

OMSI - Clinton: A Corridor for Invention and Innovation



June 14, 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 1- Context and Opportunity
Page 2- Existing Conditions
Page 3- Design Principles
Page 4- Recommendations
Page 5- Connectivity
Page 7- Character Areas
Page 8- Map and Diagram
Page 9- Focus Area #1
Page 11- Focus Area #2
Page 13- Focus Area #3
Page 15- Focus Area #4
Page 17- Focus Area #5
Back Cover- Case Studies and Acknowledgements

CONTEXT

The Central Eastside Industrial District (CEID) is located mostly in the southeast quadrant of Portland, bordering the east bank of the Willamette River. This area is home to one of Portland's industrial sanctuaries, which are in the Comprehensive Plan to "encourage the growth of industrial activities in the city by preserving industrial land primarily for manufacturing."

Six categories of use are zoned in industrial sanctuaries: industrial service, manufacturing and production, railroad yards, warehouse and freight movement, waste related and wholesale sales.

In these areas, retail, community service and office spaces are allowed when they support the industrial character of the area, meaning such uses will not interfere with industrial use and will support industrial workers.

These requirements create a unique and complex set of constraints for the development of the area around the two new stations at OMSI and Clinton Street.

By adding the Portland-Milwaukie MAX line, the region has elected to stimulate development in southeast Portland. The CEID is an area with a particularly rich identity and its opportunities for development are varied, creating spaces that are ideal for exercises in tactical urbanism, which emphasizes flexible use and experimentation with urban space.

The constraints of the industrial sanctuary create a unique district in Portland where, with the help of a few anchor spaces, people will discover something new each time they visit. Development around the new MAX line will create a walkable destination where people of all ages can spend an entire day enjoying a variety of activities.



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THE OPPORTUNITY

This project focuses on developing a vision for the corridor between two new MAX light rail transit stations at OMSI and Clinton Street, which are part of the Portland-Milwaukie Light Rail (PMLR) project, connecting downtown Portland with north Clackamas County via southeast Portland.

This vision must be created with respect to the industrial

sanctuary that flanks this stretch of light rail corridor to the west and the residential and light industry to the east.

This document is the product of a 2013 urban design workshop at Portland State University.

The project builds upon three previous urban design workshops that focused on the Clinton station specifically and in conjunction with the Rhine station further south.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

A very noticeable characteristic of this area is that it is not immediately identifiable as a cohesive realm. It is, in fact, several areas disconnected in their uses: light industrial, creative arts, housing, commercial, and entertainment. Transportation in the area is also disjointed, mixing freight with bike paths and automobile thoroughfares, but very little pedestrian traffic.



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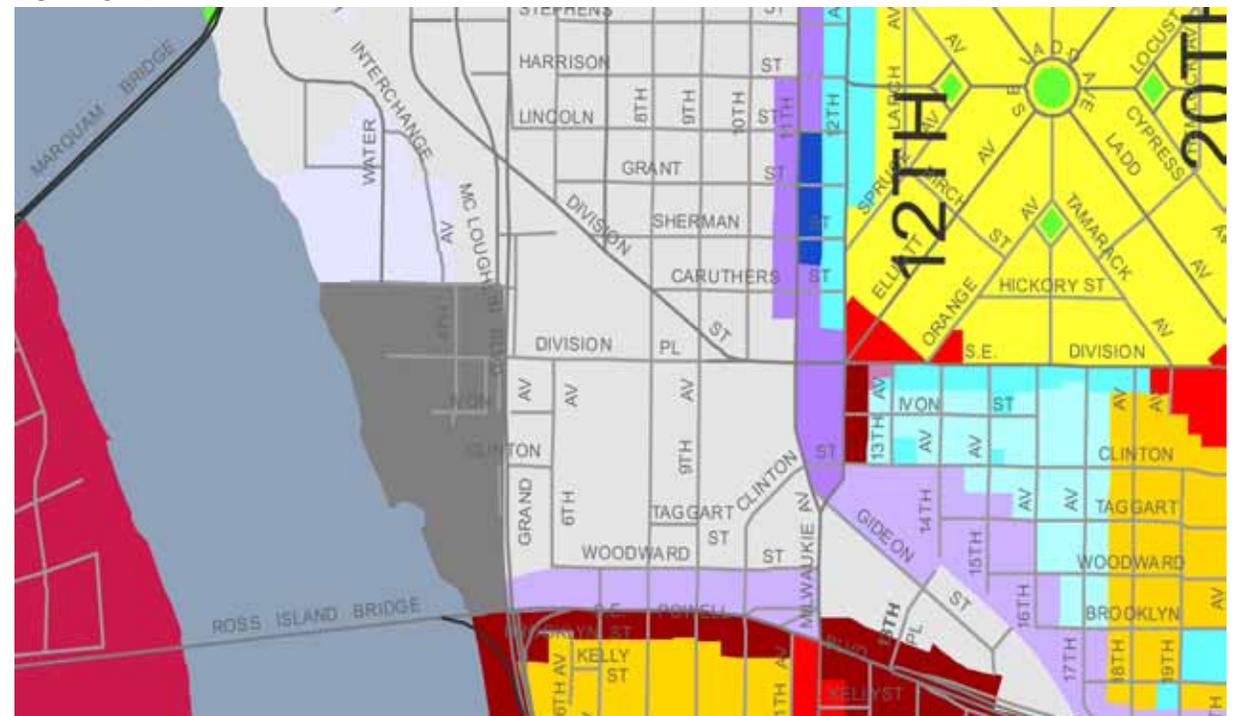


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ZONING MAP



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DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Improve Bicycle and Pedestrian Connectivity

While motorized transportation has heavily developed north-south connections, the area provides an opportunity to create stronger east-west connections that are pedestrian and bike-oriented. In particular, ecological infrastructure, such as street trees and bioswales, should be used as a wayfinding tool to emphasize the routes people should use. Tree canopy, conspicuously absent in the area, will help them read and navigate the corridor.

