

Redmond Central Connector Master Plan
Appendix B

Planning Review and Recommendations

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REDMOND CENTRAL CONNECTOR PLANNING REVIEW

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INTENT

This document is a review of the plans, visions, and guidelines for the areas near the railroad right-of-way that will become the Redmond Central Connector. It is intended to be included as background information as an Appendix to the Redmond Central Connector Master Plan document. Sections and statements relevant to the Redmond Central Connector Master Plan have been selected from the documents listed in the Table of Contents. Bold italics in this document are editorial comments, highlighting issues of particular note in the development of the Master Plan.

I. DOCUMENT REVIEW

A. Redmond Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 14 of Redmond's Comprehensive Plan addresses Urban Centers, including Downtown Redmond.

Comment:

Of particular note for the Central Connector is that both Cleveland Street and the new trail are seen as filled with people, attracted by activities along the corridor. There is reference to people peering in store windows along the trail. The challenge for designers of developments along the corridor is to create a building with multiple frontages that allow these scenarios to come to life.

Vision for Downtown

The Urban Centers section of the Comprehensive Plan sets out the future vision for Downtown Redmond, and specifically for the trail and its edges:

Old Town

"Old Town thrives as a focus for retail activity that attracts pedestrians, providing a distinctive selection of stores, restaurants, boutiques, and theater, as well as varied housing. New buildings blend with refurbished buildings, retaining the area's historic character." (Future Vision for Redmond: Urban Centers)

Old Town and Town Center

"A pedestrian-oriented retail and entertainment core that provides opportunities for comparison shopping for a wide variety of goods and services and creates an active focus for the Downtown and City." (DT-1)

Sammamish Trail, Town Square, River Bend and Anderson Park

"Mixed-use residential/office districts adjacent to the retail core that accommodate employment and housing growth in high-quality environments" (DT-1)

Bear Creek and Trestle

"Convenience retail districts at the entrances to the Downtown that provide for everyday shopping needs, such as groceries, pharmacies, and other convenience retail goods and services, while reducing the need for lengthy trips." (DT-1)

Cleveland Street

"Cleveland Street is a pleasant place to walk or sit and people fill the street during the day and evening."

Rail/Trail

"The former railroad right-of-way has been transformed to an urban green space that people of all ages enjoy, with places to stroll, gather and talk with others, celebrate, or stop and peek in store windows while walking to Old Town or Redmond Town Center."

Character and Quality

“Though the City has experienced growth and change during the past 20 years, Redmond has maintained its distinctive character.”

“The quality design of new development is a reflection of the value Redmond citizens place on the community’s appearance. Care has also been taken to employ special treatments on identified streets and pathways, and to enhance the comfort, safety, and usability of public places. Public view corridors and entryways have been identified, preserved, and enhanced. The City’s historic roots are still apparent through preservation of special sites, structures, and buildings. Interpretive signage has been used in addition to enhance the City’s sense of its heritage.”

Vision for Trail

Improve its aesthetic appeal through enhancements, such as trees, landscaping, and gathering places for enjoyment of visual or performing art. (DT-8)

Link the north and south parts of the Downtown through additional right-of-way crossings for vehicles, as well as improvements to encourage easy and safe pedestrian access along and across the railroad corridor.

Include elements of the historic railroad as part of the improvements within the right-of-way. (DT-8)

Ensure through development of specific guidelines that improvements within the railroad right-of-way and on adjacent properties relate to and support the character of adjoining districts, particularly Old Town. (DT-8)

Ensure when new development, redevelopment, or exterior remodeling takes place on properties adjoining the railroad right-of-way that façade treatments facing the right-of-way are attractively designed to create an engaging environment for users of future trail, high-capacity transit/light rail, park, or open space. (DT-10)

