

Revitalizing Urban Transit Corridors



Strategic Thinking about Corridor Development

Thurston Regional
Planning Council

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Context

The Urban Corridors Task Force was commissioned by the Thurston Regional Planning Council in October 2009 to understand the dynamics of urban infill and redevelopment and to make recommendations on measures needed to overcome barriers to achieving more compact, transit-supportive land-use patterns in the metropolitan area of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater.

Over the course of two years, the Task Force delved deep into the intricacies of corridor development. It met with planning staff from local agencies to understand how the development process works in each jurisdiction, consulted with other public agencies such as Intercity Transit, North Thurston Public Schools and State government to understand their roles and authorities regarding transport and land-use, and reviewed the array of regulatory and financial tools available for community development. Task Force members explored the economics of “walkable communities” and evaluated all urban corridors for the greatest opportunity. Perhaps most importantly, Task Force member convened a panel of private sector representatives from the finance, real estate, and building communities to help them understand the nuances of market forces in influencing commercial and residential investment decisions – what the community development process looks like from “the other side of the counter.”

This report presents the recommendations of the Urban Corridors Task force on how to stimulate mixed-use infill and redevelopment along premier transit corridors. Many of these recommendations are bold and unconventional. They challenge Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County to rethink the role of the public sector in stimulating community development by augmenting traditional regulatory tools with fresh approaches better suited to the nature of urban infill and redevelopment. To be successful, the measures will require new partnerships between the public and private sectors, the three cities and Thurston County.

The Task Force recommendations have been endorsed by the Thurston Regional Planning Council and its transportation planning subcommittee, the Transportation Policy Board. The Task Force encourages the Region to move forward with implementation of the recommendations in this report with a sense of urgency, recognizing that the current economy provides a window of opportunity to achieve key transportation and land-use objectives long envisioned by this community.



Contents

Context	i
Contents	ii
Executive Summary	1
The Vision	3
Corridor Districts	4
The Reality	6
Challenges to Achieving Urban Densities	10
Recommendation Framework	12
Alignment with Regional Efforts	13
Rethinking Redevelopment	15
Recommended Measures	15
Modest Measures	16
Moderate Measures	18
Mighty Measures	23
Roles and Responsibilities	24
Summary of Recommended Corridor Measures	26
Implementation Considerations	32
Next Steps	33
Conclusion	33
In Appreciation	34
Urban Corridors Task Force Information	35

Photo and Image Credits – Page 36

Executive Summary

To more efficiently provide the services the public demands, the comprehensive plans for Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater and Thurston County all envision vibrant, dense urban centers and moderately dense suburban development within longer term Urban Growth Areas, while preserving outlying rural areas for low density residential and rural activities. One of the keys to achieving dense urban centers is utilizing our urban transit corridors to their fullest potential, particularly through mixed-use development where appropriate.

In examining the impediments to achieving this vision, the Task Force reviewed historic development patterns, demographic trends, transit routes, corridor characteristics, and the challenges of creating profitable mixed-used development. The Task Force also

convened a panel of local developers, lenders, real estate professionals and investors to discuss the challenges and opportunities for mixed-use development in the northern urban growth area encompassing Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater.

The Task Force considered that population in the region is expected to grow at 1.5% per year over the next 30 years, adding as many as 140,000 new people. Jobs are also expected to increase at an average annual rate of 1.5% during that same time, growing

regional employment by 71,000 jobs. Furthermore, rapid demographic changes will result in a population that will be increasingly older and younger than today's community. National demographic research shows that these segments of the population will likely want the option to live in smaller households that offer a more urban, walkable lifestyle with nearby jobs and readily accessible public and private amenities and services.

Our current housing patterns leave this area ill-prepared to provide these options. In addition, increasingly uncertain energy futures, congestion, rising costs of government services, and pressures on resource and sensitive lands make it even more critical to



create mixed-use urban districts that will provide choices for these segments of the population. The logical place for this type of development is on transportation corridors where the community has already invested heavily in frequent transit service.

Based on its work the Task Force concluded that, left to itself, it is unlikely that the Market will generate the kind of high-quality, mixed-use infill and redevelopment needed to serve these populations. Today's real estate Market faces formidable barriers, including: limited availability of suitable building parcels in close-in urban areas; new lending standards limiting the availability of investment capital; low commercial rents making it difficult to finance quality mixed-use developments; environmental constraints in some areas of these corridors; an inconsistent political environment; public resistance to change;

and abundant capacity to absorb new growth in the urban fringe. The Task Force concluded further that without strong public/private partnerships to change the

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status quo, developments will continue to preferentially locate at the margins of the urban area in patterns that are more auto-dependent than transit-supportive, increasing the costs of providing transportation and other government services.

To achieve this end, the Urban Corridors Task Force members recommend that Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, and Thurston County take a more active role in partnering with the development community to stimulate mixed-use development along the primary urban corridor: Martin Way/ 4th Avenue/ State Avenue/ Capitol Way/ Capitol Boulevard.

There are measures that government can take to reduce the risk and cost associated with infill and redevelopment, and to enhance the attractiveness of specific locations for private investment. These measures, ranging from modest to mighty efforts, are described in this report. They include compiling additional information on redevelopment opportunities, providing financial and regulatory incentives, and strategically investing public funds in civic projects to complement and attract private sector development along these corridors. Two of the key recommendations are:

1. Form a multi-jurisdictional "Corridor Development Partnership" to coordinate implementation of the Task Force recommendations. This partnership is intended to complement, not override, the authority of individual jurisdictions.

This Partnership recommendation underscores the Task Force belief that local governments need to better understand and engage more fully in community development activities if existing hurdles that inhibit infill and redevelopment

along these corridors are to be overcome. The current economic downturn provides a window of opportunity in which to establish such a partnership and lay the foundation for harnessing market forces in partnership with the private sector when economic conditions improve. The private sector has many choices about where to invest. Active and informed participation by the public sector can reduce the risks of investing in these older corridors and activity centers where transit, walking, and biking are viable alternatives to driving.

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2. Introduce a new development area designation called a “Corridor District” in specific, strategic locations. Focus innovative development strategies in these designated Corridor Districts rather than trying to spread efforts out along the entire corridors. Corridor Districts are described more fully on Page 4.

With political vision, leadership, and courage, it is possible to create strong public/private partnerships that will attract private-sector investment in vibrant, mixed-use, transit-supportive neighborhoods offering an array of urban lifestyle choices and business opportunities. Doing so will address the needs for a growing segment of our population as well as provide a long-term benefit of improved mobility for all transportation system users and a more sustainable local economy.

The Vision

Adopted plans across the region envision strong urban centers, healthy suburban residential neighborhoods, resilient rural cities and towns, and low-density rural areas. This land-use vision is supported by a transportation strategy intended to provide increased travel choices for people over time, including viable alternatives to driving for many daily needs in close-in urban centers and mixed-use neighborhoods.

The focus of this report is on the urban centers envisioned in those plans.



Corridor Districts

Vibrant urban centers offering an array of mixed-use neighborhoods with their own character and identity are an essential part of this region's vision. Corridor Districts as described by the Task Force are a type of urban center, and are located at select locations along the priority corridor. As they develop and mature, these Districts will provide a range of lifestyle choices that currently do not exist in the Thurston region. They will provide an alternative for those people wanting or needing less car-dependent lifestyles, with stores and services within walking distance of home and where transit is a better option than driving for many needs.

What might these places look like? One might think about the Fremont, Upper or Lower

Queen Anne, Northgate, or Ballard neighborhoods in Seattle, the Uptown and Downtown districts in Port Townsend, or Redmond's Town Center. People often mention Portland's Pearl District when talking about mixed-use neighborhoods they like. While most of these are a bit larger than this region is likely to experience within the next 20-30 years, they offer nearby examples of successful mixed-use neighborhoods.