Treat Area Between and Around Stations as Destinations

The area between and around these MAX stations should be treated as a destination that attracts people of all ages to the area for a variety of reasons and encourages them to stay for several hours. Such development, if done in a thoughtful manner, will increase legibility of the area, improve walkability, and create a cohesive and distinctive public realm where visitors may slow down, linger and experience the variety of uses the area has to offer.

Allow for Flexibility Over Time

It is possible to maintain industrial land uses while also integrating new infrastructure and promoting future development that complements these uses. Zoning in the area should be flexible enough to allow for some additional uses that continue to preserve the functions of the industrial sanctuary.

Emphasize the Elevation Changes in the Area

Elevation changes created by infrastructure in the area create unique opportunities to capitalize on spaces both above and below the 99-E Viaduct. Heights created by the addition of pedestrian bridges can capture new visual vistas and use of overpasses can activate spaces below 99-E.



brownandcaldwell.com



Ryan Jesena



bikeportland.org



downtownphoenix.com



Buster Simpson



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Create an Identifiable Public Realm

Introduce themes and elements that increase the area’s legibility and coherence as an identifiable realm, while enabling sub-areas to develop unique characters. Use greenery (including trees and parks) as a wayfinding approach, making preferred routes more inviting than discouraged routes. Incorporate art and industrial artifacts along the corridor for continuity and additional orientation toward the new public realm.

Celebrate the Unique Identity of the Area

The CEID is home to a historic tradition of industry and manufacturing that should become a unifying theme for the area. Maintain the complexity and variety of the corridor and surrounding neighborhood. Employ engineering techniques to design the new identity and perhaps, as the OMSI station is named after a landmark, rename the Clinton station to something more linked with the identity of the specific area.

Respect the Separation of Industrial and Non-Industrial Uses

Uses within the industrial sanctuary differ greatly from the proposed uses of this new development corridor. Therefore, particular attention should be given to the separation of these activities. Existing freight routes should be protected so existing industry can continue to function efficiently. Flexibility should be employed in building and street design, as well as in any proposed zoning changes.

Tie Focus Areas Together

The varying areas highlighted in this document will be linked by the proposed armature along the PMLR line. This is the primary opportunity to create common themes, guide people through the area between stations and add transit-oriented development. Care should be given to deploy strategies consistently along the corridor in order to prevent breaks in legibility and identity.

Design Elements

In its present form, the study area is disjointed and lacks good connections. Therefore this report proposes introducing several design elements that will make the area more “legible,” creating a common feel so that people would be able to recognize it as a distinct area and navigate it more easily.



cincinnatiTRANSFORUM.org



SoulRider



thisiscosmos.com



Jane Kratochvill

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CONNECTIVITY

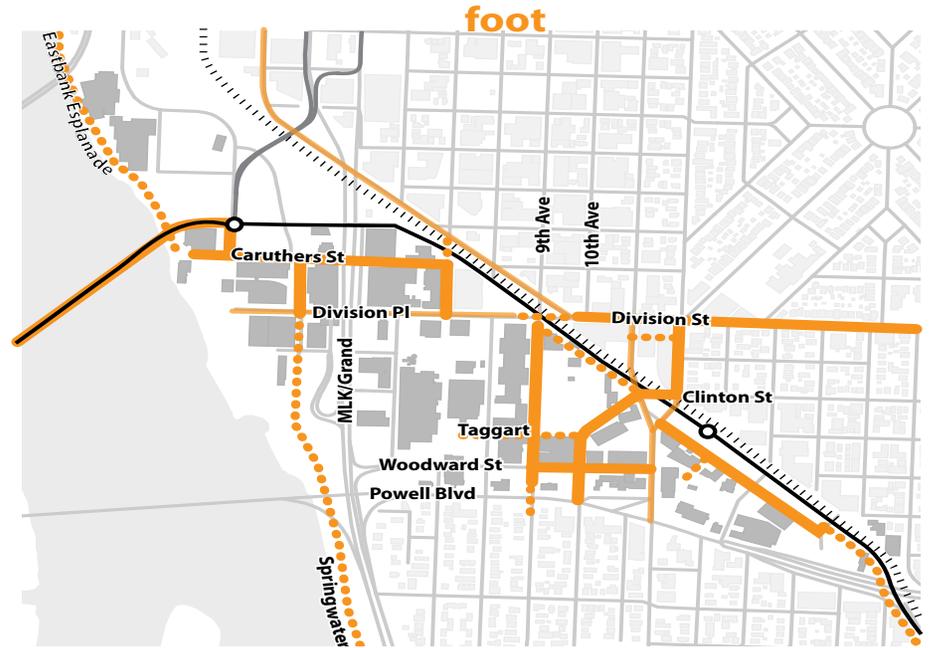
Transforming an auto-oriented district into a pedestrian-friendly network will create a vibrant and desirable area balancing a variety of mixed uses. The proposed connectivity plans allow for a safe and efficient bike and pedestrian pathways while reducing auto dependency and congestion.

Foot

Developing smaller block sizes and implementing placemaking along streets ensures human scale and increased walkability. Planning for a safe and walkable pedestrian environment for all ages between the north and south hubs should bring slower traffic speeds with higher visibility as was seen with the construction of the Yellow MAX line along North Interstate. Key areas of interest—such as festival street, public gathering spaces and artwork—integrated throughout the district would promote connectivity and develop strong pedestrian corridors, therefore, highlighting and celebrating the local industrial identity.

