A Plan for the Heart of the Region: Tukwila, WA

The Plan orchestrates the Restructuring of a 1,000-acre Regional Shopping Area into a Social and Symbolic Center for the Region.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The plan grafts urbanism onto typical built-out, mall-centered sprawl by directing the redevelopment of oversized parking lots and remaining underutilized properties into a pattern that connects the project area’s key anchors and overlooked amenities - department store and big-box anchors, pond, river, commuter rail station - to surrounding neighborhoods infilled with new homes, workplaces and a rich and varied public realm.
**ENVISIONED PATTERN OF DISTRICTS**

The existing haphazard distribution of development types is restructured into a pattern in which development types are organized by district structure. All districts are scaled to walking distance, and connected by a network of interlinked streets and primary public spaces.
As pressure for continued growth of the popular regional shopping center instigates the transition to structured parking and the redevelopment of low-intensity land uses, parking lots and strip centers are replaced with higher value mixed use development types featuring ground-level shopfronts arranged along a linear public green with flanking one way streets and curbside parking. The improvement of nearby Tukwila Pond provides a recreational and shopping destination to justify the extension of the captive audience of the mall out to and beyond the edges of the mall property, linking activity formerly trapped in mall corridors with a new public esplanade along the pond’s northern shore.

**THE ENVISIONED SHOPPING DISTRICT AND POND ESPLANADE**

**EXISTING**

- Mall entrance
- Linear public green with flanking one way streets
- Mixed-use buildings
- Groundlevel Shop-fronts
- New public openspace
- Public esplanade

View shown in rendering.

Mall surrounded by parking lots

The pond is largely inaccessible.
THE ENVISIONED TOD DISTRICT

The new TOD neighborhood is scaled to the long pedestrian-shed corresponding to walking distance from the transit center. Development on the most vulnerable properties in the project area is replaced with a mix of high density residential and workplace development in a pattern of small blocks. The temporary train station is relocated and redesigned as a multi-modal transit center that clusters bus transfer, para-transit, and “kiss-ride” right up against the new commuter rail platform. The transit center becomes the terminus of a new east-west corridor featuring mixed use buildings with stations shops close to the station, a riverfront neighborhood convenience center at the confluence of the riverfront and the primary north-south avenue, and a new pedestrian bridge over the river leading to the central main street and linear public green of the Town Center Core, with the entrance to the Mall visible at the western terminus. The Green River bisects the neighborhood and is lined with townhomes and a riverwalk; development types become increasingly urban as one moves away from the river in either direction.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing transit station is isolated from its surroundings.
Retrofitting an Overscaled Circulation System into a Walkable Network of Streets and Blocks

NEW OPEN SPACE AND PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN NETWORK
The overscaled street network of the project area is transformed into a fine-grained network of walkable streets. By regulating maximum block size, locating required new streets, and directing their design, the plan ensures smaller blocks, expanded and amenitized pedestrian crossings, and a wealth of connections to key amenities like the Mall, pond, river and transit station. The network of interlinked streets and public spaces provided by the new fine-grained block structure also disperses the activity formerly isolated in the corridors of the mall.
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A Clear Hierarchy of Streets

EXISTING STREETS
All streets look the same and discourage walking and bicycling.

Andover Park West

Southcenter Parkway

Minkler Boulevard

Strander Boulevard

RESTRUCTURED CONDITION
The Plan provides designs for required new streets as well as retrofits of existing streets.

Boulevard with Parallel Service Lanes

Boulevard with Wide Planting Strip

Avenue

Main Street

City Street

Service Road

Promenade

Riverwalk
ARCHITECTURAL PROTOTYPES

ROOF DESIGN:
Distinguishable Forms, Steep Slopes and Profiles
- Sloped roofs to provide shelter from the rain.
- Shed and shallowly pitched roofs to reflect shed forms of the region’s mills and industry.
- Expressive roof profiles at public and residential structures, using gables, dormers and towers.
- Overhanging eaves, with visible brackets and corbels, reveal the roof structure.
- Structural expression of supports and beams to reflect utilitarian construction.

*From research into historic architecture form.
Restructuring Strategy: Using Market Preferences, City Policy & Capital Improvements to Instigate Transformation

EXISTING ASSETS

STRATEGY: “VALUE SANDWICH”

PRIORITIZED PUBLIC ACTIONS

ENVISIONED EFFECT OF STRATEGY AND CODE

1. Market-driven grafts of urbanism. Take advantage of shopping industry’s current preference for open air main street formats; bolster the competitive position of the mall by grafting an urban “lifestyle center” onto it.