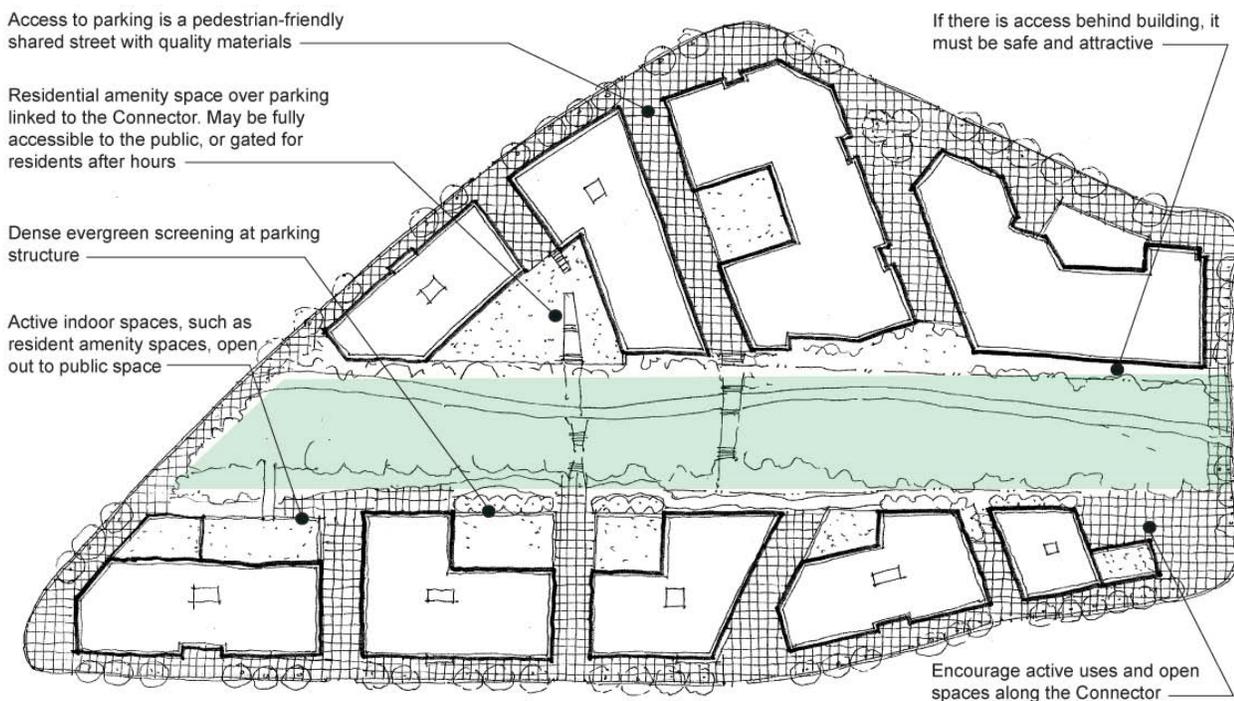


Diagram: Typical future development along corridor

B. Redmond Community Development Guide

Section 21.10 of the Redmond Zoning Code is intended to implement the Downtown vision and policies as described in the Comprehensive Plan. Downtown is subdivided into twelve districts that are characterized by “different building heights, designs and land uses, distinctive entrance corridors, streetscapes, roadway designs, landscaping and amenities” (21C..10-010). The districts that apply to the vicinity of the new trail (per map 21.10.020) are: The south end of Sammamish Trail (SMT), Trestle (TR), River Bend (RVBD), Old Town (OT), Anderson Park (AP), Town Center (TWNC), and Bear Creek (BC).

Comment:

Of particular note for the Central Connector is that there are mechanisms for design flexibility along the corridor that may help solve some of the challenges for activating buildings along both Cleveland and the trail. These include the potential of using the 14-foot setback, the use of a “fee-in-lieu” parking option, height bonuses, or transfer of development rights.

21C.76.070 ©(8) Administrative Design Flexibility

Design deviations may be allowed through Administrative Design Flexibility (ADF) if the deviations result in a development that better meets the intent of the goals and policies; is superior in design in terms of architecture, building materials, site design, landscaping and open spaces; and provides benefits in terms of use, activity and design.

21C.10.030- through 21.10.100 Maximum FAR and Height without TDRs.

The setback for yards adjoining the railroad right of way is 14 feet in all districts.

Height bonuses are allowed for desired amenities. For instance in the Town Square district, bonuses of up to three stories above the 5-story base is allowed for usable open space in the form of plazas/arcades with water features that are accessible to public during extended business hours or other desired features. Granted through the site plan review process.

21.10.130 Residential Development in Downtown Districts.

The density allowed on the site increases with the increase in site area and site width. For large lots in most Downtown districts, the number of units is unrestricted so long as the necessary parking, open space and other site requirements are met. For projects with more than 66 dwelling units per acre (exclusive of density bonuses), at least one level of semi-subterranean or subterranean parking or structured parking hidden behind ground floor commercial space or pedestrian amenities along the street front is required.

Downtown Design Standards 21.62

Section 21.62.020(B) speaks directly to the design of buildings along the railroad corridor. The intent of the section is to ensure that buildings and uses along the right-of-way engage with and provide access to the corridor, and to make sure that uses would not hamper future use of the right-of-way for rail. The section does not apply to the portion of the right-of-way in the Sammamish Trail and Trestle Districts where the elevated grade and steep slopes separate the corridor from the level of the adjoining property.

