

North Bethany Concept Plan Stakeholder Interview Report 10/3/06

Introduction

Kristin Hull, Jeanne Lawson Associates and Michelle Stephens from Otak conducted ten stakeholder interviews between September 27 and October 6, 2006. One interview included four members of the Outer Northwest Rural Advocates and the Forest Park Neighborhood Association.

The following people participated in interviews:

Jim Labbe, Audubon Society

Lori Waldo, Bethany Community Network

Mary Manseau, CPO 7

Katherine Perrson, Portland Community College – Rock Creek Campus

Bruce Bartlett, CPO 1

Sia Lindstrom, Vision Action Network

Peter Leonard, Cedar Mill Community Library

Carol Chesarek, Outer Northwest Rural Advocates/Forest Park NA

Jim Emerson, Outer Northwest Rural Advocates/Forest Park NA

Arnold Rocklin, Outer Northwest Rural Advocates/Forest Park NA

Jerry Grossnickle, Outer Northwest Rural Advocates/Forest Park NA

Virginia Bruce, Cedar Mill Business Association

Greg Malinowski, farm owner, Multnomah County

In most cases, interview questions focused on background (how is each stakeholder involved in the Bethany area?); hopes and concerns about the concept plan process; ideas for public outreach; and ideas about the concept plan and the future of Bethany. The interview with Sia Lindstrom, Vision Action Network, focused on identifying other contacts that the project can use to better reach people in the study area.

This report includes a synopsis of key themes raised throughout the interviews and a general summary of responses regarding each topic. Appendix 1 includes all of the actual responses by topic.

Key themes

In response to a variety of questions, a few key themes recurred throughout the stakeholder interviews:

- Provide adequate routes between North Bethany and US 26. Stakeholders said that this was critical for North Bethany to be successful and for the concept plan to be acceptable by the community. Participants also said that developing an inter-connected community that is accessible by walking and biking was important.
- Build community in Bethany by planning for community gathering spaces that allow for connections to neighbors and a sense of pride in the community. Community gathering spaces were defined as neighborhood restaurants or coffee shops or as parks and plazas.
- Protect and plan for parks and natural resources. Parks and trails were identified as key community resources that should be a priority. Many stakeholders said that efforts should be made to protect environmentally sensitive areas in the North Bethany study area, especially Abbey Creek. Some stakeholders thought that parks and trails near environmentally sensitive areas, but not through them, could protect these areas from development and provide a community amenity.
- Ensure that the process is inclusive and transparent. Many of the stakeholders raised questions about the Stakeholder Work Group membership noting that it did not include representatives from the adjacent rural areas in Multnomah County.

1. Existing Bethany

When asked “What do you like about Bethany and what would you change?” responses ranged from transportation and green spaces to community pride and ownership. Key themes included:

- **Transportation issues**, such as improvements to existing streets (i.e. Laidlaw, Kaiser and Springville roads), better connectivity to and across US 26, and better connectivity within Bethany via trails or a grid-pattern streets, were cited as something stakeholders would change about the area. Bethany Boulevard was mentioned as an example of a well-planned street that is used by community members as a place to walk and bike.
- **Community gathering places** were mentioned as something that was needed in Bethany. These areas were described by various stakeholders as outdoor plazas or parks, or neighborhood-scale commercial areas with coffee shops or restaurants. One participant suggested that the area needed a cultural center.
- **Parks** were mentioned as a need. Participants noted that both trails and parks that were not located under power lines and not wetlands were needed.
- **Existing development** was described as both a step in the right direction (Central Bethany) and as opportunity wasted.

2. Other communities

When asked “What other communities should Bethany seek to emulate?” responses ranged from Orenco Station and old Portland neighborhoods to neighborhoods in the San Francisco and Houston area. The Springwater Community Plan and Pleasant Valley Concept Plan were mentioned as examples of good community planning efforts.

Communities cited as examples of good development included:

- **Orenco Station** because it blends neighborhood commercial services and community spaces with a variety of housing types and has good architecture.
- **Older Portland neighborhoods** such as Ladd’s Addition, inner Northeast Portland, and the Northwest 25th and Thurman Street area. These neighborhoods have grid-

pattern streets, traffic calming (narrow streets or traffic circles) and a good connection between retail, schools, churches and residential areas.

- **Park Merced (California) and the Woodlands (Houston)** were mentioned as areas that are connected by green or open spaces. Park Merced is a community of town homes surrounding shared open space and the Woodlands is a planned community of single family homes connected by trails and green spaces.
- **Oak Hills** was mentioned as a neighborhood that has schools, churches and parks at its center with a good road network around, not through, the center.

