoods?
- How should the transportation system from this primarily residential and employment area interact with the downtown transportation system?

**The Historic downtown core as it relates to the rest of the Central Area . I'd like your opinion about some of the possible opportunities or impacts that future downtown growth might pose to adjacent and surrounding neighborhoods.**

- What are some of the opportunities and challenges related to neighborhoods surrounding downtown?
- What are the most vital pedestrian access opportunities and issues connecting these neighborhoods with the larger Central Area?
- What transportation options would be most effective to tie these areas into the larger Central Area?
- What types of development would best complement the existing neighborhoods?
- Priority areas?

## **Interview Responses**

The responses of the individuals interviewed are summarized below, by question and subtopic as appropriate.

### **Third Street Corridor (Old Highway 97):**

*What do you see as the greatest opportunity for making Third Street a “Great Street”? What opportunities for open spaces and gateways does this area offer?*

Most interviewees felt that the greatest opportunity for making Third Street a “Great Street” was in changing the streetscape by making sidewalks, trees, and street furniture a focus of the street rather than cars alone. Many respondents also felt that concentrating on visual elements such as signage and façade treatments would best transform this street.

Other respondents felt that focusing on mixed use and clustered building forms would best transform the street. Most respondents felt that any open space should focus on “plaza type” spaces and had a difficult time imagining green open spaces along Third Street. Several respondents suggested transforming Third Street into a Boulevard between Franklin and Greenwood, and possibly to Revere or Olney.

Almost all respondents felt that the intersection of Third Street with Greenwood Avenue, followed by the intersection of Franklin Avenue, would be the most logical gateways. A few respondents mentioned the possibility of Revere Avenue as a gateway from the North.

*What type of redevelopment along this Corridor might have the greatest potential for “setting the tone” for this part of the Central Area?*

Most respondents felt that development of mixed-use (residential/office/retail) with higher buildings could set the tone for transforming Third Street. Several respondents specified that any new development needs to consider varied building scale and setbacks. Most felt that there was a potential for a mix of residential, office and commercial uses in this area, while a few felt that residential development in this area would be a hard sell due to the heavy traffic on Third Street, and that a mix of office and retail with a few large anchors would be more suitable.

*What transportation options would best help ease congestion problems in the Central Area? Access to/from the core area is constrained but what do you see as the best way to tie Third Street to the historic downtown core?*

Most respondents felt the biggest existing transportation gap along Third Street is the lack of prominent bike lanes and safe pedestrian walkways. Many felt that improvement of these transportation modes would reduce congestion problems in the Central Area as a whole and also provide better connectivity to the historic downtown core from Third Street. A few respondents suggested consolidating access points along Third Street and providing turn-out areas for pedestrians to sit or bus riders to gather. Most respondents were in agreement that improving aesthetic connections and design themes along Third Street would be both a challenge and an opportunity. Several respondents commented that it is difficult to know where the historic downtown core was in relationship to Third Street and felt that better way-finding between the areas through signage and designated paths would greatly help the Third Street transformation as part of the downtown area.

*Are there any other challenges or issues that should be addressed if a Third Street transformation is to be successful?*

Respondents saw the lack of east / west connections from Third Street to downtown as a major issue and felt that new connections under the Parkway and the railroad could open new opportunities for Third Street. Some respondents felt that existing businesses may not have adequate incentives to make changes in accordance with transformation plans. Others saw the large number of property owners in this area as a challenge to developing a uniform plan and design. Finally, nearly all respondents felt that the great volume of traffic, including trucks, would be a challenge to a Third Street transformation.

### **Residential neighborhoods to the south of the Historic Downtown Core:**

*How should these neighborhoods relate to the downtown area? How? What kinds of activities?*

Overwhelmingly, respondents strongly felt that the southern residential neighborhood related well to downtown and shouldn't change. Some felt that better pathways and sidewalk completions / improvements could strengthen the relationship of this neighborhood to downtown.

*What are some of the challenges and issues that need to be addressed in preserving the character of these neighborhoods?*

Most of the respondents felt that historic designations in this area already protect these neighborhoods. However, at least one respondent questioned whether current development code regulations were consistent with historic preservation goals. A few people expressed concern that land costs are encouraging changes and that some "remodels" were really re-builds and that they degraded the character of the neighborhood.

