North Old Town / Chinatown Redevelopment Strategy
REDEVELOPMENT CHARRETTE December 4 - 6, 2006
Background Materials Package – Development Zoning and Transportation Map
Brief Synopsis of Previous Reports
This Redevelopment Strategy must be reviewed within the context of a long history of comprehensive planning and urban design studies. A brief overview of some of the more pertinent reports is listed below:

Central City Plan, 1988
While far reaching in scope and covering the whole of the central city, the North of Burnside Urban Design Plan references several specific goals and actions pertaining to the area surrounding the current study blocks. They include:

- Preserving and enhancing the district’s architectural character and international character,
- Focus development along the extended transit mall
- Maintain those social services in the area while supporting business activities and development opportunities,
- Pursue implementation of the Chinatown Development Plan,
- Preserve and maintain up to a maximum of 1282 SRO housing units and shelter beds.
- Limit the maximum number of permanent shelter beds to 252 and allow the replacement of all district shelter beds with SRO housing units.

In addition, several specific North of Burnside action items affecting the current study area were noted:

- NB3 - Establish an Asian Market with a rooftop public plaza or Chinese Garden on the block bounded by 4th, 5th, Couch and Davis Streets.
- NB6 - Provide ‘Portland Ornamental’ cast iron lighting standards throughout the district.
- NB8 - Maintain a community center for area residents with clean-up facilities, medical support, and a job bank.
- NB11 - Build North of Burnside District gateways in locations shown on map, including additional cultural gateways on the north side of Burnside.
- Increase the supply of housing for no and low-income individuals.
- NB12 – Develop a strategy to reinforce the international character of this area.

The Human Services Sector was addressed with several recommendations, and three main items of note: establish a centralized human services info center; establish a youth center offering recreational programs, health care, counseling, and job placement; and to conduct an additional study developing a city-wide plan to guide the siting and expansion of social services facilities.

Old Town / Chinatown Vision Plan, 1997
This collaborative document brought together representatives of the neighborhood’s diverse stakeholders and set forth a series of agreements, addressing five main areas. Periodic updating of the vision was recommended to create a living document. The five main areas were:

- Communication/Conflict Resolution reinforced the neighborhood’s commitment to increased communication, namely through good neighbor agreements, while diversifying the housing, shelter, and social services.
- Crime/Safety made mention of addressing not only the reality but the perception of safety in the district.
- Street Environment and Public Improvements made broad recommendations regarding the physical appearance of the neighborhood.
- Night Life/Marketing/Promotion encouraged businesses creating active, off-hour activities and a street life inviting to visitors.
- Development, Parking, and Circulation, listing the goals of the planning and implementation strategy. One item of note in the social service section opposed the notion of a single, centrally located assessment center.
differing from the 1988 Central City Plan. Finally, the last chapter identified four specific action items: one or more housing developments in Chinatown, preparation of an Old Town/Chinatown Development Plan, soliciting a commercial development for the 'Trailways' block, and the construction of the Classical Chinese Garden.

**Old Town / Chinatown Development Plan, 1999**

This report was designed to complement the spirit and implement the economic development objectives of the Vision Plan, and to serve as a broad blueprint for public and private investment. The plan addressed a large area, spanning from Union Station in the north to SW Stark street in the south, and from the Willamette River in the east, to 7th Avenue in the west, so holds a large range of recommendations spanning from and integrating the planned Public Market and Fire Station redevelopments, to the Burnside street improvements, to the Arts and Cultural Marketing Strategy. Specific recommendations for the current Study Area included:

- Reduce the barriers to the OT/CT district at the edges and access points, consider construction of a new gate or similar feature.
- Support new developments adjacent to the Classical Chinese Garden to enhance the visitor experience. Possibilities might include a hotel or Asian cultural center.
- Acquire most of Block 25, undertake predevelopment work, and prepare a development offering that would include parking, housing, retail, and accommodation of the Blanchet House functions.
- Address the district’s parking needs with four levels of parking on Block 24, additional parking beneath and within large developments on Blocks 25 and 26, as well as Blocks O and P.
- Proceed to develop the 3rd and 4th Avenue concept diagram,
- Reconstruct the intersection at Glisan Street and 3rd Avenue and proceed with a tree planting program on Glisan.

**Old Town / Chinatown 3rd & 4th Avenue Streetscape Plan, 2002**

The improvements outlined in this document were intended to strengthen the identity of the historic district, fostering cultural and economic diversity, and promote a vibrant pedestrian streetscape. Three schemes were explored:

- ‘The Ribbons’, addressed the tree size and frequency, graphic signage, street furniture and lighting, and restriping along one, or both, of 3rd and 4th Avenues;
- ‘The Ring’ emphasized creating a district center by temporarily blocking off Davis and Flanders for public events, and improving Glisan, to better link 3rd and 4th Avenues, and,
- ‘The Jewel Box’ which defined additional sidewalk improvements on Couch, Everett, and Hoyt, as well as introduced the Festival Street concept for Davis and Flanders Streets.