Bike

With new transit improvements already underway, recommendations for increased bicycle connections remain a top priority for the area. The PMLR bridge crossing the Willamette River will include bicycle and pedestrian access, feeding into the OMSI station. Currently, a proposed pathway for both modes will run from the Eastbank Esplanade onto Caruthers and along Gideon. Although Division Place would remain car-oriented, extended bicycle lanes could connect the east and west sides of the railroad. Bike connectivity may also serve as a traffic calming feature for both drivers and pedestrians. Ensuring low-stress bicycle connectivity provides direct routes between origins and destinations planned for both recreational purposes and commuter throughways.



CONNECTIVITY MAPS KEY

legend

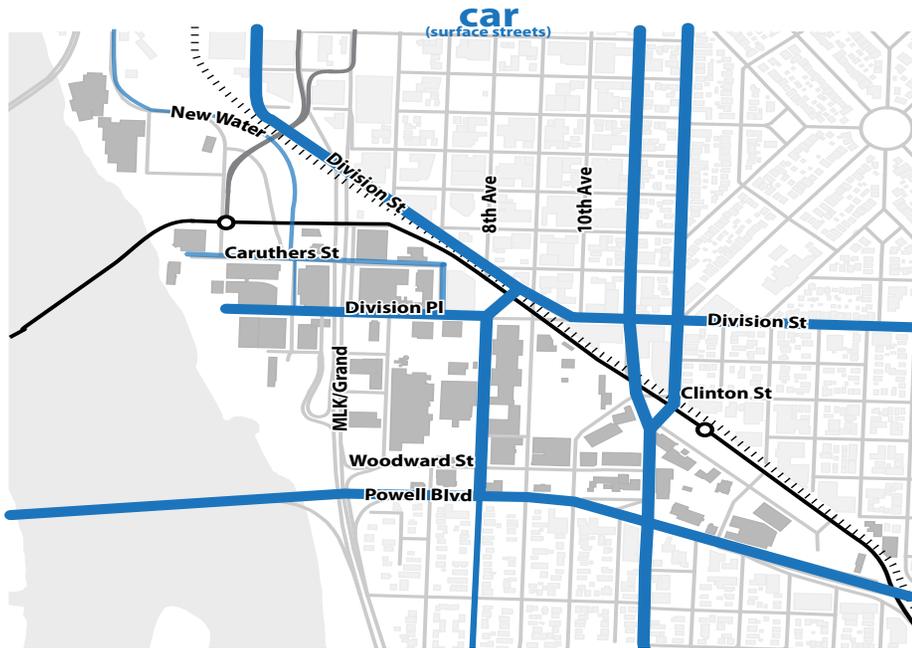
paths:

(color varies by mode type)

- major path
- minor path
- foot/bike only

other items:

- existing RR Tracks
- future lightrail line
- existing streetcar line



Transit Ridership

Future transit lines will connect the Central Eastside hub with surrounding regional institutions and serve as a new alternative for commuters. The proposed development around the OMSI station area, located within the District H2O, would provide an age-friendly, all-day access point supported by businesses such as galleries and restaurants. The Clinton station hub would connect the industrial sanctuary with the Brooklyn and Hosford-Abernathy neighborhoods. The nearby lower density housing within a 20-minute walk from new transit can support new retail and destination uses.

Car

The proposed plan for automobiles will allow for primary roadway connections crossing the railroad tracks on Division Street and between the 8th and 9th Avenue block, the Clinton station and Powell. Orienting more foot traffic to fewer main roads with improved pedestrian and bicycle access will allow for the continued flow for vehicular traffic elsewhere in the area. Ideally, the diverse transit options for commuters would help the area avoid increased traffic congestion as it grows.



Freight Truck

To ensure continued and improved freight truck access, much like the automobile plan, the proposed freight plan develops a primary pathway to ensure the safety for pedestrians and cyclists. By minimizing throughway freight access along Water Avenue and along 3rd and Division, drivers will be encouraged to use the newly built ramp on 99-E/MLK-Grand to connect between Powell and I-5 to the Central Eastside Industrial District. One strategy to enhance freight connectivity involves removing the Woodward ramps to and from 99-E, and replacing them with the northbound 99-E ramp from Powell; while using the existing ramp to Powell while SE Division Place to accommodate much of the truck traffic.

In order to reduce congestion and conflict between modes, a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the railroad tracks and Division Street (starting near 9th/Caruthers and connecting between 7th and 8th) is proposed.

CHARACTER AREAS

With the addition of the PMLR line, local agencies are making significant investment to improve connectivity through and within the OMSI-Clinton station area. In doing so, significant opportunities are created to help preserve and enhance the area's primary functions while promoting new economic development.