Though they will have different features and identities, successful Corridor Districts will have certain things in common:

- Busy, lively sidewalks oriented around pedestrians and activities
- Well-designed, multi-story architecture
- Different types of uses – residential, retail, services, civic – adjacent to each other or “stacked” vertically
- Abundant public amenities like plazas, pocket parks, and street features (benches, trees, fountains)
- High quality transit service
- Minimal surface street parking
- People – lots of people, all day long, engaged in different kinds of activities

Corridor Districts will evolve around a cohesive plan that ensures individual elements are integrated, even though they will typically develop out over many years. They will probably reflect a mix of coordinated private and public investments. Many existing buildings will be retained, though underutilized buildings may be repurposed to meet current needs. Housing will accommodate a mix of incomes and owner/renter



opportunities. Over time these emerging Corridor Districts will develop their own strong sense of place and local identity. They are not necessarily large, though in order to support neighborhood-scale retail and services, a minimum of 3,500 households within a half mile radius is needed. In this way these neighborhoods will become increasingly self-sufficient, offering the full range of services and amenities that make an urban lifestyle “urban.”

There is no expectation that everyone in the Thurston region will want to live in these Corridor Districts; many people will continue to prefer the amenities that suburban or rural lifestyles offer and can afford the household costs associated with those lifestyles. Adopted visions simply acknowledge that this region needs to offer a lifestyle choice increasingly in demand by people looking to downsize from their large suburban homes and by a younger and creative working class that is not attracted to the suburban residential lifestyle that dominates this region. Over time, the demand for a more urban lifestyle in this region is expected to increase due to significant demographic changes taking place. Additionally, the per capita cost of providing sewer, water, police, fire, and transportation services is lower in mixed-use urban neighborhoods than either suburban or rural residential areas. That is why mixed-use neighborhoods have been an integral part of adopted comprehensive land-use policy since the mid-1990s. They are a cornerstone of this region’s land-use and transportation vision, complementing the other lifestyle choices currently available. Focusing on Corridor Districts is a promising way to achieve this elusive aspect of adopted visions.

The rest of this report summarizes results of this region’s efforts to create truly urban places in the Lacey-Olympia-Tumwater area and real-world challenges to realizing that vision. It outlines the framework behind the Task Force recommendations and the alignment of this effort with other regional efforts. This report lays out a series of bold measures intended to reduce the risk to private developers so they would more likely invest in creating quality urban neighborhoods that provide an additional lifestyle choice to complement current development patterns. It concludes with a detailed summary of all recommended measures, including timing, responsibility and other key factors for each.



The Reality

This region's transportation policies and investments are predicated on achieving the land-use vision embodied in locally adopted Comprehensive Plans. As noted previously, those visions describe vibrant urban centers, healthy suburban residential communities, resilient rural cities and towns, and low-intensity rural residential and resource areas. Since plans were adopted in the mid-1990s, many successes have been realized in achieving this vision. But an intractable problem remains: attracting the growth needed to retrofit under-utilized, auto-oriented arterials into mixed-use urban corridors where transit, walking and biking are viable alternatives to driving for most or all daily needs.

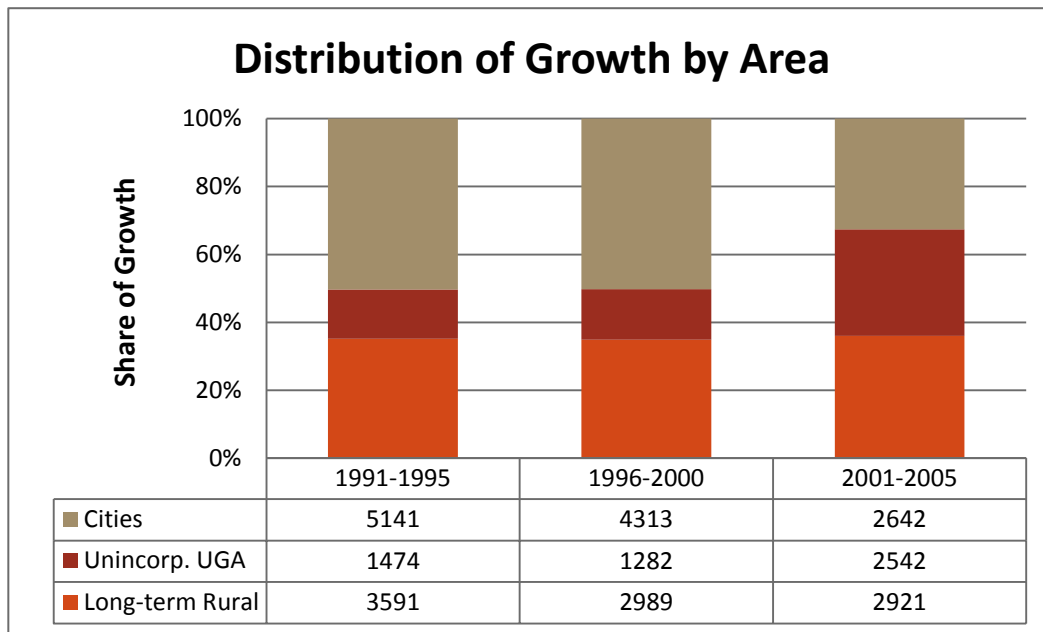


Figure 1 - Distribution of Residential Growth 1991 – 2005. Buildable Lands data, TRPC.

Since the early 1990s, the share of growth locating in rural areas has remained relatively constant at just over one third of all units permitted, as shown in Figure 1. During that same time, the share of residential growth locating in the cities and unincorporated urban growth areas (UGA) has gone through a dramatic shift whereby the unincorporated urban growth areas now attract almost as much residential development as do the cities. While the long-range intent is for these areas to become urbanized, Countywide Planning Policies envisioned growth locating closer in to established urban centers and gradually over time expanding outwards in an efficient, contiguous pattern. Figure 2 illustrates this shift from incorporated to unincorporated urban growth areas over the last 15 years. It is summarized in the following table.

Distribution of Growth by Major Area Type

Share of Growth	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005
Cities	50%	50%	33%
Unincorporated UGAs	14%	15%	31%
Long-term Rural	35%	35%	36%

Figure 2 - Summary of Residential Growth 1991 – 2005. Buildable Lands data, TRPC.

This outward expansion of residential activity into unincorporated urban growth areas is reflected in the decline over this same period in the number of residential units built as infill or redevelopment along high-density corridors offering frequent transit service. These strategy corridors are intended to accommodate a larger share of residential growth, much of it as mixed-use development, where viable alternatives to driving are available. Not only has the share of transportation-efficient residential growth not increased, it has actually declined over time. Table 3 below describes residential infill and corridor development activity since 1991. Despite land-use visions for mixed-use and dynamic urban centers, Thurston County's high-frequency transit corridors are attracting a declining share of residential growth.

Distribution of Growth to Infill Areas, Strategy Corridors

Area Type	1991-1995	1996-2000	2001-2005
Infill Areas	8%	14%	6%
Strategy Corridors	8%	9%	5%

Figure 3 - Summary of Residential Infill and Corridor Development Activity, 1991 - 2005. Buildable Lands data, TRPC.

The price of continued sprawling growth is significant. For transportation alone, studies done in 1998 found that if these growth patterns continue, to maintain acceptable service levels would require widening many rural roads to 4 or 5 lanes and most urban arterials to 6 or 7 lanes, costing nearly \$1 billion dollars. Even with this level of investment, congestion and travel times would increase dramatically, as would the personal costs of travel as energy costs escalate. This is in addition to significant and unacceptable impacts on community character and the environment.

Recognizing this level of transportation funding is unlikely to ever materialize and that the community impacts of such a street system would be intolerable, local jurisdictions have already made significant investments in land-use plans, multi-modal transportation infrastructure that supports all modes of travel, and public amenities to support a long-term transformation to more urban development patterns.