Buildings should orient to the right-of-way as well as to the streets, and should include storefronts and entrances to, and through, the buildings from the right-of-way/future trail. Service areas and mechanical equipment along the right-of-way shall be screened.

Sites adjoining the right-of-way are to complement it with landscaping, plazas and other pedestrian features. Parking is to be incorporated in structured garages, and when the garage faces the right-of-way, it should be attractively designed with ornamental grille work or other architectural features. Attractive, high-quality building materials and architectural detailing are called for on all sides of the building, including facades along the right-of-way.

Ground floor spaces adjacent to the right-of-way, including garages, shall have a minimum ceiling height of ten feet. Should this space be retrofitted later to commercial or retail space, that converted space would be exempt from replacing any parking stalls removed as part of the conversion.

21.400.010(F)(1) Cooperative Parking

Cooperative parking is allowed for uses with distinctly different peak demand.

An in-lieu parking fee may be submitted to the City for each required parking space that is not provided on-site. This is a special fund within the Office of the Treasurer-Comptroller, with a fee to be determined annually by the Technical Committee. Floor area bonuses may also be granted for contribution to the parking fund. The bonus area is exempt from parking requirements.

Parking may also be reduced below the required minimum if a Transportation Management Plan is recorded with the property that effectively reduces transportation demand.

C. Downtown East-West Corridor Study

The Downtown East-West Corridor Study (DEWCS) is based on the vision set out in the Downtown Transportation Master Plan:

“...to reclaim our downtown as an economically healthy, people-friendly place, enhanced by the movement of pedestrians, bikes, cars and a diversity of businesses...”

Comment:

Of particular note for the Redmond Central Connector is the mapping showing the cross-streets, including “woonerf” pedestrian-style connections at Brown and Gilman. The retail activity along Cleveland is emphasized.

In order to implement this vision along the Redmond Way and Cleveland Street corridor, the following project principles were formed to support a vibrant downtown as described in the DTMP:

- Circulation: Streets should provide connectivity and circulation for all modes while maintaining a level of traffic consistent with an urban downtown
- Parking: Parking should be available for businesses, residents, visitors, and local deliveries and should support the pedestrian environment and the viability of transit
- Travel Choices: Facilities and services should be designed to support the goal of having transit, walking, bicycling, and carpooling comprise a significant share of the trips to and from Downtown
- Parks and Open Spaces: Streetscape, parks and open space should create a sense of place, be linked to one another and serve a variety of purposes
- Land Use: Streets should accommodate and encourage the future land use vision
- Great Streets: Downtown streets should contribute to and reinforce this area as a destination and the heart of Downtown by creating economically vibrant and pedestrian supportive streets
- Cleveland Street: Cleveland Street should be a traditional “Main Street” promenade
- Railroad Right-of-Way: Any design should take full advantage of this asset, including high capacity transit, non-motorized trail and other opportunities
- Urban design: The corridor design should include highly walkable and shopper-friendly streets, with amenities ranging from wide sidewalks widths and curb bulbs, to way-finding signs and shopping and/or informational kiosks.
- Enhanced Streetscape: The project shall implement plazas, planters, street trees, decorative pavement/ sidewalks and street furniture, such as benches, decorative bike racks and trash receptacles.

- Art Overlay: Integrated into the project shall be art that celebrates the unique identity of the corridor and responds to the Community’s cultural diversity and leadership role in the technology industry.
- Low impact development (LID): LID elements such as planter boxes containing rain gardens, pervious sidewalk pavement bands and/or pavers, and reusing rooftop runoff as irrigation can be incorporated to create a “green street.”
- Private development: Both Redmond Way and Cleveland Street shall be designed to accommodate future development along the corridor. Curb placements, sidewalk widths and bulb outs are situated for future buildout; allowing developers to add onto the corridor without having to tear out and reconstruct City improvements.
- High Capacity Transit/Rail corridor: The corridor improvements have taken into account the preliminary plans for future HCT and the intended use of the RAILROAD corridor. Proposed improvements directly related to the HCT/Rail corridor at the time of the corridor construction/conversion are the integration of the 161st Avenue NE and 164th Avenue NE crossings and connection to the BSNF trail.

D. Downtown Central Park

The vision for Redmond’s proposed Downtown Central Park is “a gathering place that serves as a destination for downtown residents and visitors and a catalyst for planned growth and investment to strengthen Redmond’s regional presence.”

It is a focal point and a neighborhood connection that reinforces the historic heart of Redmond at the confluence of Redmond Way, Leary Way and Cleveland Street.

Comment:

Downtown Central Park is an important move for Redmond’s Downtown, and needs to be incorporated into the planning for the trail in terms of circulation, hierarchy of spaces and wayfinding. Of particular note for the Central Connector is the importance of the connection at Brown Street.