Ultimately, the Jewel Box approach was selected, and after some value engineering revisions, the design and engineering progressed and construction has now been substantially completed.

The Re-Visions Committee, incorporating several members of the original 1997 and 1999 documents, was established to update and evaluate the progress of the earlier recommendations. In general, the 2003 report reaffirmed the goals and mission of the earlier efforts, while in some areas listed specific updates and recommendations. Pertinent items addressing the current Study Area centered on five topic areas:

- **Neighborhood Process** – The committee reiterated the priority of working with the Neighborhood Association to reach consensus on how to approach gentrification and balance in the area, ensure representation for all facets of the community in vision and land use work, and set up a clear communications network to promote relationship building and good neighbor agreements. The rebirth of a business association was emphasized.

- **Housing, Development, Circulation / Barriers** noted a lack of success in breaking down the barriers to the waterfront, across Burnside, and to the Pearl District. Transit options were supported, as were the preservation of landmark and contributing buildings. The committee reiterated their goal of increasing the number of for sale housing units, particularly in the 60-120 MFI range, with parking included for all new mixed-use developments.

- **Open Spaces, Community Center, Culture, History** emphasized the district’s history, arts and entertainment, with particular note of the New Japantown Chinatown Historic District. It also included a clear priority for a Community Center and the desire to develop an appropriate model. A lack of consensus on the need for, or location of, potential open space in the district was also mentioned.

- **Nightlife / Marketing / Promotion / Job Creation** noted that the challenge remained regarding the interaction of active nightlife and housing and parking, and mentioned the lack of a clear job creation strategy.

- **Crime / Public Safety** stated a priority for future development to enhance the security of the neighborhood, as was the desire to address blank building walls, lighting, and provide safe public restrooms.

Additional studies and reports recently completed, primarily addressing housing needs and retail uses in downtown Portland:

**Workforce Housing Report Central City Portland, Oregon**, 2003

**Central City Housing Inventory**, 2005

**Downtown Retail Strategy**, 2002

**The 10-year Plan to End Homelessness in Portland and Multnomah County**, 2002

**No Net Loss/Preservation Policy**.
The illustration above shows the revised Tri-Met light rail alignment, essentially passing to the south and west of Block A&N, rather than thru the northern portion of the block, as earlier designed. The illustration below is an architect’s sketch of one possible configuration for Blanchet House, located along the northern edge of Block 25, where the existing facility, as well as the Dirty Duck Building, currently stand.
Blanchet House of Hospitality – Expansion Proposal Site Issues
Blanchet House, currently located at 340 NW Glisan Street, has been serving meals and providing temporary lodging to Portland’s homeless community since 1952. The facility houses up to 28 men who are directly involved in the meal service program, offering work / volunteer experience for these temporary residents. It is the only facility in Portland serving three meals a day, totaling between 600 – 800 meals every day, in a clean and sober environment.

Study Area Overview and Potential Blanchet Expansion Scenarios – (Incorporating subsequent UPDATES)

Block P
- Size: Could accommodate Blanchet’s preferred building footprint with potential of extra space for additional user.
- Acquisition: Seller is not motivated – ability to acquire site is questionable.
- Development Constraints and/or Opportunities: No lease or demolition constraints.

Block O
- Size: Could accommodate Blanchet’s preferred building footprint with potential of extra space for additional user.
- Acquisition: JBH Properties currently intends to acquire for future new development.
- Development Constraints and/or Opportunities: Need to clarify any lease implications. Building is not historic, but demolition is likely to be required to accommodate future development.
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Background Materials Package – Blanchet House Potential Locations (cont’d.)

Block A&N
- Size: TriMet plans a spur line on the north side of the parcel with a 20’ setback. Blanchet is currently verifying whether the site can accommodate their facility’s expansion needs. Potential space for a garden to be managed by Blanchet volunteers.
- Acquisition: Site owned by PDC – need to clarify any agreements with Tri-Met.
- Development Constraints and/or Opportunities: Light Rail spur line may have impact, as will cost of renovating the Historic Fire Station building. Blanchet has expressed that they may be interested in the site. Eastern edge of site is close to existing rail crossing, with access to Waterfront Park and Willamette River.

Block 36
- Size: Need to verify if the site can accommodate Blanchet’s program.
- Acquisition: Owner is not currently motivated, due to the future potential of pedestrian-oriented retail development along the new light rail transit mall.
- Development Constraints and/or Opportunities: May require demolition of existing structure. Need to verify parking implications.