- Jurisdictions embraced the philosophy and investment policy of multi-modal “complete streets” more than a decade before that term became mainstream jargon. They have invested tens of millions of public and private dollars into a growing network of sidewalks and bike lanes on city streets, and made sidewalk, bike lanes, and connected streets standard compliance features for development projects. Transportation impact fees in Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater are based on multi-modal “complete street” cross sections.
- Major investments in transit have resulted in 15-minute or shorter headways on the region’s most important urban corridors with frequent, coordinated connections between neighborhoods and these primary corridors.

The bigger challenge has turned out to be attracting the kind of urban land-use activities that will generate the transit, walk, and bike trips to use this transportation system and relieve growing demand for street capacity.

Generating walk or transit trips that replace car trips requires more than just building sidewalks or running buses. It requires that there be a destination within walking distance of one’s home or job, or at most, within a short, direct transit ride. What’s required are destinations offering the basics to support day-to-day needs. These are typically neighborhood-serving retail, food and drink, services, banking, and health care establishments.

To be financially viable without relying solely on drive-by customers for their support, these neighborhood-serving businesses need about 1,500 households within a 5-10 minute walk – that is, within a ¼ mile radius on a connected street grid, as shown in Figure 4. They need another 2,000 or so households within the next ¼ mile radius, totaling about 3,500 households within a ½ mile radius.¹ This is what it takes to support a small neighborhood business district with modest reliance on traffic from outside the neighborhood.

¹ Creating Walkable Neighborhood Districts: An Exploration of the Demographic and Physical Characteristics Needed to Support Local Retail Services. June 2010. Greg Easton and John Owen.

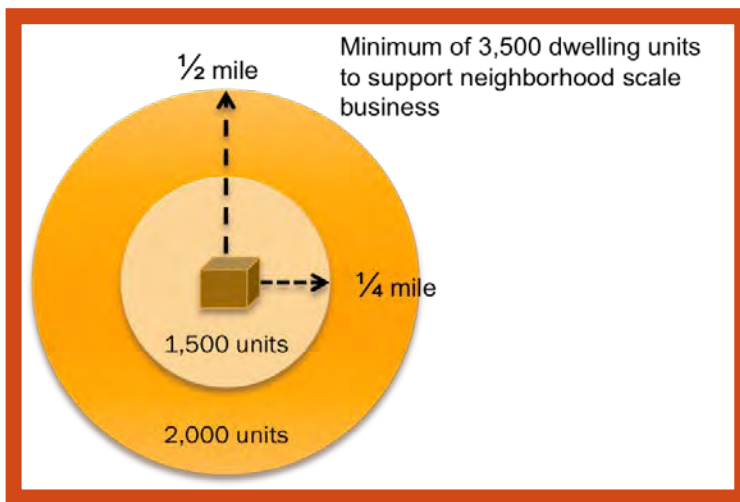


Figure 4 - Residential Units Needed to Support Neighborhood-Serving Businesses

These land-use patterns aren't compatible with suburban low density residential development unless commercial development can be located adjacent to residential uses. Few of the region's suburban neighborhoods allow this. The promise of neighborhood-scale business districts lies in walkable, mixed-use urban areas. These are the hard realities of a community vision calling for neighborhoods that offer more travel choices and less reliance on driving for every trip.

Suburban areas – with their segregation of uses, low densities, and dispersed activities – will remain primarily auto-dependent. While a large segment of our population will continue to want to live in these areas, our demographics are changing and with that, the demand for a different type of lifestyle is emerging.

Population in the region is expected to grow at 1.5% per year over the next 30 years, adding 140,000 new people. This growth is accompanied by rapid demographic changes that will result in a population that is both older and younger than today's community.

Today's residents age 65 or older represent almost 13 percent of Thurston County's population. The number of residents age 65 or older will more than double over the next 30 years, increasing to over 19 percent of the population by 2040. Mid-to-late sixties is traditionally the age when many people begin to reconsider their need for a large home or a residential location that can only be accessed by driving. Anecdotal information suggests

Our demographics are changing and with that, the demand for a different type of lifestyle is emerging

that Thurston County is already losing active seniors who are looking to transition to a walkable, urban lifestyle which does not yet exist in this region but which can be found in Tacoma, Portland, and other places.

In addition, the so-called "Millennial Generation," born between 1982 and 2003, are the single largest segment of Thurston County's population today. More than one in four people are in this demographic group. Ranging in age from their mid-teens to early 30's, the Millennial Generation is demonstrating a stronger preference for urban lifestyles than any generation since the 1940s.

These demographics, supported by a market analysis, indicate that when this region emerges from the current recession there will be pent-up demand for smaller homes, condominiums and townhomes. These residents will want to live close to urban services and attractive destinations, in areas that offer viable transportation choices including frequent transit services and walkable destinations. Our existing urban corridors offer an opportunity to meet these needs.

Challenges to Achieving Urban Densities

Development patterns of the last fifty years leave this area ill-prepared to provide housing choices for this growing and changing population. Yet opportunities exist to retrofit existing under-utilized transportation corridors where the community has already heavily invested in frequent transit service and other urban services. This is the great potential that corridor redevelopment offers.

In examining the impediments to achieving this vision, the Task Force convened a panel of local developers, lenders, real estate professionals and investors to discuss the challenges and opportunities for mixed-use development in the northern urban growth area encompassing Lacey, Olympia and Tumwater. The panel observed that achieving this potential faces substantial barriers.



- **High-quality mixed-use infill and redevelopment is a high demand specialty niche within the development industry.** There is only so much investment capital for this type of product and few developers with the expertise to deliver quality projects. Good developers have many attractive communities vying for their business. Throughout Washington, the Pacific Northwest, and the nation, this type of development is a greatly sought after alternative to traditional suburban residential products. Good developers have many choices about where to make this type of investment.
- **Limited investment capital is hampered by national financial criteria that rate the Thurston region as a secondary lending market** (Seattle-Tacoma is a primary lending market). This means that projects have to surpass standard risk assessments before developers can get financing to build in this market, or have some other kind of assurance from the community that these projects are a good financial investment.

- **Rents are lower in the Thurston region than in the central Puget Sound.** Though land prices are also lower in this region, the majority of development costs – such as labor, materials, environmental remediation, and insurance – are fixed. And they are much higher for mixed-use infill and redevelopment than they are for traditional suburban residential development. The region’s lower rents make it particularly difficult to absorb risk and recoup costs for these higher-cost projects on timelines acceptable by lending agencies.
- **These are complicated projects to accommodate in the traditional zoning and development review process.** Most development codes reflect decades’ worth of experience with standard suburban residential development; review processes are not set up to handle the complexity of mixed-use projects. Parking standards suitable for suburban uses can kill an urban project, overly-prescriptive zoning can undermine an otherwise desirable project, impact fees structures are not set up to accommodate transit-oriented projects, and inadequate design guidelines can sour a community on high-density infill. New tools are needed in the development review toolboxes of local jurisdictions to facilitate this type of development.
- **It is difficult to amass parcels large enough to accommodate an economically viable project.** Unlike outlying development on large parcels of vacant suburban land, infill and redevelopment projects must contend with small parcels of land, fragmented city blocks, and environmental uncertainty associated with previous uses of the land.
- **Thurston County residents have very little experience with truly urban-style development in this region.** Citizens wary of change and frustrated by various aspects of previous development projects can stall projects, increasing risk and uncertainty in addition to cost. Often “high density” is blamed for poor or incompatible design requirements, making it that much more difficult to introduce appropriately-scaled higher-density products into or adjacent to existing neighborhoods.

The reality is that growth is often looked upon as a liability. Yet, if this region is to create more opportunities for walk / bike / transit-oriented lifestyles – if people are to have a choice of urban as well as suburban and rural residential choices in the future – then growth can be viewed as a resource that will enable the retrofit of some under-utilized land-use patterns into more sustainable, people-oriented places that offer a truly urban lifestyle. This is not just good for urban centers and corridors, it supports close-in suburban neighborhoods and helps preserve rural lands and lifestyles.