E. Downtown Redmond Parking Study

The report asks the question—“Does the current parking management in downtown support a vibrant, pedestrian friendly, urban neighborhood?”

Comment:

The report outlines several consensus themes that are relevant to the Connector work. There was agreement that Redmond lacks a “walkable business environment” that is linked to a convenient parking system serving a “center” of downtown. “Priority customers” for Downtown are patrons and residents.

The study recommends that the City consider its long-term strategy for surface parking. According to the study, the City’s standards result in more parking being built than the land use itself. This will not result in the vibrant, walkable Downtown that is so often discussed in the City’s planning documents.

Parking Study Opportunity Sites Study

This follow-up document recommends three locations for building multi-level public parking garages. One site, in Old Town, would be an easy walk to the trail corridor.

Bibliography:

Redmond Comprehensive Plan

Available via

<http://www.codepublishing.com/WA/redmond.html>

Redmond Zoning Code

Available via

<http://www.redmond.gov/cms/one.aspx?objectid=3466>

See Section 21.10 Downtown and various sections

Downtown Redmond Parking Study

Findings and Recommendations of the Parking Stakeholders' Advisory Committee

Prepared by Rick Williams Consulting, January 2008

<http://www.redmond.gov/connectingredmond/studies/parkingstudy.asp>

Parking Opportunity Sites Study

Development Concepts and Illustrated Options

A supplemental report for the 2007 Downtown Redmond Parking Study

February, 2008, Rick Williams Consulting, Mark A Seder, RA, NCARB, LEED AP

Downtown East-West Corridor Study

Master Plan and Implementation Strategy

February, 2009

KGP, Consultant

Downtown Central Square Study

June 2008

The Berger Partnership, Consultant

II. CURRENT AND PROPOSED LAND USES

The edges of the Connector are a mix of vacant land, retail uses and some newer mixed-use buildings (see figure 2.01). The central segment of the Connector provides a link between Leary Way, center of the historic area of Downtown, with Redmond Town Center. This segment is where activated edges are most desirable. Existing uses along in this area were designed for easy access by car, with plentiful parking, and understandably turned their back on the railroad right-of-way. The existing uses are noted on the accompanying map.

On the northwest portion of this central segment, newer mixed-use buildings are oriented to Cleveland Street, with parking along the Connector edge. The new buildings planned for parcels 3 and 5 shown here follow the same pattern.

On the north side of the Connector to the east of the new and planned mixed-use buildings, the development consists of one-story retail structures with surface parking. Presumably, these uses will become denser over time and provide opportunities to create an edge with some degree of interaction with the Connector over time.

The southern edge, east of Leary Way, abuts NE 76th Street. Town Center is adjacent to three long blocks of NE 76th Street. There is some potential for the buildings in this area to be adapted to be more open to the street over time.

The historic Justice White House is at the corner of Leary Way and NE 76th Street. This intersection is a gateway into the Downtown currently, and its position as a gateway will be strengthened in the future with the arrival of light rail.

The City-owned property west of Leary Way is a significant opportunity for the corridor because of its location near the light rail station, and because of the City's ability to control the type and quality of development there.



Figure 2.01

PROPERTIES ADJACENT TO THE CENTRAL PORTION OF THE REDMOND CONNECTOR

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1 Red 160 16015 Cleveland Street Built in 2010 | 6 Single-story retail 16425 Cleveland Street Built 1984 | 11 1-Story Retail with surface parking 7215 170th Ave SE Built in 1998 |
| 2 The Cleveland 16141 Cleveland Street Built in 2006 | 7 2-Story Retail with surface parking 16701 Cleveland Street Built in 1978 | 12 Redmond Town Center Built in 1996 |
| 3 Old Town - Proposed Development Expected construction 2011 | 8 1-Story Retail with surface parking 16701 Cleveland Street Built in 1989 | 13 Justice White House 7730 Leary Way Built in 1900 |
| 4 2-Story Retail and surface parking 7805 Leary Way Built in 1910 Parking is adjacent to Connector | 9 1-Story Retail with surface parking 16725 Cleveland Street Built in 1978 | 14 Vacant Owned by City of Redmond 7215 170th Ave SE |
| 5 Center Pointe 16325 Cleveland Street Expected construction 2011 | 10 1-Story Retail with surface parking 16771 Cleveland Street Built in 1961 | |

III. DESIGN PARAMETERS

The City of Redmond regulates design through its Community Development Guide and its Design Review Board. The function of the Design Review Board is to “examine building and site applications for the quality of their design elements and compatibility with the community”.