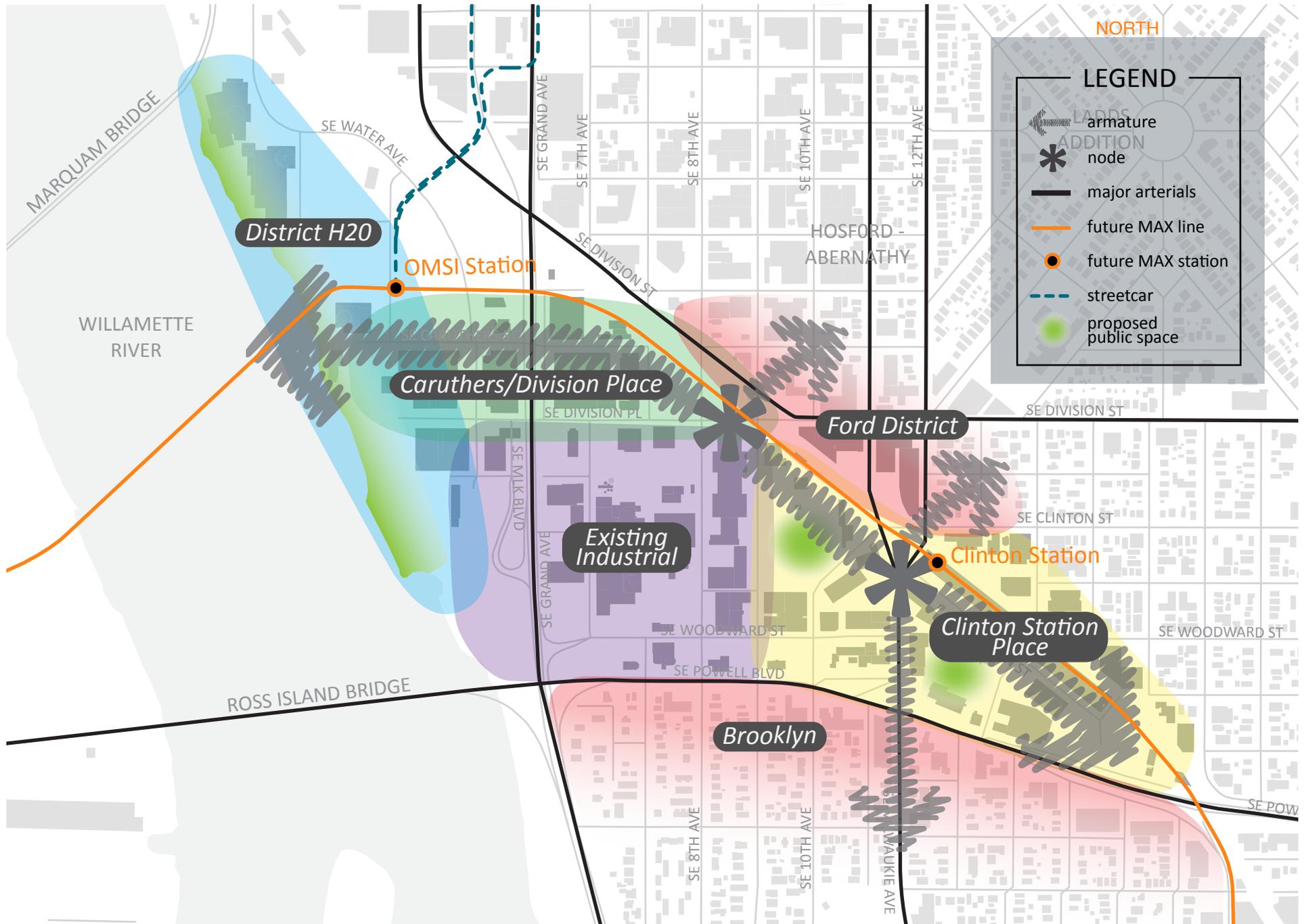
The concepts in this report aim to reinforce these opportunities through identification of 'character areas.' This identification will help define unique characteristics of key areas to guide future development. It will also aid in place making and way finding, as well as help justify and promote other future public investments.

The concept's character areas include:

1. District H2O
2. Caruthers/Division Place
3. Gideon Station Area
4. Existing Industrial
5. Ford District/Brooklyn Neighborhood

The character areas are linked by a primary connectivity armature paralleling the PMLR alignment from its crossing of Powell to the Willamette River. Primary access nodes at crossings near 8th/Division Place and at Milwaukie/Clinton create portals that link station areas to neighborhoods and districts beyond.





Focus Area #1: District H2O

The area bordered by the Willamette River, Clay Street, the Union Pacific rail line, the 99-E viaduct and the Ross Island Bridge is a regional destination with significant opportunity for expansion. It is home to the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, the Portland Opera and the Oregon Rail Heritage Museum, and will soon become a new eastside transportation hub. In addition, it is the terminus of two regional trails, the Springwater Trail and the Eastbank Esplanade, which lack off-street connections to one another. This area is also difficult to access and is visually removed from many nearby neighborhoods.

This concept envisions this area as one of the Portland region's primary cultural entertainment districts as new transportation investments improve accessibility and attract new institutional investment. Rebranding the area District H2O – a name that references the district's major feature (water) and primary institutional attraction (science) – the concept aims to create a campus-like setting with a strong emphasis on walkability and transit. Parks, green streets and public art would be integrated to create a more welcoming environment, encouraging longer visits throughout the day.

Proposed development along Caruthers/Division Place (to the east) will provide restaurants, galleries and other supportive businesses to encourage extended trips to the district. While the new PMLR bridge will aid in emphasizing greater orientation to the Willamette River, creating new parks and trails along and connecting to the river should be a prioritized.



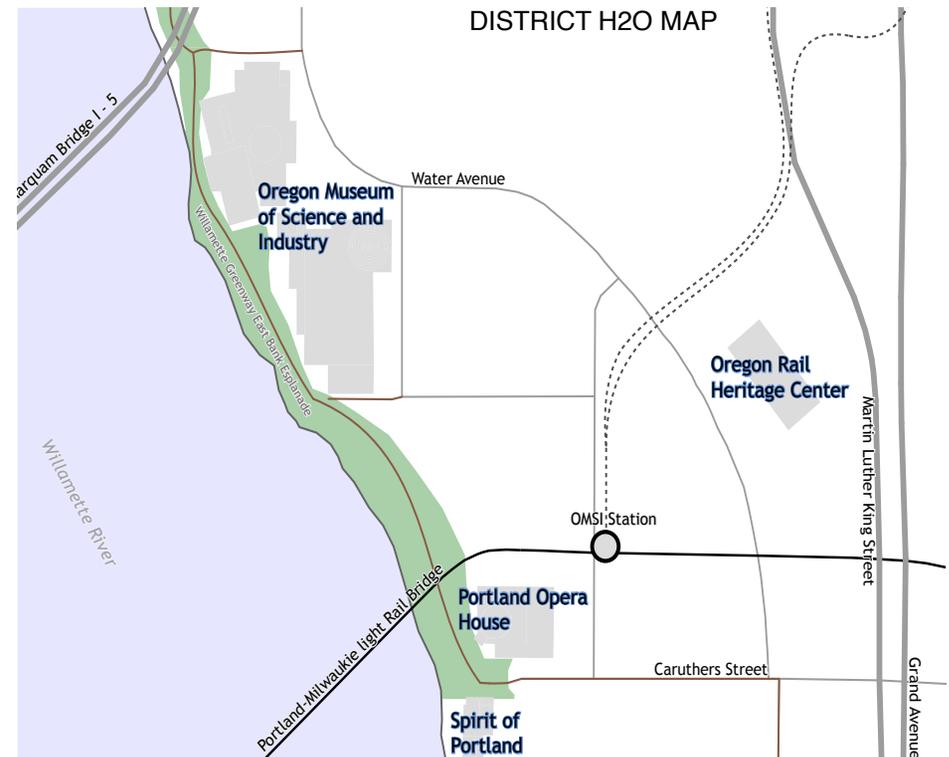
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DESIGN ELEMENTS