*Any specific suggestions about enhancing the transitions from this neighborhood to downtown and Franklin Avenue (a Great Street)?*

Several respondents felt that a buffer of small scale commercial uses already exists along Franklin Avenue and this acts as a transition from the residential neighborhood to downtown. Some respondents felt that further development of a civic area or Heritage Square plan could act as a stronger transition from the residential neighborhoods to downtown. Most of the respondents felt that heavy traffic on Franklin Avenue is a challenge that should be addressed when considering any changes to this area.

*How should the transportation system from this primarily residential area interact with the downtown transportation system?*

About half of the respondents felt that traffic from downtown to the Old Mill District should be diverted out of the residential neighborhood, while half felt that this traffic could be better accommodated with upgrades to Wall and Bond Streets. Most of the respondents mentioned that overflow downtown parking is still an issue in this neighborhood, even after the construction of the parking garage. A few respondents felt that much of the traffic and overflow parking in this area was linked to commuters from out of town and suggested encouraging carpools or expanding transit use, along with park and rides to decrease this traffic.

### **Residential neighborhoods to the north of the Historic Downtown Core:**

*Are there opportunities for infill in these neighborhoods? What are the most important characteristics any new development in these areas should consider?*

The general consensus in response to this question was that housing stock in this area should be preserved and that perhaps there is an opportunity for greater density near Division Street. There was an overall feeling among those interviewed that the riverfront area in this neighborhood should be preserved as low density. A great number of respondents identified condos and neighborhood commercial as possible developments for this area. A few respondents felt that this area offered an opportunity to introduce lower-income or senior housing near the downtown

area. Nearly all respondents felt that Division Street needs revitalizing and that any new development needs to lend a sense of place or identity to the neighborhood. A few respondents felt that this may be an area for some types of light industrial.

*How should these neighborhoods relate to the downtown area? How? What kinds of activities?*

Several respondents felt that this neighborhood could relate better to the downtown area, perhaps through better bike and pedestrian connectivity; however, some felt that this neighborhood had a better possibility of developing its own identity. Many respondents stressed that the river was a natural connection for this area to downtown and suggested further development of river trails in.

*What are some of the challenges and issues that need to be addressed in preserving the character of these neighborhoods?*

The lack of identity for this neighborhood was the most common challenge cited by respondents. This was closely followed by the poor connectivity of this area to downtown. Other challenges mentioned were proximity to the Parkway and triangular land pieces.

*How should the transportation system from this primarily residential and employment area interact with the downtown transportation system?*

Many respondents felt that automobile and general connectivity between this area and other areas within the Central Area should be simplified. Some respondents noted, however, that directing more cars to the downtown historic core would just cause additional congestion. Some respondents suggested a shuttle system could aid in reducing this disconnect, should enough need develop. A few people mentioned that it would depend largely on what type of future development occurred. It was noted that if lower income or senior housing is developed in this area, there would be a need for transit or a shuttle system because the area is not within walking distance of the historic downtown core.

### **Relationship between the Historic Downtown Core and Other Central Areas**

*What are some of the opportunities and challenges related to neighborhoods surrounding downtown?*

Several respondents wanted to make sure that opportunities on Greenwood Avenue were highlighted. They felt Greenwood Avenue is an area with development possibilities for commercial and higher buildings, possible mixed-use. One of the biggest challenges for this area was seen as parking availability. It was felt that this has been an impediment to some development opportunities in the past.

Respondents also noted the challenges the railroad creates for development and redevelopment opportunities in Central Area. A few respondents felt that long term plans should look at moving the railroad east of town.

The heavy traffic on Greenwood Avenue east of Third Street (designated as Hwy 20) was seen as an impediment to creating a pedestrian friendly environment at the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Third Street. Several respondents suggested removing the Hwy 20 designation from Greenwood and moving it north to another existing east-west road. It was suggested this would allow more flexible options for function and design. Overall challenges in the areas surrounding the historic downtown core were perceived as infrastructure, connectivity, and preservation of existing businesses and homes.