3. North Bethany Concept Plan

Responses to questions about hopes and fears related to the concept planning process, ideas for development types and features in North Bethany, and opportunities and challenges in planning North Bethany varied. Stakeholders were suspicious of the input that they would have into the concept planning process but were optimistic about the opportunities to create a great place in North Bethany. A summary of ideas includes:

- **Protect natural resources** such as Abbey Creek, wildlife migration corridors and sensitive upland habitat areas.
- **Explore partnerships** between institutions (PCC-Rock Creek, Cedar Mill Community Library) to provide for a cultural center and library.
- Provide for an adequate **transportation system** that includes improvements to existing roads, better access to US 26 (without widening Bethany Boulevard), transit service, and better connectivity within the entire Bethany area.
- Plan for a **walkable center** with easy access to community amenities (post office, library, community-scale retail, parks, schools) on foot or bike. Use new development to support the existing Bethany center.
- Provide for **green spaces** that connect development and provide places to play, walk, bike.
- Design North Bethany as a **model** for other new development. Create a real center either by supporting the expansion of the existing center or developing a new center in North Bethany.
- Provide **housing** at a range of affordability levels and choices for a variety of life stages.
- Make **natural areas and rural lands** outside the urban growth boundary assets to the Bethany area rather than putting pressure on these areas to develop. Consider Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) programs to advance this goal.
- Provide for adequate **school** facilities in good locations. Do not build elementary schools on arterials. Do consider opportunities to co-locate schools and parks, but ensure that parks are truly available for community use.

4. Public involvement

When asked about how to best engage people in the planning process, most people thought CPO and neighborhood newsletters, email lists and local newspapers were the best ways to invite people to participate. Several stakeholders requested that public input be requested on topics that the public has a real ability to shape. Fears that the public would not be asked to participate until plans were developed were also expressed.

Several participants raised concerns about the date of the first open house (Dec. 14) being too close to Christmas. The option of reviewing information and providing feedback via an online form seemed well-received as an alternative to rescheduling the meeting.

Appendix 1 – Responses by topic

1. Existing Bethany

When asked “What do you like about Bethany and what would you change?” responses ranged from transportation and green spaces to community pride and ownership.

All responses to this question:

- The area is missing a cultural center. The college is interested in adding a performing arts center that could be a community partnership. The performing arts center would need to be co-located with upscale restaurants.
- People don't seem to stay in Bethany and don't put roots down.
- Community already uses PCC campus. People walk here and PCC rents spaces to two churches for Sunday services.
- Bethany Boulevard is pedestrian-friendly.
- Infrastructure was sized appropriately for population 20 years ago, but has not kept up with growth.
- Schools are overcrowded and elementary schools are too big to be “child friendly.”
- Bethany needs better parks – not just parks that are wetland areas or in power line corridors.
- Bethany needs more contiguous sidewalks – current process has been for development to provide sidewalks which has resulted in discontinuous routes.
- Bethany lacks a sense of community.
- Bethany is a bedroom community without employment which means that people have to commute out to work each day.
- Bethany lacks green spaces
- Bethany area is an examples of wasted opportunities – retail is not attractive, not a real town center, not a community, no gathering places
- Bethany development is set up as independent “blocks” of homes without connectivity between subdivisions.
- Existing Bethany is an unsustainable type of development because it relies on cheap energy to survive (driving, heating big houses, etc)
- Existing Bethany is comprised of huge houses on small lots that don't provide any yard. Houses should be smaller to allow for a bigger yard.
- Bethany Boulevard is pedestrian, bike and kid-friendly and better planned than most suburban streets.
- Bethany Boulevard would lose its character if it was widened to four lanes.
- Bethany is well-located with many convenient routes to Portland besides US 26.
- Central Bethany development is a decent development – condos around the center is better than most areas – it is not an ideal Main Street, but is a step in the right direction.
- Residents take pride in their community.
- Bethany needs better access to US 26 and improved interchanges as well as more routes across US 26.
- Bethany needs a grid-style road system around centers (not through centers)
- Bethany needs community meeting places like plazas or parks.
- Bethany needs trail connectivity
- Springville, Kaiser, Laidlaw roads need improvement

- Bethany has housing diversity – ranges from apartments to expensive single family homes
- Reasonably satisfied with how Bethany has turned out
- Has heard about neighbor disputes around East Indian families wanting to display things outside homes that violate HOAs in Bethany
- Has heard that East Indian families are not being readily accepted into community
- Build appropriate infrastructure
- Create welcoming community for everyone
- Schools are a big issue – schools in existing Bethany are overcrowded.
- Bethany does not have enough green spaces or walking/biking trails.
- Central Bethany town center is a good development.
- Central Bethany is owned by one developer. It seems like a better idea to have multiple developers in the area.
- Reasonably satisfied with how Bethany has turned out
- Center is well designed
- Likes the fountain because it is a gathering place for families