Art-terminated Vistas

Locating works of art at a street's terminus is an aesthetic addition that helps with wayfinding and navigation in a district. Art-terminated vistas on the riverfront could be used to draw people to the river along Division St. and Caruthers, to call attention to the river as a destination by exerting an aesthetic pull on the viewer, inviting him or her to explore or come closer. Milwaukee, Wisconsin's lakefront Art Museum, a building with great visual appeal located at a street terminus, is a good example. When viewed from the street at a distance, it interacts with work by Di Suvero; the industrial scale orange I-beam sculpture and the museum align to create a complex vista.





Layering Elements In Harmony

The verticality of streetscapes is an important component in the efficient use of land. It creates compact spaces requiring fewer limited resources. In the context of CEID, verticality plays upon the changes on elevation and creates human scale and a sense of place.

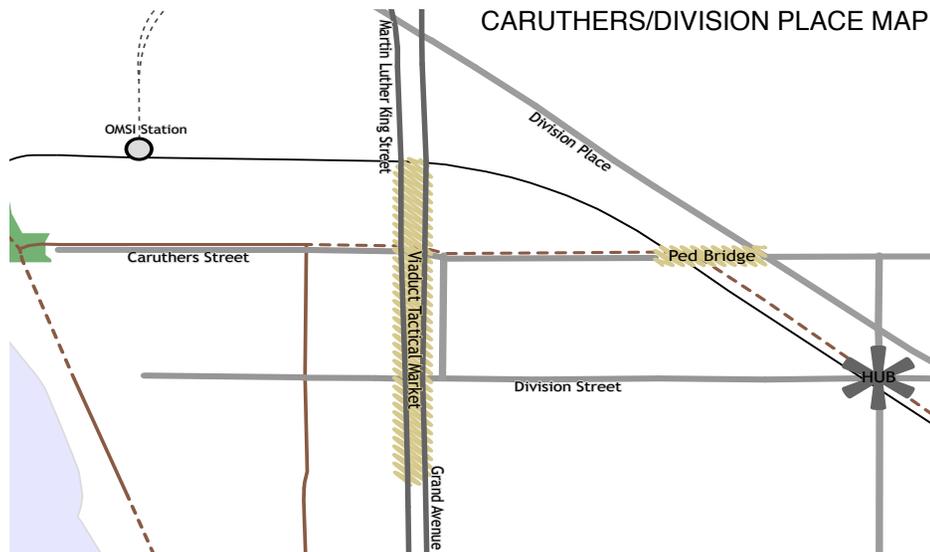


Focus Area #2: Caruthers/Division Place

Proposed development along Caruthers/Division Place extends District H2O eastward, greatly increasing the district's visibility, improving its accessibility, and creating opportunities for supportive economic development. This area focuses on two primary east-west streets, Caruthers Street and Division Place. Both streets would provide safe and intuitive travel for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. They would also include wide sidewalks, art pedestrian-scale lighting, large street trees, stormwater planters and strong visual termini at the Willamette River.

Each street would function significantly differently. Division Place will remain the primary route for automobiles and trucks while Caruthers would mostly serve bicyclists and pedestrians. Caruthers would be a plaza-like green street, linking neighborhoods east and south to District H2O. It would include signature street trees and a unique 'curbless' streetscape design that allows it to be readily transformed into a linear plaza for street festivals. It would also have café seating, unique lighting, public art and extensive bike parking. North-south streets between Caruthers and Division Place would serve utilitarian needs such as trash removal and loading.

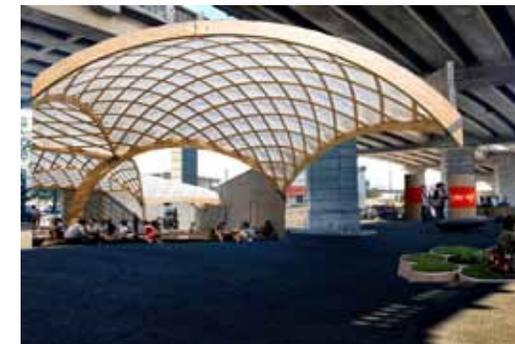
The 99-E viaduct over Caruthers and Division Place presents another unique design opportunity. Given the structure's sculptural appearance, it is a striking landmark that, when emblazoned with artistic lighting during evening hours, can become a visual icon of District H2O. The concept also envisions the space beneath the viaduct as transforming into a flexible performance, exhibit and market space. It could be used for outdoor events for District H2O institutions, as well as celebrations like the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art's Time Based Art Festival.