*What are the most vital pedestrian access opportunities and issues connecting these neighborhoods with the larger Central Area?*

Respondents described Greenwood Avenue, Franklin Avenue, and Olney Avenue as the most vital geographic areas for pedestrian access opportunities. Overall opportunities were seen as better connectivity, lighting, safety and pedestrian street presence for people with all levels and types of mobility. Many respondents noted that the Franklin Avenue underpass was of the highest priority, followed by the Greenwood Avenue underpass. Some respondents noted the need to tie pedestrian access goals to design elements because environmental design makes walking more interesting.

*What transportation options would be most effective to tie these areas into the larger Central Area?*

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities were the most cited transportation options that would effectively tie the surrounding neighborhoods to the larger Central Area. The second most cited transportation option was public transit and most respondents seemed to be pleased with the new bus service and expressed hopes that it would be successful and service would be expanded.

Several respondents felt strongly that downtown traffic was problematic and should be addressed. There were several suggestions including adding parking facilities in close proximity, requiring employers to provide off-site parking, and possibly revisiting the shuttle concept with better defined schedules and routes.

*What types of development would best complement the existing neighborhoods? Priority areas?*

Most respondents saw Third Street, particularly between Greenwood Avenue and Franklin Avenue as a priority area for redevelopment. Greenwood Avenue between Third Street and the Parkway was seen as a priority by some. Mixed use was suggested for both of these areas; however, some expressed doubt that anyone would want to live along Third Street.

Many respondents felt any development to the northern neighborhood should not be completely reliant on downtown but should include services for adjacent residential development and be complimentary to downtown.

Some respondents felt that the southern neighborhood could be enhanced by the development of a few corner stores and cafes along Wall and Bond Streets, as long as it was of appropriate scale and character for the historic neighborhood. Any new commercial development should be

focused on serving these residential neighborhoods, rather than a destination for people in the greater Bend area. Several people also commented that automobile traffic between downtown and the Old Mill District on Wall and Bond Streets was heavy and likely to increase rather than decrease.

A few respondents felt that Division Street was a priority area for redevelopment because it was a smaller area than Third Street and because it lacked a strong identity (positive or negative) it was seen as being easier to transform.

Overall comments about development and redevelopment included a review of zoning and making sure it reflects market driven uses along Third Street and Division Street, and that it is consistent with the historic preservation goals in the southern neighborhood.

## **Additional PAC Comments to Stakeholder Interview Questions**

In addition to the Stakeholder Interviews, the project team shared the interview questions with the Project Advisory Committee at their first meeting and asked for their input on any of the issues already identified or new issues. This exercise elicited the following comments which are organized by district:

### **Third Street Area**

- Planning should consider an aging population and future energy conservation.
- There should be landscape guidelines for meaningful streetscapes and that consider irrigation.
- There should be balance between the state highway and community goals
- If the RR stays, look at the need for a local Amtrak station
- A state highway designation along Greenwood Avenue will inhibit redevelopment in the short term
- Protect accessibility along Third Street and the ability of automobiles to turnaround
- Beautify the RR tracks – like Billings, MT
- There should be incentives or tools for developers or property owners to relocate or redevelop
- Relax system development charges to create development incentives
- Look at expanding the existing UBA to include 3<sup>rd</sup> Street
- Look at Tax Increment Financing as a way to finance redevelopment
- Bicycle access is very important
- Look at setback, scale, and design guidelines

### **Residential Neighborhood to the South**

- This area is underserved in the way of neighborhood parks and playgrounds

- Way finding / signage / paths would strengthen current downtown connections with the Old Mill District
- Look at fixed route transit (rail) from downtown to the Old Mill
- Management and transition of land uses and traffic is important
- Preservation is important. Don't become like east of downtown
- Points of interest along pedestrian paths should be encouraged through design and should be allowed uses in the development code

### **Residential Neighborhood to the North**

- Special purpose district like the Portland Pearl may be appropriate for parts of this area
- Still need to have light industrial – Not all of Bend can be gentrified
- Pedestrian connections are a high priority; complete the River trail in this area
- Division Street's place in the City's transportation hierarchy should be reviewed
- Neighborhood park amenities are needed