2. “Value Sandwich.” Stimulate investor interest in residential development by relocating and improving the commuter rail station and arranging the elements of the new Town Center core so that the most vulnerable properties are positioned in between those two value generators.

3. Prioritize ruthlessly: Stimulate short term change by focusing all available city resources on the development of the Town Center Core, relocating and improving the transit center, and providing a safe & attractive walk between them.

The new Town Center extends from the Mall into the TOD towards the transit center.

View shown in rendering.
Restructuring Strategy: Graft Urbanism onto Conventional Regional Shopping Center Sprawl

**EXISTING**
Conventional Mall-centered sprawl dominates north half of project area

**MID-TERM**
TOD Neighborhood: Riverwalk townhomes, mid-rise housing, office and lodging fill in pedestrian-shed of transit center and Town Center core. Continued transition to structured parking allows completion of east-west corridor connecting Mall to Town Center, neighborhood and transit center. Pond esplanade and park installed and connected to south side of the Mall. New freestanding retail anchors limited to high-speed thoroughfares.

**SHORT-TERM**
First Graft / Catalyst: Anchored Town Center Core developed on vulnerable properties closest to Mall, stretching toward TOD and relocated transit center. Public sector provides linear town green and comfortable, safe walk to/from station thru land set aside for TOD. Mall expansion includes ground-level shopfronts providing north side of future shopping street.

**LONG-TERM**
Second Graft: Pond esplanade and proximity to Mall stimulate mixed use development along Pond Esplanade, sparking redevelopment of south side of mall. Code directs small block pattern connecting the Mall to the Pond esplanade. Success of northern redevelopment instigates office development in slower changing workplace district.
DISTRICT ZONES
Use, Height, Maximum Block Size, Parking and Open Space are organized by District Zone.

CORRIDOR TYPES
Public Frontage, Thoroughfare, Private Frontage, Frontage Coverage, Build-to-Corner, and Enfronting Orientation are organized by Corridor Type.
The regulating code directs the development and distribution of retail use throughout the project area by setting up a hierarchy of retail-driven development types organized according to scale of target trade area, from regional to walking distance. Retail development types consist of pre-defined mixtures of use, building type, orientation and parking type and location. This system replaces a zoning code that permits any form of commercial development on any site in the project area, and results in the clustering of retail in decreasing scale as one moves away from the Regional Shopping & Entertainment District.

**PERMITTED LOCATION FOR RETAIL PLACE TYPES**

- **Regional Shopping District Retail**
  Major retail and entertainment targeted to a regional trade area; wide range of specialty goods; no local serving anchors e.g. super markets, fitness centers; structured & surface parking.

- **Town Center Shops Retail**
  Multi-story development with ground-level shopfronts facing public streets; anchored retail and entertainment; including supermarkets; meant to appeal to both regional and local trade areas; linear shopfronts required for big-box; structured parking.

- **Commercial Corridor Retail**
  Auto-oriented commercial sales e.g. big-box, drive-in uses; sales of large-scale goods; formerly permitted anywhere, now restricted to a single corridor.

- **Neighborhood Center Retail**
  Small-scale businesses anchored by super markets oriented to nearby neighborhoods, preferably integrated into mixed-use building; limited to one per neighborhood. Restricted parking.

- **Waterfront Shops**
  Small clusters of eating or water-related shopfronts integrated into waterfront-facing block frontage or kiosk along waterfront esplanade; no off-street parking.

- **Station Shops**
  Shopfronts with convenience retail enfroniting transit station or along block frontage closest to station; off-street parking restricted.

- **Corner Store Shops**
  Individual stores incorporated into the corner of a residential or workplace building. No off-street parking permitted.
The portion of the code illustrated specifies community standards for the improvement of the public street and the private frontage along each property's street front. All streets, both new and existing, are designated by corridor type. Where more than one street design is permitted, the applicant may choose which street to provide. However, if adjacent properties are required to continue a new or existing street across their property, they must continue the street treatment in accordance with the already implemented street type. Where more than one private frontage type is permitted, the applicant may choose which frontage type or combination of types to use along the property frontage.