DESIGN ELEMENTS

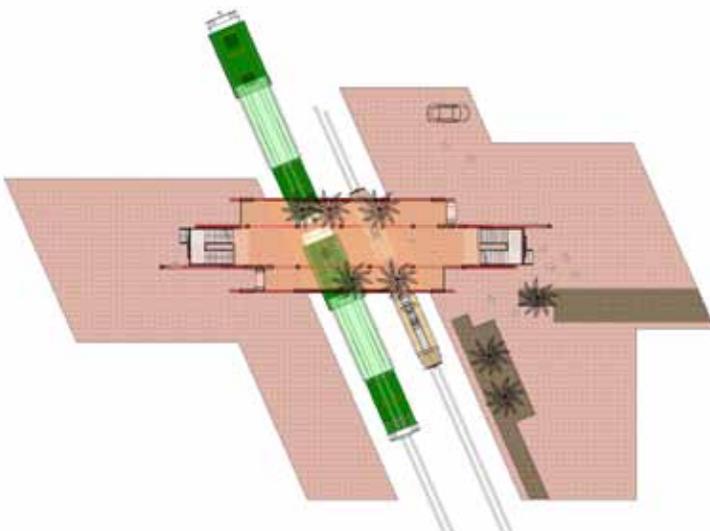
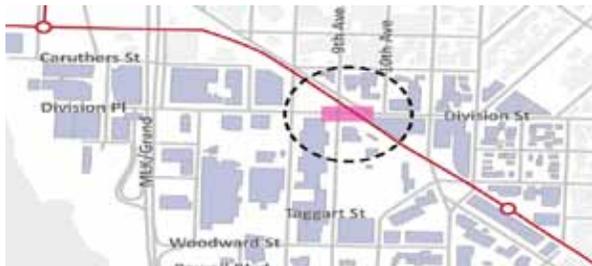
The Viaduct

The space beneath 99-E is a sheltered area which, thanks to the overpass design, has a surprising amount of natural light and is relatively quiet. It offers great potential for temporary outdoor uses. This report recommends using a tactical urbanist approach to achieve incremental change in a way that engages local residents and businesses in low-cost, low-risk experimental measures involving flexible structures. This space could be used for performances and exhibits, as well as a market, pop-up café, temporary living lab, or food cart pod, activities which could draw people from nearby attractions such as OMSI and the Ford Building as it develops into a destination in its own right.



Pedestrian-Bicycle Bridge

A pedestrian-bicycle bridge over the rail line at near 8th and Caruthers would help to counterbalance a planned reduction in rail crossings, allowing a safe and more direct route across tracks. By taking advantage of existing grade changes, the bridge would provide a unique vantage point, offering vistas of the district, the river and downtown. The bridge would also improve east-west connectivity, allow better movement to the riverfront, and provide better access to jobs in the CEID by foot or bicycle.



Focus Area #3: Gideon Station Area

The Gideon station's (currently called Clinton station) unique location will serve a variety of residents and nearby employees and will likely become an important catalyst for new housing, manufacturing and retailers. The concept envisions the station area as a transition between housing and light industrial, incorporating many aesthetic and functional attributes of both. Incubator development, intermixed with mixed-use and multi-family housing will define the district.

As a hub for multiple key streets, the Gideon station area has significant potential for promoting pedestrian-oriented retail along these key streets to better encourage transit ridership:

- 11th and 12th Avenues, connecting to Division to the north
- Milwaukie Avenue, connecting the Brooklyn Neighborhood to the south
- Gideon Street, parallel to the railroad tracks to the south
- Clinton Street, to the east

The 'Powell Triangle,' between Powell, Gideon and Milwaukie, will provide supportive housing and employment to support retail on Milwaukie. As it is completely beyond the boundaries of the Central Eastside Industrial District (CEID), housing will not conflict with industrial goals. Likewise, the area between 8th, Milwaukie and Powell (that includes the Northwest Natural Gas site) offers similar development opportunities, with greater focus on light manufacturing further to the west.



The concept envisions areas adjacent to Milwaukie between the railroad tracks and Powell as similar in appearance and function. In addition to sharing a strong retail orientation on Milwaukie and similar land uses and densities, both areas should include new park space and a denser street grid. They should also capitalize on unique features, like the fire tower and the sunken Northwest Natural Gas site, and maintain a strong emphasis with the Gideon Street axis.

The 'Clinton Street Redevelopment Study: Tomorrow' describes a "curbless" Gideon Street between Milwaukie and Powell as a "flexible, pedestrian-oriented space accommodating a variety of uses" and a "front yard for adjacent residential, industrial and live/work buildings." The concept supports this idea, but also proposes extending Gideon Street westward beyond Milwaukie to 9th. This accentuates the Gideon axis on both sides of the Clinton station. The space between Gideon and the railroad tracks could be a linear, urban park that could flexibly serve a variety of uses and include the proposed bike/pedestrian trail.

Future development on the north side of the railroad tracks and east of 12th, particularly given its proximity to single-family homes, would have a multi-family housing focus with opportunity for incubator-type spaces and retail. Clinton Street, given its proximity to the station and prominence as a major bikeway, could also accommodate limited mixed-use retail near the station. In addition, a new street paralleling the railroad tracks to the north would aid in efficient access to the new station, particularly if no additional neighborhood crossings to Gideon are built.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

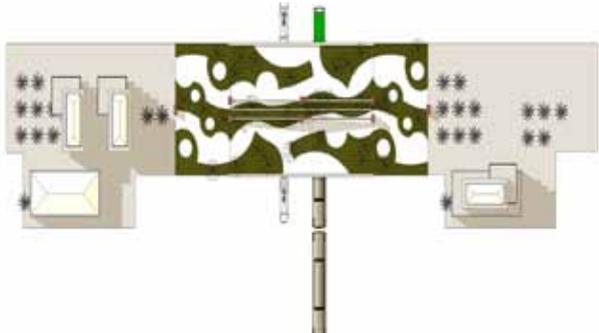
Green Connections



This report recommends strategically using vegetation to assist in placemaking, creating continuity with nearby heavily canopied neighborhoods and addressing a range of environmental issues. Green works would include bioswales, unique species of trees along key routes and a thoroughfare-style park on part of the Northwest Natural Gas site that could serve as the 'backyard' to the Ford Building - eventually becoming a lively location bordered by residential, office and commercial activity.