Recommendation Framework

Efforts to stimulate corridor investment should strive to achieve important objectives inherent in locally and regionally adopted plans, and central to these Task Force recommendations. The vibrant, Corridor Districts envisioned in this process will:

- Orient around people, not cars.
- Foster increased residential density and diversity.
- Grow neighborhood commercial activity.
- Support the community's environmental ethic.
- Reflect jurisdictions' similarities and respect their differences.
- Promote inter-governmental coordination and innovation.



The priority focus corridor extends from Lacey to Tumwater along Martin Way/ 4th Avenue/ State Avenue/ Capitol Way/ Capitol Boulevard; secondary consideration is given to the Harrison Avenue – West Olympia and Pacific Avenue corridors.

The priority corridor is the old state highway route that preceded construction of Interstate 5. It connects the city centers of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater. It is served by 15-minute transit service and is a logical corridor if more intensive, urban transit services like street cars or bus rapid transit are introduced in the future.

Figure 5, on the next page, provides greater detail on this priority corridor. Also depicted on the map are the first three candidate Corridor Districts identified by local jurisdictions. They include Tumwater's Brewery District, Olympia's Martin Way District, and Lacey's Woodland District. Also shown is the Capitol Boulevard Study Area, a corridor segment currently undergoing strategic analysis by Tumwater.

This emphasis on corridors and Corridor Districts is consistent with previous and on-going efforts, providing a new approach to understanding and solving problems that have handicapped previous efforts at corridor development over the last twenty years.

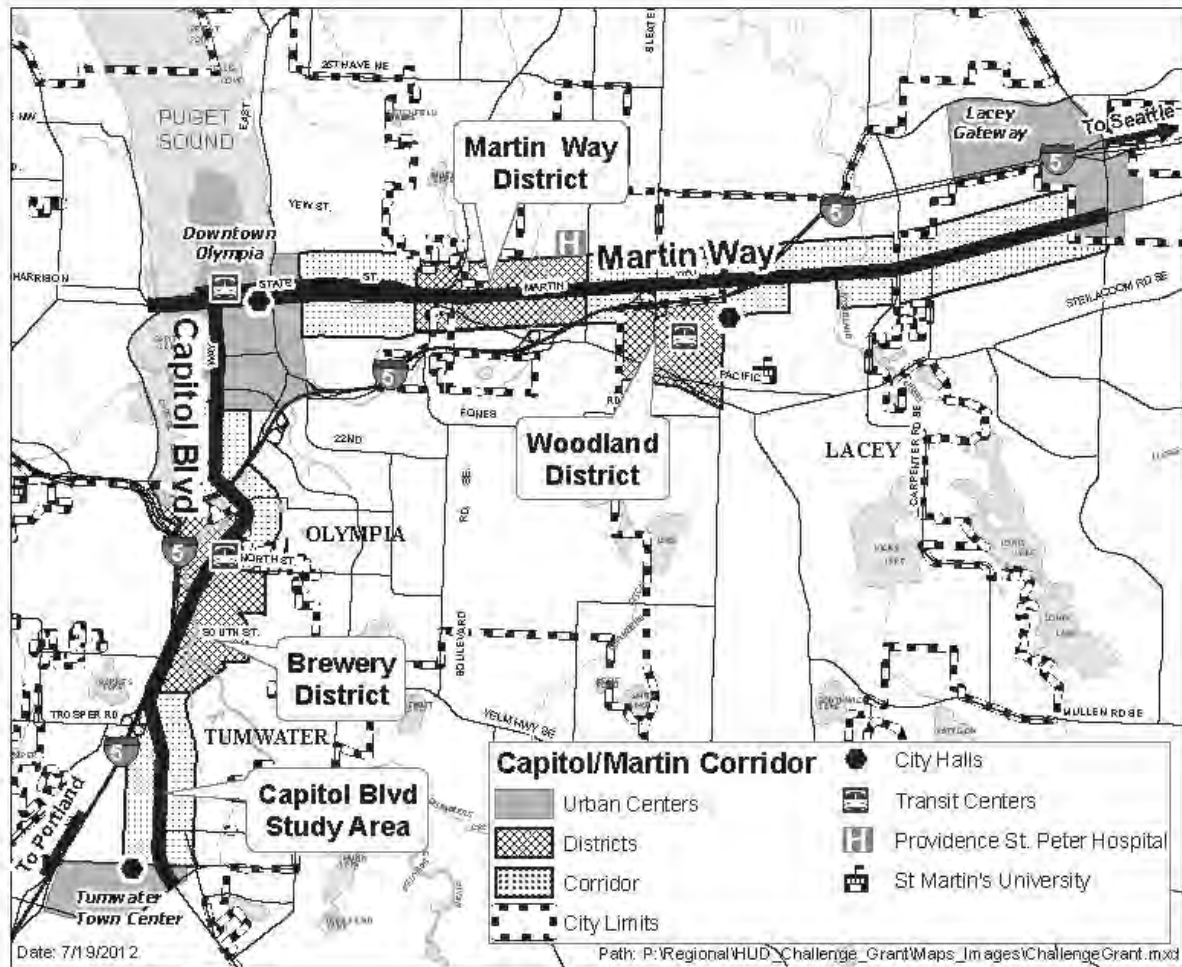


Figure 5 - Priority Corridor in UCTF Recommendation with Three Candidate District Corridors

Alignment with Regional Efforts

Collaboration on corridor issues is nothing new for this region. From the earliest days of growth management planning when high-density corridors were singled out for focused treatment, local and regional efforts have been directed to these corridors.

- The 1993 Regional Transportation Plan identified these as “high density corridors” along which high frequency transit should run, supported by high density, mixed-use development.
- Designation of these key arterials in 1998 as ‘strategy corridors’ in the Regional Transportation Plan exempted them from concurrency standards requiring ever wider streets that undermine broader community objectives. It recognized that growth should be directed to these corridors instead of outlying areas since this

is where transit, walking, and biking will be the most effective alternatives to driving in the future.

- Transportation considerations were reinforced with local Comprehensive Plan policies calling for high-density, mixed-use development throughout the corridors, and restricting auto-oriented businesses in these areas.
- The 2009 Olympia Transportation Mobility Strategy laid out specific steps for a multi-modal approach to transportation, planning and development in the City, including focus on a Community Transit Network that emphasizes the importance of supporting good transit service with sound land-use policy and strategic transportation investments in key corridors.
- Lacey is leading efforts to understand and apply the potential application of Form Based Code as a means of reducing barriers to achieving mixed-use infill and redevelopment along the corridor.
- Tumwater is intensely focused on revitalizing the old brewery site and fostering land-use investments on Capitol Boulevard that are consistent with regional transportation efforts. This early focus will generate useful insights for other corridor projects.
- Intercity Transit route planning placed a priority on this corridor, which today boasts 15-minute service frequency throughout the day. If this region will ever have local, high capacity transit service, this corridor would be a priority candidate for that service.
- TRPC's 'Smart Corridors' project brings together Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, Thurston County, Intercity Transit, and the Washington State Department of Transportation to work on signal and technology upgrades that will improve multi-modal mobility and system efficiency within the existing corridor right-of-way. 'Smart Corridors' emphasis is on the same corridor on which UCTF efforts focused.
- Work of the Urban Corridors Task Force is a cornerstone of the collaborative *Sustainable Thurston* planning effort underway right now. This work enabled TRPC to receive a federal Community Challenge Grant in November 2011 to pursue implementation measures in three pilot Corridor Districts located on the priority corridor and explore the potential for a unified corridor vision.

Work of the Urban Corridors Task Force reveals the importance of each of these efforts, which are consistent with and supported by the recommendations included in this paper. While this work is purposefully urban in nature, lessons and insights gained from this effort will have application in the region's smaller communities.

Rethinking Redevelopment

The status quo is one in which public sector regulations combine with private sector investments to result in a market-driven pattern of community development. This public regulation combined with private sector investment has typically resulted in moderate density single-family suburban residential development served by medium-to-large suburban commercial centers and several large office complexes.