2. Other communities

When asked “What other communities should Bethany seek to emulate?” responses ranged from Orenco Station and old Portland neighborhoods to neighborhoods in the San Francisco and Houston. The Springwater Community Plan and Pleasant Valley Concept Plan were mentioned as examples of good community planning efforts. All responses to this question:

- Houston Heights neighborhood – has strong neighborhood feel and diversity
- Woodlands (Houston) – planned development with canals connecting commercial areas, play spaces, town center – very family friendly
- Oak Hills neighborhood has church and schools at heart of neighborhood with commercial on fringe
- Orenco Station
- Ladd’s Addition, other Portland neighborhoods with street grid
- Streets of Tanasbourne area is nice
- Pleasant Valley Concept Plan integrated Kelly Creek riparian corridor into planning and included strategies for restoration – it made natural resource areas asset to community
- Springwater was a good process
- Old Santa Monica pedestrian mall (has prospered while traditional indoor mall has become depressed)
- Orenco Station – is an attractive community with good architecture, gathering spaces, interesting stores
- Fairview Village – houses front streets with porches, modest house sizes (some lot left after house footprint), different housing types support different life-stages
- Row houses in Forest Heights are nicely designed
- Park Merced in San Francisco with town homes build around green spaces
<http://terraserver-usa.com/image.aspx?T=4&S=11&X=1364&Y=10436&Z=10&W=1>
- NW 25th and Thurman area – park and school close together, traffic circles for calming
- Urban places on Hawthorne
- Parking lot at New Seasons at NE 33rd and Killingsworth (parking lot and store are separated by street)

- Inner NE Portland where homes and businesses are integrated
- Hillsdale and Multnomah where it is easy to get to neighborhood services
- Oak Hills has a good core with a school, church park
- Downtown Tualatin is interesting because it is planned around a natural feature, the lake

3. North Bethany Concept Plan

When asked questions about hopes and fears related to the concept planning process, ideas for development types and features in North Bethany and opportunities and challenges in planning North Bethany, responses were varied. Stakeholders were suspicious of the input that they would have into the concept planning process but were optimistic about the opportunities to create a great place in North Bethany. Stakeholders were also quick to recognize transportation as the key challenge in planning for North Bethany. Actual responses included:

- Concerned that college will be asked to finance infrastructure
- Possible partnerships with academic programs
- Would like to explore partnership with Cedar Mill Community Library to locate a public library on campus
- Include a post office
- Include improvements to existing road network including Laidlaw and Saltzman
- Include walkable amenities and pedestrian connections
- Interconnect development with ribbons of green spaces
- Use boundaries of natural resource areas for trails
- Support an increased sense of ownership and community
- Include better services, parks, libraries
- Understand and plan for preservation of natural resources
- Provide for increased traffic and better access to US 26 without widening Bethany Boulevard
- Consider a new overpass across US 26
- Provide for transit service throughout Bethany (TriMet doesn't usually expand into new areas)
- Consider a larger area for urban development that would include employment land
- Protect trees as roads are built and expanded
- Encourage people to get around on foot, bike
- Need trails that are not under power lines
- Include neighborhood commercial
- Address traffic needs and connectivity
- Protect Abbey Creek area
- Protect upland habitat area
- Metro is developing a process that will enable jurisdictions to apply for density-requirement waivers in exchange for protecting habitat
- Protect regionally-significant environmental areas
- Consider water quality and wildlife protection values
- Planning to meet watershed targets
- Consider Transfer of Development Rights program within the area
- Set SDCs high enough to cover plan implementation (Pleasant Valley and Springwater are quite high)
- Plan for trail system

- Minimize stream crossings
- Create a real town center with community amenities including commercial uses, library, parks
- Don't distract from improvement of existing center by creating a new center
- Develop urban street grid
- Provide a range of housing types for different people
- Plan for green spaces
- Make adjacent farmland an asset
- Transportation is a real issue – looking one mile outside study area is not enough
- Intersection at Germantown Road and Bridge Road needs to be improved
- Protect Abbey Creek Wildlife corridor (disagreement about the appropriateness of a trail in the area)
- Consider requiring wildlife passages under some roadways (bridges)
- Minimize impacts and pressure to expand onto adjacent farmland
- Consider light pollution
- Create a sustainable community (energy efficient, walkable, transit)
- Consider a neighborhood farmers' market
- Design streets for calm, slow traffic (narrow streets like Portland's inner east side)
- Don't build wide arteries into North Bethany – make streets wider at US 26 and narrower in study area
- Use land where schools are located more efficiently (build up)
- Any transit center should be well designed and “not ugly”
- Incorporate pedestrian only spaces and plazas
- Parking should be provided in structures or underground
- Could result in better community connections
- Include transportation system, parks, community gathering spaces
- Develop the Bethany area as a model for good development
- Plan the Bethany area as real center – make sure all involved agencies (ODOT, county, Metro) understand and support it as a center
- Support existing center and core of Bethany
- Consider connecting smaller neighborhood commercial nodes
- Seems that the County is trying to do urban, city-level planning for North Bethany which is good and gives hope that it will be done right
- The plan is an opportunity to illustrate the actual cost of development
- Widening Bethany Boulevard would be difficult
- County codes could be a challenge because they are not detailed enough to really control what is built
- Transportation is a big issue for CPO 1 residents – many thoroughfares like Cedar Hills Boulevard will be affected by North Bethany development
- None of the transportation corridors in area are wide enough to support the development that is occurring
- Plan should include parks and green spaces, a street grid, main street-style development
- Commercial parcels need to be large enough to be viable but small enough to prohibit big box retail
- Schools and parks should be co-located
- Preserve significant natural resources – not mud-puddle wetlands
- Plan for a buffer between parks and houses (either a street or natural area)
- Make natural areas accessible to all residents, not just houses along a “green belt”