Pedestrian Destination

In addition to the three functions of way finding, connections, and elevations, rail crossings are opportunities to create destinations with pedestrian needs in mind. This extra acreage can serve as both a connector and additional real estate.



Focus Area #4: Existing Industrial

The CEID is home to light manufacturing, warehouses and showrooms, many of which rely on loading docks, freight movement and highway access. To preserve the district's functions, the concept aims to maintain and improve conditions of the area's existing industrial uses while integrating them with needed transit improvements.

Multiple benefits to existing eastside industrial areas will be achieved through the PMLR project. New transit and enhanced connections to transit create better employee accessibility between homes and jobs. Improved roadway design can also improve conditions for freight mobility by offering alternative routes for motorists and cyclists and reducing congestion for trucks. In addition, new development can provide employee housing and access to retail businesses.

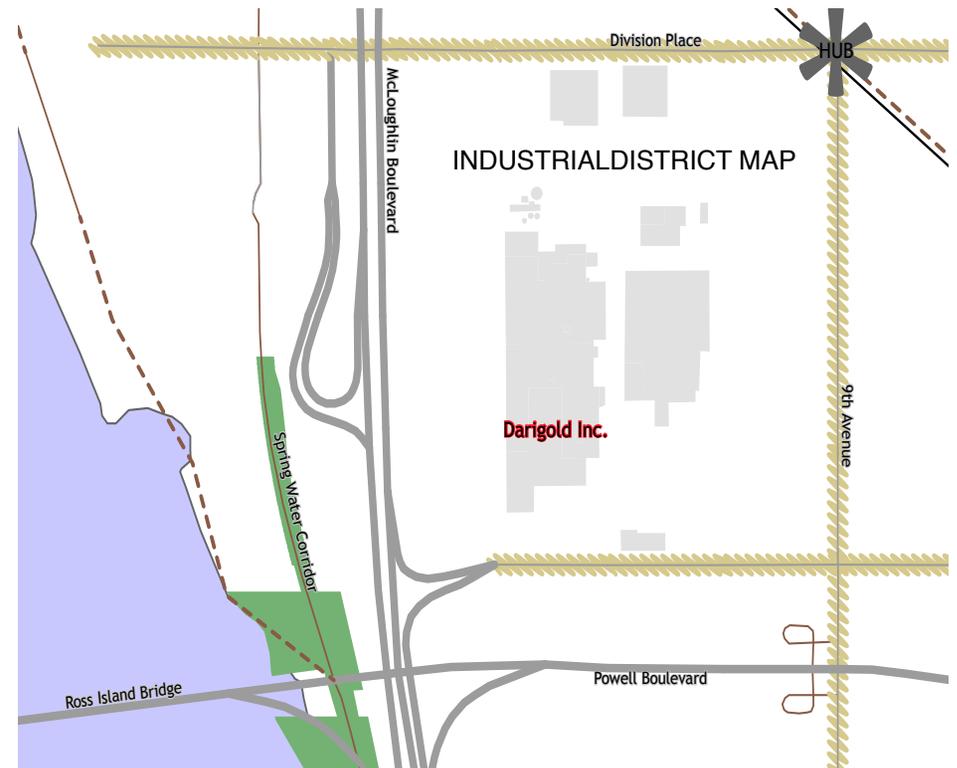
In the concept, the current industrial area south of Division Place, north of Powell and east of 8th would remain primarily as is, with mobility improvements and development opportunities identified at the area's edges. Division Place and 8th would remain as a primary route between 99-E, the CEID and the Ross Island Bridge/I-5. Improved signage would help guide motorists and bicyclists to preferred routes. Other improvements, such as replacing the Woodward Ramp to/from northbound 99-E with a new ramp from westbound Powell, could also help alleviate cut-through automobile traffic in the district.

Likewise, the light industrial area north of Division Street between 11th and Grand would not be negatively impacted by the concept. The proposed bike/pedestrian overpass would actually better link employees in this district to transit and bikeways. Pedestrian-oriented development along Division Street, combined with newly built sidewalk improvements along the railroad side of the street, will better integrate this industrial area with PMLR-related improvements.



DESIGN ELEMENTS

Industrial "Fossils"/ Wayfinding
Embedding elements, industrial artifacts or "fossils," into the public realm can serve as reminders of the area's industrial history. Sidewalks and pavers could be studded with small industrial remnants (such as gears or bolts) that provide a tactile connection with the district's industrial heritage. This industrial theme could also be carried over into street lamps and benches. By introducing a common feel in a district that lacks a clear identity, the district can begin to develop a sense of place. In addition, it can assist with wayfinding on subtle, unconscious manner.



Built Structure

Built environments can house both public and private spaces. Multi-functional public spaces can capitalize on the area's topography by creating multiple level, all-year round gathering places. This structure identifies with the industrial history of the surrounding area.



Focus Area #5: Neighboring Areas - Ford District and Brooklyn Neighborhood

The neighborhoods bordering the study area have a very different character from the it and the CEID as a whole. In particular, they are marked by a noticeably finer-grained grid system and a mature tree canopy. The differences in character are accentuated by connectivity challenges which impede movement. Improving connections between the CEID and these neighboring areas could help to stimulate fruitful interactions between districts.