Block 24
- Size: Could accommodate Blanchet’s preferred building footprint.
- Acquisition: Owned by NW Natural rate-payers and there is little incentive to selling in the near future.
- Development Constraints and/or Opportunities: Requires replacement of NW Natural parking, as well as some (high clearance) storage for maintenance vehicles.

Block 25
- Size: Could accommodate Blanchet’s preferred building footprint.
- Acquisition: Owned by Blanchet, City of Portland, and PDC.
- Development Constraints and/or Opportunities: Requires replacement of NW Natural parking (approximately 130 spaces) and a Type-4 Land Use Review for demolition of two contributing historic structures.
Additional Stakeholder / Community Interviews – Mid Project Report

In addition to collaborating on this project with the SAC, our consultant team interviewed several other stakeholders and community members. This group included those active in a variety of community initiatives (many with decades of involvement), area business and property owners, and representatives from social service agencies and cultural organizations. In addition to individual interviews, our team sought information from a number of people on specific aspects of the study.

This mid-project report highlights the main points offered by the people contacted to-date. It particularly concentrates on comments and information that will be helpful to the discussions to be held at the 2nd SAC meeting on November 14, 2006. This report is not intended to provide a scientifically valid or all-encompassing profile of community opinion.

Summary of Findings To-Date

1) **Key elements of a redevelopment strategy in the north OTCT focus area to help create a “vibrant, mixed-use, 24 hr/day urban neighborhood, rooted in a rich historical past”:**

- Create a northern gateway into the area that augments the Chinatown identity and supports the artistic, cultural, historical, and educational assets of OTCT as a whole;
- Enliven the street level with ground floor retail and good access to buildings; develop pedestrian friendly routes between important blocks and destinations, including into downtown Portland;
- Develop workforce housing (most common definition was between 80-120% of median family income/mfi) to have a critical mass of people who invest in OTCT by living there, and who will support local businesses.

2) **Opportunities:**

This is a forgotten area (a doughnut hole), one that is ripe for redevelopment and which has opportunities for people to have a real impact on positively defining the area. It’s been overlooked; it’s time to fill in the hole.

- The Autumn Festival showed that people are willing to come to this area for authentic cultural experiences. People are attracted to the Garden and the culture/history of OTCT. More businesses that support the mission of the Garden would enhance the experience;
- New and potential initiatives in the surrounding area (e.g. University of Oregon, Arts Bldg., Mercy Corps, small creative work spaces, Pacific NW College of Art, Light Rail, bus/train station developments, festival streets) can bring benefits, vitality, and activity to the redeveloped northern area of OTCT;
- We can do more to encourage and recruit for private investments (local, foreign, etc.)
- Transit options, the U of O, and proximity to downtown core, eastside, and riverfront make the area desirable for workforce housing.

3) **Challenges:**

Some type of gentrification will happen if the area develops. How do we develop vibrantly, but not lose the character of the area?

- Parking;
- Perception of danger and drugs;
- Cleanliness issues, loitering, queuing detracts from the visitor experience and lessens the desirability for those considering living here or having a business here;
- Besides a visit to the Portland Classical Chinese Garden and eating lunch, there’s not much of a Chinatown left and not much along those lines to do;
Lack of area residents with disposable income;
Businesses will look for already-developed spaces and stable areas to locate; OTCT streets have been torn up for years and will continue to be due to Light Rail.

4) **What’s missing from today’s business mix to meet customer needs? What are the top priorities for new ventures?**

Several ideas were put forth, including: a high end, well-run Asian restaurant with private banquet room space; a boutique-type hotel with meeting space; local small businesses such as jewelry stores, coffee shops and professional personal services. A grocery store or market, particularly one that was Asian-oriented or even a destination-type (e.g. Uwajimaya’s) but there were questions about whether a large grocery store would be viable.

5) **With limited future public funding available to assist developments, what types of projects should receive priority?**

- Parking – subsidize development; do a cost/benefit analysis of parking;
- Development of small business spaces; development of buildings that have small business-owned spaces; enhancements for current businesses;
- Seismic upgrades to conserve historic buildings;
- Community center and/or cultural center space (varying opinions as to what this means, how the space would be managed and how operating costs would be paid);
- Destination open spaces and/or natural spaces.

6) **Blanchet House:**

There was overall support for Blanchet House to stay in the area and provide their service in a facility that is appropriate and designed to accommodate their work and be a good neighbor. Many felt that if BH stayed in its current site it would be detrimental for the revitalization of the north focus area because we would lose the opportunity for one of the few full-block developments in OTCT. Generally, interviewees supported the current social services in the area but voiced concern about and potential opposition to substantial expansions and additional facilities.