- Urban level development should not occur in the absence of a city to provide services
- Plan for next phase of growth
- Roads are going to need to be widened to accommodate new traffic from North Bethany and residents are going to be upset – do it anyway
- A skate park should be located in North Bethany
- Seems that it is not wise to continue developing homes north of the Sunset Highway without any employment land, but that is not an excuse to put a big industrial development on what is now farmland outside the UGB.
- Don't try to build a "main street" along a five lane arterial.
- Include community gathering places – especially parks.
- Concerned that North Bethany planning will push development beyond UGB.
- Hope that the plan develops North Bethany as a nice place to live with walkable development, adequate schools.
- Maintain wildlife corridors and natural areas.
- Think carefully about co-locating schools and parks to ensure that parks are really available for public use.
- Compact development can work if green spaces are provided.
- Connect trails to neighborhoods and schools.
- Avoid development on the Oatfield fault.
- Locate schools away from arterials.
- There are opportunities for rural areas and the North Bethany development to work together. Farmland outside North Bethany could be an asset where residents come to buy food and recreate similar to what happens on Sauvie Island.
- Should be planned for community – include gathering spaces like small neighborhood centers (public facilities) where exercise classes, meetings, etc can be held. Smart growth principles can facilitate community
- Maintain any historic structures that are present
- Transportation system is key – it should encourage people to park their cars and walk around the center
- Plan for transit, maybe light rail
- Consider rural to urban transect design with highest densities in the center served by transit with less dense uses as you move away from the center
- Put parks and schools away from dense uses
- Live within the environment rather than pave it over
- Preserve natural areas
- Provide neighborhood services within walking distance of homes (markets, restaurants, etc)

4. Public involvement

When asked about hopes and concerns about the process, responses included:

- Hope that the team will ask for input about issues where the public can truly affect decisions
- Skeptical about the public process and whether the community will really be listed to
- Fear that developers will drive the process
- Frustrated that Multnomah County citizens do not have a seat at SWG
- SWG membership in not inclusive and choices about SWG membership were political
- Process has not been collaborative up to this point

- Concerned that the public will not be asked for input on the plan until it is nearly done.
- Transparency is very important – both in concept plan and finance plan

When asked about good ways to reach people in their community, responses included:

- CPO 1 newsletter
- CPO 7 newsletter
- Skyline Ridge Runner
- Cedar Mill news
- Email lists (Audubon, Outer Northwest Rural Advocates)

When asked who else we should talk with, responses included:

- Virginia Bruce, neighborhood activist and leader with Rock Creek Watershed Partners, 503-629-5799
- Janice Berger, Administrator, St. Vincent's, 503.216.2213 (Amy); Adelle Hughes, Public Relations, 503.216.7192
- Jerry Olkak, Community Action Network, 503.693.3255 (poverty issues)
- Mary Moriett, Lifeworks NW, 503.645.3300 (behavioral health)
- Bill Thomas, Washington County Commission on Children and Families, 503.846.4491
- Tualatin River Watershed Council, April Olbrich, 503.846.4801
- Sunset Presbyterian Church
- Bilal Mosque, Shahriar Ahmed, 503.591.7237; shesum@comcast.net
- Janet Rash, Intel, 503.264.2292
- Karen Frost, Westside Transportation Alliance, 503-617-4844
- Jonathan Schleuter, Westside Economic Alliance, 503-968-3100
- Dave Richards, LDS church, 503.777.3895
- Interfaith Action Network, Emily Godfield, 503.295.6761
- Tualatin Riverkeepers, Patricia Iron, 503-620-7507
- Linda Degman, PCC Rock Creek, Facility Planning Manager
- Noelle Studer, PCC Rock Creek, Sustainability Program Director
- Henry Oberhelman, CPO 8, 503-648-7309
- Hal Ballard, Washington County Bicycle Transportation Coalition, 503-984-1761
- Soil and Water Conservation District