As described earlier, most of this residential development has occurred around the margins of the metropolitan area, at the fringes of the cities and in the unincorporated urban growth areas. The scale of new retail is geared towards citywide or regional markets more so than neighborhood scale markets. Little mixed-use infill or redevelopment along the corridor has resulted from this market-driven approach to community development as it is currently practiced.

Government can help reduce the risk associated with infill and redevelopment, offset private sector costs commensurate with community benefits generated, and deliberately recruit businesses and investments.

There are additional roles that government can pursue, roles that entail more active participation in the community development process than simply regulatory enforcement. As an active participant in the community development process, government can help reduce the risk associated with infill and redevelopment, offset private sector costs commensurate with community benefits generated, and deliberately recruit businesses and investments. The Urban Corridors Task Force recommends a selection of these measures as a way of fostering the livable, transit-oriented communities envisioned in local plans.

Recommended Measures

Recommended measures range in complexity, risk, and benefit from modest to mighty. At one end of the spectrum are measures that enhance understanding of underlying conditions while leaving the status quo intact. At the other end are measures that redefine the framework within which community development takes place, deploying new tools and forming new partnerships. Recommended measures include bold and unconventional strategies.

This next section outlines a dozen recommended measures that support the strategic direction embodied in local and regional visions and plans. It provides a brief description of the measure and the value of that measure in achieving corridor objectives. This is followed by a summary of anticipated roles and responsibilities.

It must be noted that while these measures are presented from least-complex to most-complex, they are not sequential in order of implementation. Several measures can and should be pursued concurrently.

Modest Measures

*Conduct Inventory of Properties – Sponsor “Community Development 101” –
Augment Land-use Analysis – Identify Priority Investment Locations*

Modest measures are those that provide critical understanding of the magnitude of issues and opportunities. Though they do little to change the status quo, they are useful when trying to think more strategically about how to approach redevelopment. These measures are relatively straightforward, should be applied throughout the corridor, and entail little political risk.

1. Conduct Inventory of Properties

- a. Vacant Commercial Property Inventory – Key characteristics include: building size; parcel size; type of commercial property (A or C); location; ownership; duration of vacancy; marketed lease rate; building value and land value.

Corridor Value: *This inventory contributes to an understanding of the magnitude of issues associated with vacancy absorption in the commercial market that must occur before the market will respond with new commercial investments*

- b. Public-Ownership Property Inventory – Key characteristics include: public agency ownership; parcel size; parcel use; if built, building size and occupancy status; location.

Corridor Value: *This inventory provides a clear picture of potential community assets in public ownership as well as the potential for subsequent public-to-public land swaps for use in public-private partnership opportunities.*

2. Sponsor “Community Development 101”

- a. The Mechanics of Community Development – Develop an outreach program, modified as appropriate to reach diverse audiences including elected officials, agency staff, advisory boards, and the general public. This education element should address topics to include: development finance, both public and private; the importance of design; the legal framework within which land development occurs; and the array of tools available to achieve specific outcomes.

Corridor Value: *Lack of understanding about the nature of community development – the partners, the role of the partners, the factors that are within and outside of government control – undermines community acceptance of development projects that support established values and objectives and hinders local jurisdiction efforts.*

- b. Engage Development Community – Formalize an on-going communication strategy with private sector representatives. This may take the form of quarterly or biannual meetings to share information, data, and analysis, and to keep the development community apprised of progress in corridor activities.

Corridor Value: *Policy makers have few venues to communicate and work with those responsible for the financing, marketing, or building of the community described in their Comprehensive Plans. On-going communication helps to establish working relationships and understanding that will be useful in resolving complicated corridor development issues when they arise.*

3. Augment Land-use Analysis

- a. Land-to-Building Value Analysis – Supplement the TRPC long-term commercial market study with an analysis of commercial land value compared to commercial building value for corridor properties.

Corridor Value: *These data will provide insights into potential “low-hanging fruit,” specific locations where redevelopment interest may be higher due to low building values relative to high land values.*

- b. Neighborhood Business District Analysis – Evaluate existing capacity of select areas to support neighborhood business districts and develop a clearer understanding of opportunities and challenges associated with potential priority Corridor Districts. Considerations should include ¼ mile and ½ mile radii estimations of household characteristics, non-residential land-uses, transportation system characteristics, and existing development regulations regarding parking requirements and mitigation measures.

Corridor Value: *This information can substantially inform final decisions about priority districts under consideration by documenting the degree to which existing conditions support mixed-use, walkable environs and the magnitude and nature of deficiencies facing each potential district.*

4. Identify Priority Investment Locations within the Corridors

- a. Select a very small number of Corridor Districts in which urban infill and redevelopment is of highest priority for targeted, coordinated investment efforts.

Corridor Value: *Clarity on priority areas for infill and redevelopment will help public agencies to make more strategic infrastructure investments and policy changes, and provide greater certainty to private investors.*

Moderate Measures

Develop Strategic Investment Strategy – Refine Regulatory Tools – Apply Impact Fees Strategically – Develop Land Acquisition Strategy – Evaluate Urban Growth Boundaries

Moderate measures are those that use existing tools within the existing framework to shift market dynamics somewhat from the status quo, with government actively working to level the playing field between corridor redevelopment and greenfield development on the urban fringe. These measures are more complex to implement, may be considered at either the corridor or district level, and entail a moderate degree of political risk.

5. Develop Strategic Investment Strategy

Innovative finance is one way in which government can reduce the costs associated with infill and redevelopment to attract the kind of investment whose long-term benefits exceed the government ante in the project. Investment vehicles may include Washington’s Community Renewal Law [35.81 RCW], Community Revitalization Financing [39.89 RCW], Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program [83.73 RCW], Local Revitalization Financing [39.104 RCW], and Local Improvement Districts [35.43 RCW].

- a. Critical Infrastructure Investment Strategy – Identify priority infrastructure deficiencies in target districts and develop an investment strategy that leverages public resources to attract private investment in desired project types. This includes transportation, as well as sewer, water, and other infrastructure needs.

Corridor Value: *Addressing outstanding infrastructure issues is a form of cost-sharing that can help overcome lending bias associated with project financing in a secondary market such as the Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater area by demonstrating “skin-in-the-game” commitment to project success.*

- b. Place-making Investment Strategy – Evaluate the priority public amenities that are lacking in target districts and develop an investment strategy to complete these over time. These are the investments that help give a place its character, that create the unique amenities and spaces that make a place memorable. People looking for urban lifestyles expect a vibrant, urban experience, not just a home on the corridor. Plazas, gathering places, well-designed streets and sidewalks, and civic features are all examples of the kinds of public amenities that help to create a memorable and attractive place.

***Corridor Value:** Public investment in the public realm is a means of cost-sharing, and demonstrates to potential private investors that a city understands the importance of the place itself in making corridor redevelopment successful.*

6. Refine Regulatory Tools

- a. Explore Form Based Code – This type of zoning tool is increasingly widespread in communities striving to achieve mixed-use development that is compatible with existing neighborhood character, which provides smooth transitions between low and intense uses such as would be found over time on a corridor, supports transit and walking, and includes a range of housing affordability. Instead of regulating land-use activities, Form Based Code regulates the built environment, how it functions, and a high-quality interface between the public and private realms. Because it doesn't dictate specific land-use activities it is more responsive to changing market demands. As such, it is often considered essential to getting the mix of uses called for in urban areas but which traditional zoning usually inhibits. Accounts from across the country indicate that Form Based Code or some hybrid is easier to administer, easier for the public to understand, and more responsive to market conditions. Select target districts in the corridor provide an opportunity to test the effectiveness of zoning tools such as this.