Ford District

We envision a natural creative continuum that would stretch from Caruthers and Division Place (characterized by exploratory and incubator spaces) to the Ford District (which extends these activities but with a decidedly more polished appearance and retail orientation). As these physical linkages are strengthened, energy from development occurring within the Ford District could enliven the areas further west.

The Ford Building is an example of successful adaptive reuse, containing creative office space, artist studios and retail, and is the anchor to the nascent Ford District. The Ford District, however, is separated from the main study area by the new PMLR line and the existing rail line. Better crossings could help stimulate connections between the Ford District (and its creative industries) and the areas west of the tracks which currently lack a definitive character or identity.

Brooklyn Neighborhood

The Brooklyn neighborhood is largely residential, with commercial activity primarily limited to Powell and Milwaukie. It is home to the Aladdin Theater, a live music venue which brings nationally known performers, and some specialty shops; it also has an industrial section further east (beyond 17th Ave.)

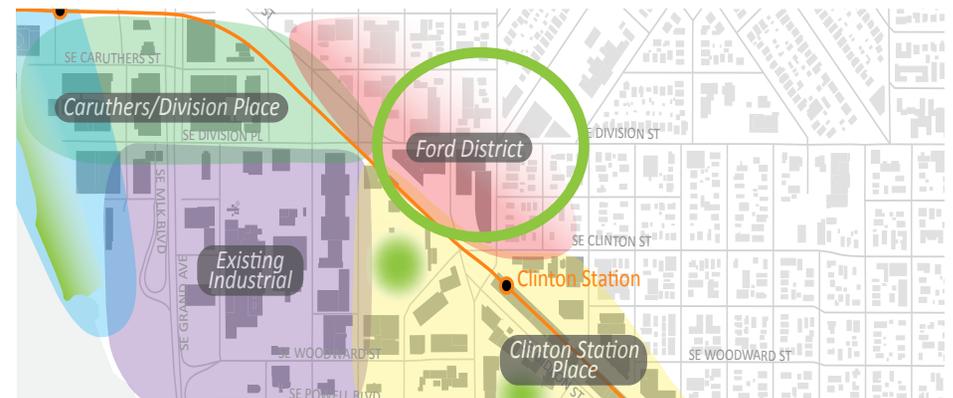
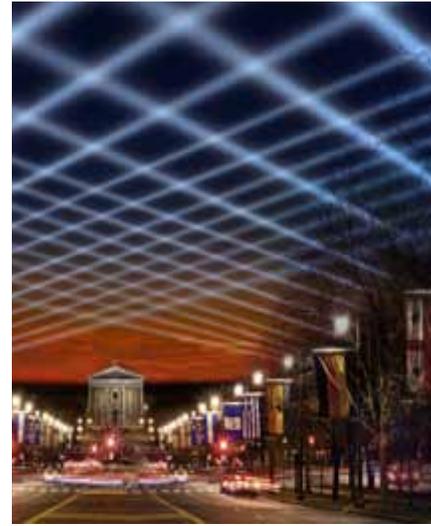
Despite Brooklyn's proximity to the study area, there is currently little perceived connection between the two, as Powell forms a visual and physical barrier. Powell Boulevard (which is also State Route 26) is one of three priority corridors in the Metro region slated for high-capacity transit; it also has the dubious distinction of being a high-crash corridor.

Enhancing pedestrian/bicycle crossings at 9th and Milwaukie could provide greater options for individuals to commute by foot or bicycle to and through the CEID. It would help link Brooklyn to jobs in the industrial core and beyond, including in the growing creative industries.

DESIGN ELEMENTS

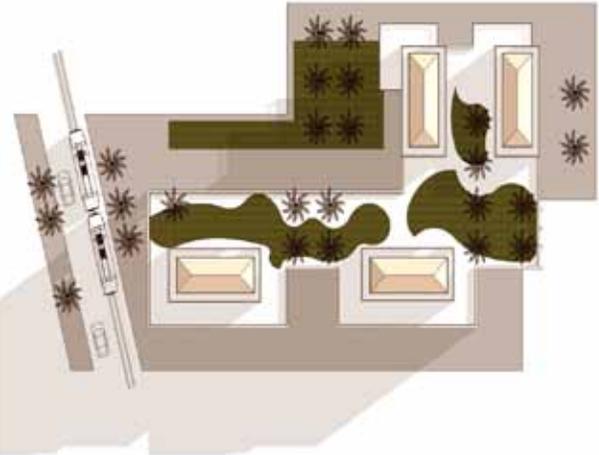
Vertical Elements

The study area contains several vertical features (the fire tower and Darigold tower, which are landmarks offering spectacular views to the river and downtown. There are also below-grade sheltered spaces, under 99-E. These vertical elements mark the area as the 'up and down district,' an area which one can view and traverse not only horizontally, but vertically. This report recommends harnessing these elements to create interesting views above- and below-grade, for example, with the proposed pedestrian bridges or by introducing a residential tower or hotel with views to downtown and to district parks.



Urban Rooftops

We build upward and not outward. Moving up from the ground plane offers vistas and urban realms to be discovered. What we experience six floors up is very different from what we experience at the street level, and these higher spaces provide the opportunity to incorporate park-like retreats and take advantage of the views.



IT'S HAPPENING ELSEWHERE

For additional information, checkout what these other cities are doing with similar characteristics.

DENVER, CO, USA

<http://nymag.com/travel/weekends/denver/index1.html>

MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/in-mexico-city-planners-turn-vacant-space-under-freeways-into-places-to-work-dine-play/2013/05/28/ade28c26-c32e-11e2-9642-a56177f1cdf7_story.html

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Also, thank you to our visiting professionals who provided us with crucial feedback, insider information, and a fresh perspective on the unique challenges of this area of Portland.

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