***Corridor Value:** Zoning tools that favor mixed-use development and which emphasize the relation between the built environment and the public realm support the corridor vision. Some communities with zoning codes dating back 40 years or more are finding it easier to simply replace the outdated codes with Form Based Code rather than to keep patching them, which results in cumbersome and difficult to understand rules, the interpretation and application of which are frequently challenged in court. Outdated and sometimes conflicting regulatory requirements can undermine an otherwise desirable private investment.*

- b. **Planned Action EIS** - Develop binding district zoning that may include a form-based code overlay and design details, determine mitigations, and conduct a complete environmental impact statement for the target district. This strategy clearly spells out land-use and transportation expectations down to the design detail, lays out the mitigations that will be required, and reveals up front what environmental issues may be present as well as any shared opportunities for addressing those issues. While neither fast nor inexpensive, a well-executed planned action EIS removes uncertainty for the investor, informs government expectations about the attractiveness of a potential site, and engages the public at a constructive time in the sub-area planning process. It can serve as the basis for long-term entitlements for projects requiring many years to build out.

***Corridor Value:** A planned action EIS is one way in which government can reduce the risk associated with infill and redevelopment, in addition to establishing objective expectations for both public and private sector interests.*

- c. **Streamline Development Review Process in Corridor** – Expediting the permit process for projects that support corridor objectives and are consistent with adopted public policy is one way to lower development costs without incurring a financial burden by the local agency. This may include changing from a council-based review process to an administrative review process, streamlining the appeals process, and giving priority review to corridor proposals.

***Corridor Value:** Reducing the level of uncertainty for investors and minimizing the risk that potential projects become political targets in the public arena are ways in which costs of development in target areas can be lowered.*

7. Apply Impact Fees Strategically

- a. **Impose Fees in Rural Thurston County** – Impose impact fees throughout unincorporated rural Thurston County to more fairly assess the costs of growth on all those who generate impacts and in the process, reduce the urban subsidy for rural growth and the disincentive for urban development. Development locating outside of the Lacey-Olympia-Tumwater urban growth area in rural Thurston County is not subject to impact fees, even though growth in unincorporated areas generates impacts on urban infrastructure and services.

***Corridor Value:** This will reduce the disincentive for urban development by recouping costs of growth wherever that growth occurs.*

- b. Location-Efficiency Differentiation for Residential and Commercial Fees – Evaluate how well existing fees account for location efficiency of residential and commercial development. Residential development locating on premier transit corridors and in compact, mixed-use neighborhoods generates fewer household trips over time than development located off a 15-minute transit corridor or in residential-only neighborhoods. Without consideration for location efficiency, traditional trip generation calculations can impose inflated costs on the developer that increase the financial risk associated with potential corridor investments.

***Corridor Value:** Reflecting the reduced transportation impacts associated with location-efficient development in the structure of impact fees can better align fees with impacts and lessen a disincentive to develop on premier transit corridors and in mixed-use target districts.*

- c. Size-Differentiated Residential Impact Fees - Explore the possibility of basing residential impact fees on the size of dwelling units. Distinguishing only between multi-family and single-family unit types gives no consideration for the size of dwelling units. Smaller dwelling units – such as those that will be needed to accommodate future housing needs and which are desired for corridor development – should generate fewer vehicle trips than large units intended to serve larger households. Determine what data exists to support greater differentiation in fee structures.

***Corridor Value:** Paying the same impact fees to construct small cottage-style dwelling units on urban corridors as are required for large dwelling units in suburban, single-family residential neighborhoods may over-charge infill and redevelopment for the impacts associated with smaller household size, thereby creating a disincentive for this type of development.*

8. Develop Land Acquisition Strategy

- a. Land Swap Strategy - Identify potential public-to-public land swap opportunities and execute those which support policy priorities. Include consideration of all publicly owned land that is underutilized or which could be developed more strategically by a different agency. This includes land owned by cities, county, state, Port of Olympia, Intercity Transit, school districts, etc.

***Corridor Value:** Land swaps enable exchanges between public agencies to achieve multiple objectives, including the potential to reduce both the cost and risk associated with achieving desirable infill and redevelopment.*

- b. Land Aggregation Strategy - Identify and execute potential land aggregation opportunities. Building on the concept of public-to-public land swaps, it is possible for the public sector to amass multiple parcels in a strategic location and then to aggregate them for resale to a private sector development partner.

Corridor Value: *Government can reduce both the cost and risk of private sector investment in corridor infill and redevelopment by facilitating the aggregation of suitably sized parcels in target corridor locations. This demonstrates to lenders that the jurisdiction is serious about its commitment to this type of project and can help offset the higher credit factors associated with a secondary lending market.*

9. Evaluate Urban Growth Boundaries

- a. Prior to the Growth Management Act and adoption of local Comprehensive Plans, cities in the Thurston region maintained short-term and long-term growth boundaries. The intent was to focus infrastructure and development into the closer-in short-term boundaries while reserving capacity for future urban growth in the long-term boundaries. This would concentrate densities to achieve multiple community objectives while at the same time better managing limited public resources to serve the community. When Comprehensive Plans were adopted, all but Yelm replaced short- and long-term boundaries with a single urban growth boundary. Land-use permit data indicate that a large proportion of urban development activity is happening at the fringes of the urban growth area instead of contiguous with existing urban development. This abundance of vacant land on the urban periphery undermines efforts to focus investment into corridor redevelopment, creating a large supply of easily developed urban land far from established urban centers. An evaluation should be made of the potential benefits associated with reinstituting this short-term / long-term boundary concept within the existing urban growth boundaries.

Corridor Value: *If short-term boundaries are still feasible in light of recent growth patterns, they could help make infill and redevelopment more attractive by temporarily constraining supplies of outlying lands for urban-scale development.*

Mighty Measures

Pursue Legislative Agenda – Establish Community Lending Pool – Create Corridor Development Partnership

Mighty measures seek to redefine the framework within which the public sector participates in community development. Deliberate efforts on the part of government to create magnets for neighborhood district investment along the corridor and to be an active player in the development process can overcome many obstacles that hinder infill and redevelopment. These measures are the most complex to implement, are best applied in very carefully defined districts, and entail the highest degree of potential controversy and political risk.

10. Pursue Legislative Agenda

- a. Identify regulatory barriers and potential solutions through the legislative process. Build on the working relationship with the State Capitol Committee and others to rectify policies that create unintended barriers. This may include the terms by which public agencies can swap properties, limitations with existing funding tools, environmental considerations, or other things.

Corridor Value: *Government can reduce both risk and cost of corridor redevelopment by addressing policy barriers that restrict its effective use of tools granted by the legislature.*

11. Establish Community Lending Pool

- a. One way to reduce financial risk for lenders is to share the risk among several partners. Government should work with a group of local investors to create a community lending pool for investments targeted to desired mixed-use development projects in specific district locations.

Corridor Value: *A community lending pool for select projects in target locations would facilitate the lending of credit for those well-conceived projects that support community goals but which are difficult to fund under the terms of national lenders in a secondary market.*

12. Create Corridor Development Partnership

- a. Create a multi-agency Corridor Development Partnership to identify and initiate public-private partnership opportunities, and to work cooperatively in recruiting developers and tenants for target districts. This would likely be done under the auspices of Public Development Authority statutes [35.21.730 RCW]. There are literally dozens of these special purpose, quasi-municipal corporations in Washington State though there are none in Thurston County.

Corridor Value: *This is the antithesis to the corridor development status quo. A Corridor Development Partnership will not sit back waiting for development to occur; it will help create the conditions that attract further investments in corridor infill and redevelopment. Such a partnership would be a nimble and strategic liaison between the cities and the development community, facilitating the kind of development envisioned for corridor redevelopment.*

Roles and Responsibilities

Strategies included in this recommendation go far beyond the capacity of a TRPC policy maker subcommittee to carry out. In particular, the approach for achieving measures 5 – 12 depends upon whether a coalition of jurisdictions is approaching corridor activities or whether each jurisdiction is pursuing efforts independent of the others. This recommendation envisions a coordinated, regional approach involving the corridor cities, Thurston County, Intercity Transit, the Port of Olympia, school districts, and other public and private entities, though the decision on that rests with each of the individual stakeholders. Many of the measures included in this recommendation can only be done through local initiative, whether in coordination with other stakeholders or independently.

Similarly, the scale at which the measures will be conducted will vary. Some, such as outreach and education, and certain of the inventories, make sense at the metropolitan area level or corridor level. Others, such as a planned action EIS or investment strategies, are more appropriate at a targeted district level.

Finally, the question of resources is not fully answered in this study effort. In November 2011, TRPC received a federal Community Challenge Grant that will fund several elements included in these measures. Those that are fully or partially funded by the Challenge Grant are indicated. Other measures, such as basic data collection and analysis, are within the scope of the regional transportation work program. However, efforts as far-reaching as creation of a Corridor Development Partnership and strategic public investments will require additional resources to be fully executed.

All of these factors underscore the critical importance of local jurisdiction support. TRPC endorsement of the Urban Corridors Task Force recommendations is important; local jurisdiction and stakeholder endorsement is essential.

Following is a summary and a high level assessment of responsibilities, cost, and potential timeframe for pursuing each measure based on a coordinated, inter-jurisdictional approach to implementation. This is a first draft implementation plan and

schedule. It begins with preliminary tasks needed to wrap up UCTF work and transition to the implementation phase, and then describes each recommended measure. It will likely evolve over time as feedback is obtained from affected jurisdictions and stakeholder agencies. It is anticipated TRPC will continue to play a lead role in gathering and analyzing data and coordinating and reporting on progress in implementation of this plan. Individual jurisdictions have implementing authority in several areas and will need to take the lead for those tasks. Once the Corridor Development Partnership is formed, overall coordination and advocacy would likely become one of their responsibilities.

Summary of Recommended Corridor Measures

ID	Measure	When	Scale	Cost	By Whom	Notes
Pre	Conduct Outreach to TPB, TRPC, and local jurisdictions to Secure Endorsements and Support for Recommendations	4 th Qtr 2011 – 2 nd Qtr 2012	Metropolitan area	\$	TPB and TRPC members with support from TRPC staff	Endorsements from TPB and TRPC are prerequisite to local support. Buy-in from Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater is essential to the success of a coordinated approach. Seek endorsement from each city and the County.
Pre	Reach Out to Other Partners to Secure Endorsements and Support for Recommendations	2 nd Qtr 2012	Metropolitan area	\$	TPB and TRPC members with support from TRPC staff	Engage Intercity Transit, Port of Olympia, EDC, GA, school districts, etc, to inform of direction and solicit support and involvement. Solicit endorsements from key stakeholders. This, in combination with endorsements from local jurisdictions, will be the basis of the corridor partnership.
1a	Vacant Commercial Property Inventory	1 st Qtr 2012	Corridor-wide	\$	TRPC staff, with support from commercial real estate industry	Can be done within existing regional work program. Report out to regional and local policy makers, other stakeholders and partners.
1b	Public-Ownership Property Inventory	3 rd Qtr 2012	Metropolitan area	\$	TRPC staff	Can be done within existing regional work program. Report out to regional and local policy makers, other stakeholders and partners.

Summary of Recommended Corridor Measures

ID	Measure	When	Scale	Cost	By Whom	Notes
2a	"Community Development 101" – The Mechanics of Community Development	Initiate in 2 nd Qtr 2012	Metropolitan area	\$	TRPC staff will develop with implementation a shared responsibility of corridor partners	Needs outside support to develop materials and messages suitably tailored to different audiences, including business community and general public. Multi-media messaging. This will likely be an on-going program. <i>Funding support from TRPC Challenge Grant.</i>
2b	Engage Development Community	Initiate in 1 st Qtr 2012	Metropolitan area	\$	TPB and TRPC policy makers, with support from TRPC staff	Engage development community in topics of mutual interest as initial step in establishing longer-term relationship. 1 st meeting includes UCTF recommendations and findings of the commercial and housing market studies. 2 nd meeting to include findings of commercial property vacancy and land-use analyses (Measures 1a and 1b).
3a	Land-to-Building Value Analysis	2 nd Qtr 2012	Corridor-wide	\$	TRPC staff	Has value in defining priority districts. <i>Funding support from TRPC Challenge Grant.</i>
3b	Neighborhood Business District Analysis	1 st – 2 nd Qtr 2012	Select districts	\$	TRPC staff	Apply factors researched by John Owen to select districts. <i>Funding support from TRPC Challenge Grant.</i>

Summary of Recommended Corridor Measures

ID	Measure	When	Scale	Cost	By Whom	Notes
4a	Identify Priority Investment Locations within the Corridors	4 th Qtr 2012	Corridor wide	\$	Each local jurisdiction	Informed by previous data analyses. Initial locations identified by the jurisdictions. After formation of the Partnership, subsequent locations would be identified in consultation with the Corridor Development Partnership.
5a	Critical Infrastructure Investment Strategy	2 nd Qtr 2013	1 – 3 priority districts	\$	Each local jurisdiction	Includes assessment of district infrastructure ability to support desired uses and viable finance strategies. Does not include the cost of investments. <i>Funding support from TRPC Challenge Grant.</i>
5b	Place-Making Investment Strategy	2 nd Qtr 2013	1 – 3 priority districts	\$	Each local jurisdiction in consultation with the Corridor Development Partnership.	Includes assessment of amenities and other elements of the public realm for select districts. Does not include the cost of investments. <i>Funding support from TRPC Challenge Grant.</i>
6a	Explore Form Based Code	2 nd Qtr 2012 – 1 st Qtr 2013	District level	\$\$	Lacey and Tumwater	May be applied as an overlay or replacement code for a select number of districts, or may be applied corridor-wide. <i>Funding support from TRPC Challenge Grant.</i>
6b	Planned Action EIS	TBD	1 or 2 priority districts	\$\$\$	Jurisdiction staff & policy makers with consultant support	This will take longer than a year and cost ± \$250,000 per district. Actual time frame and appropriate district is yet to be determined.

Summary of Recommended Corridor Measures

ID	Measure	When	Scale	Cost	By Whom	Notes
6c	Streamline Development Review Process in Corridor	2013	Corridor or district level	\$	Each local jurisdiction in consultation with the Corridor Development Partnership	This work will be informed by the efforts of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater in their sub-area planning work through the TRPC Challenge Grant. Details to be determined based on that work.
7a	Impose Impact Fees in Unincorporated County	2012	Unincorporated Thurston County	\$	Thurston County	Efforts are underway to establish unincorporated area impact fees.
7b	Location-Efficiency Differentiation for Residential and Commercial Impact Fees	2013	Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater	\$	TRPC staff to provide basic research support to Corridor Development Partnership and local jurisdictions	Two step effort entails evaluation as prerequisite for determining implementation measures. Logical multi-jurisdictional effort.
7c	Size-Differentiated Residential Impact Fees	2013	Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater	\$	TRPC staff to provide basic research support to Corridor Development Partnership and local jurisdictions	Two step effort entails evaluation as prerequisite for determining implementation measures. Logical multi-jurisdictional effort.
8a	Land Swap Strategy	2013	Select target district	\$	Corridor Development Partnership in association with all affected public property owners	Goal is to identify and acquire suitable property for redevelopment through public-public land swap. Entails legal and financial elements in addition to policy and planning.

Summary of Recommended Corridor Measures

ID	Measure	When	Scale	Cost	By Whom	Notes
8b	Land Aggregation Strategy	2013	Select target district	\$	Corridor Development Partnership in association with all affected public property owners	Goal is to amass a suitably sized parcel in a target district as public ante for a partnership project. Entails legal and financial elements in addition to policy and planning.
9a	Evaluate Urban Growth Boundaries	2014	Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater	\$	Local jurisdictions with data support from TRPC staff	This assumes only the analysis and related discussion associated with a potential reinstitution of short- and long-term boundaries. If such a change is warranted, additional time and cost will be incurred. This work will be informed by findings of the Sustainable Thurston Task Force and resulting land-use recommendations.
10a	Pursue Legislative Agenda	As needed	District, corridor, jurisdiction	\$	Local and regional entities	Need and topic dependent upon issues encountered in pursuit of corridor strategy.
11a	Establish Community Lending Pool	2014	District or Corridor	\$	Corridor Development Partnership in partnership with local lenders	Entails high degree of legal complexity and coordination.

Summary of Recommended Corridor Measures

ID	Measure	When	Scale	Cost	By Whom	Notes
12a	Create a Corridor Development Partnership	Initiate in 2012	Corridor	\$ - \$\$\$	Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater policy makers, with other public and private stakeholders as appropriate	Entails background research, extensive legal complexity, and inter-local coordination. Efforts should begin in 2012 with core partners to begin exploring potential organizing framework, logistics, and interagency agreements. Despite its complexity, this measure is fundamental to many of the modest and moderate measures. <i>Funding support from TRPC Challenge Grant.</i>

Notes:

\$ = Low cost / \$5,000 - \$25,000

\$\$ = Moderate cost / \$25,000 - \$100,000

\$\$\$ = High cost / > \$100,000

This table assumes a coordinated, multi-jurisdictional approach to implementing corridor measures. Who is actually responsible for conducting the work and the timeframe in which it will be done depends in large measure on how the corridor partners ultimately decide to proceed. Most measures in this recommendation can be approached by either a single jurisdiction or as a coordinated multi-jurisdictional effort. Assuming the latter, an early role of a Corridor Development Partnership will be to provide a more substantive scope and time frame to the recommended measures.

Implementation Considerations

In discussing its recommendations, Urban Corridors Task Force members recognize the logic of starting with easier, modest strategies and working through to the more complex, mighty measures. **However, a sense of urgency suggests effort should begin as soon as possible to establish a Corridor Development Partnership.** That entity would then be engaged in identifying priority districts and the appropriate measures to pursue, as well as working those measures through local jurisdiction processes as appropriate. Task Force members understand that the success of Corridor Development Partnership activities will rest in large part with the successful implementation of modest and moderate measures. Involvement of the Partnership in the execution of those measures will help ensure their success.

Establishing a Corridor Development Partnership is a significant undertaking requiring the support and commitment of partner jurisdictions; it is far beyond the scope of the Urban Corridors Task Force. Champions exist within the Task Force but Commission success will require thoughtful consideration and participation by the governing bodies of each jurisdiction. Task Force leadership is necessary to secure local support for such an endeavor.

The process to gauge support for a Corridor Development Partnership and work out the logistics associated with its formation can occur concurrently with several of the data collection efforts and “Community Development 101” outreach. However, identification of one or more priority investment districts hinges on the interest of jurisdictions to participate in a collaborative commission structure and approach towards corridor renewal. If there is interest, identifying priority districts would appropriately be a decision of the fledgling Corridor Development Partnership. If there is insufficient interest in a collective approach, then each jurisdiction can determine its own priority district(s) in its own way.

Until it is known what the level of support is from local jurisdictions for the UCTF Corridor Development Partnership concept and the rest of the recommended measures, it is difficult to develop a realistic implementation strategy. Data collection, land-use analysis, and some outreach to both the general public and the development community can be conducted. However, details on some major messages will depend on the priority local agencies give to corridor infill and redevelopment objectives. For that reason, most elements of an attainment strategy beyond the basic data collection and analysis should be done in consultation and coordination with local jurisdictions.

Next Steps

Urban Corridors Task Force recommendations were presented to the Transportation Policy Board in December and Thurston Regional Planning Council in January for review and endorsement. Both bodies endorsed these recommendations as presented.

Over the ensuing months, briefings were held with the cities of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater, and with the Board of County Commissioners. Briefings included the Lacey and Tumwater planning commissions.

All four municipalities expressed interest in working together to pursue these recommendations as appropriate. They also expressed interest in exploring the possibilities inherent in the Corridor Development Partnership. Many questions remain to be answered about how such a partnership would work; many concerns need to be addressed.

In June the Task Force will reconvene to identify the best way to proceed with the Partnership and with implementation of these recommendations.

Many of the strategies included on this list require active participation on the part of local jurisdictions; most of the measures cannot be accomplished by any standing sub-committee of TRPC absent that local support. Different strategies will have different financial, legal, policy, and logistical implications for different jurisdictions. Sufficient time for local consideration and discussion is needed to gain support and buy-in, particularly of the more ambitious measures.

Conclusion

The Urban Corridors Task Force convened with a mission of identifying measures that will enable jurisdictions to better achieve transit-supportive mixed-use development in key corridors. The work of the Task Force progressed from a sweeping view of the entire metropolitan area – its corridors and its activity centers – to a sharp focus on strategies for a specific, high-quality regional transit corridor.

The measures included in this recommendation are bold and far-reaching. They do not shy away from politically risky or controversial topics, and several may be unpopular. Few will be easy or inexpensive, but all will require strong regional cooperation.

The measures in this recommendation result from objective evaluation of long running trends, consideration of factors beyond simple policy statements and visions, and reasoned discussion. Collectively they have the potential to reshape market forces in the Thurston region, to attract investment in residential and mixed-use development into urban corridors as envisioned. Their accomplishment will be no small feat, reflecting a singular combination of vision, political leadership, public/private partnerships, and courage.

In Appreciation

The work of the Urban Corridors Task Force was enhanced through the generous contribution of time and expertise from a panel of local community development experts:

David Brubaker, Redevelopment Consultants, LLC

Steve Cooper, Orca Construction

Tim Dowling, West Coast Bank

Tom Fitzsimmons, Lorig Associates

Mark Furman, Heritage Bank

Mark Kitabayashi, Windermere Realty

Glenn Wells, Vine Street Group

Terry Wilson, Greene Realty

While the insights of these private sector representatives helped to inform their decisions, the recommendations of the Urban Corridors Task Force were theirs alone.

A copy of the meeting materials and summary from this August 2011 workshop can be found on-line at <http://www.trpc.org/regionalplanning/landuse/Pages/UCTF-Aug30,2011PresentationMaterials.aspx>

Developers tread a delicate path. They are agents of change, operating between the regulations – and desires – of local jurisdictions and the demands of the marketplace, and they must satisfy both. That isn't always easy, and it's rarely popular. (Witold Rybczynski, "Last Harvest")

Urban Corridors Task Force Information

The Urban Corridors Task Force was a joint subcommittee of the Thurston Regional Planning Council and its Transportation Policy Board. Between November 2009 and November 2011, the Task Force worked to establish an objective understanding of background conditions along the region's key urban corridors, identify and understand barriers to achieving adopted land-use visions, and identify potential opportunities for addressing those barriers. Task Force members looked at the relationship between transportation and land-use in these corridors, and worked to understand the market factors that influence the viability of infill and redevelopment projects in this region.

The recommendations presented in this report are the culmination of that work.



Urban Corridors Task Force

<i>City of Lacey</i>	<i>Virgil Clarkson, Andy Ryder</i>
<i>City of Olympia</i>	<i>Stephen Buxbaum, Doug Mah</i>
<i>City of Tumwater</i>	<i>Pete Kmet (Chair)</i>
<i>Thurston County</i>	<i>Sandra Romero (Vice-Chair)</i>
<i>Intercity Transit</i>	<i>Ed Hildreth</i>
<i>North Thurston Public Schools</i>	<i>Mike Laverty, Chuck Namit</i>
<i>TPB Citizen Representatives</i>	<i>Mike Beehler, Jackie Barrett-Sharar</i>
<i>TPB Business Representatives</i>	<i>Doug DeForest, Renée Sunde</i>

Materials, white papers, presentations, and resource materials used by the Urban Corridors Task Force throughout its work can be found on the TRPC website at <http://www.trpc.org/regionalplanning/landuse/Pages/uctf.aspx>

For more information or to schedule a briefing, please contact Thera Black – 360.956.7575 / blackvt@trpc.org
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