The following is a review of design parameters for the Downtown Districts along the Connector in order to understand the design drivers that have led to the recent and proposed buildings along the Connector to identify opportunities and challenges to getting the desired activity at the edges.

Comment:

The City may wish to modify the language in the code so that the edges along the trail are considered as fronts rather than rear facades, and make sure that desired land uses, aesthetics, transparencies, edge conditions and quality of design is set out clearly in the Community Development Guide now that the Connector is becoming a reality. The structure already exists in the Community Development Guide and the Downtown Pedestrian System, and changes specific to the Corridor can be incorporated into Community Development Guide.

In testing the requirements with the realities of the properties along the corridor, it is clear that some sites along the trail have challenges to providing parking and offering activated facades in the standard development paradigm. The mechanisms that allow for flexibility could be used to promote the type of uses and qualities desired at the edges of the Connector, so long as the desired public benefit is clearly specified.

Districts

Seven Downtown Districts lie along the edges of the Connector: Sammamish Trail, Trestle, River Bend, Old Town, Town Center, Anderson Park, and Bear Creek. (Map 20C.40.20-015)

Permitted Uses

General retail and service uses, residential, public uses, most educational uses, repair and rental uses are permitted outright in all districts. There are minor differences in other uses allowed between the Downtown districts.

Comment:

Note that Vending Carts/Kiosks are allowed but only as Special Uses. These may be small, but important uses that could enliven the corridor, and it may be worth considering criteria and ease of permitting.

Residential Density

Per Table 20C.40.45-020. Note that lot coverage requirements do not typically apply to residential developments with ground floor commercial/retail uses. Residential Density Bonuses area are allowed for semi-and full-subterranean parking, affordable housing and senior housing. *Residential density bonuses are a potential “carrot” to encourage development that would activate the Connector.*

Yard Setbacks

Per Chart 20C.40.40-045

Cleveland Street would be considered the front yard of buildings adjacent to the north side of the corridor. Yards adjoining the railroad ROW or Parks have a required 14-foot setback.

Comment:

Where public purpose is better served by active uses, this setback may be used as a “carrot” for developers to activate the Connector. The desired public purpose would need to be very clear from the City end; projects would require review and approval by the Design Review Board.

Downtown Pedestrian System

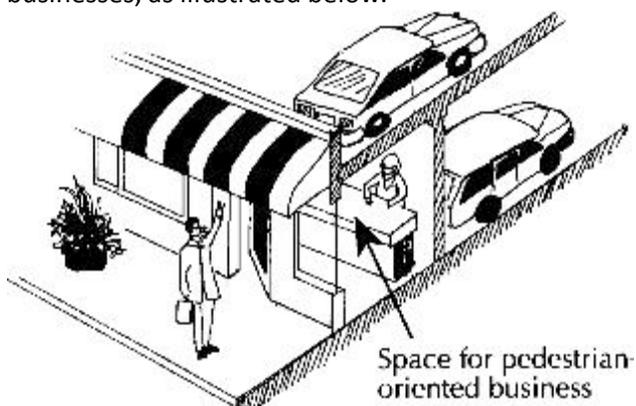
The Downtown Pedestrian System has a number of street types that sets zones for planting areas and sidewalks along pedestrian-designated streets. Cleveland Street is a Type V pedestrian street per Downtown Pedestrian System Map 20C.40.105-020. On a Type V street, as described in 20C.40.105-030(5):

A 14-foot sidewalk with the first floor of buildings up to the edge of the sidewalk, and street trees in tree wells next to the street. Sidewalks may be wider than 14 feet. The minimum unobstructed pedestrian travel way shall be no less than 10 feet wide. A footnote to this specifically discusses Gilman Street, which “shall become a brick-lined pedestrian/vehicular plaza, and Brown Street which includes an 8.5-foot-wide sidewalk”

Parking

Per footnote 5, see 20C.130.10-030 For Residential Uses in Downtown Districts, 1 space per dwelling unit is the minimum, 2.25 is the maximum. For commercial uses in Old Town, 2 spaces per 1,000 gsf minimum and maximum, with modifications.

For building frontage along a Type V pedestrian walkway per the Downtown Pedestrian System Map, 20D.130.10-030(15) parking lots cannot be located between the street and the building. Parking lots and ground floor parking garages are to be separated from streets by building areas (excluding vehicle access points) which are developed as, and made available for, pedestrian-oriented businesses, as illustrated below.



Building Height

Building height in most of the Downtown is 5 stories, modified by footnotes. Note the 3-story height limit on Leary. Additional height is possible through the bonus provisions and TDR.

Lot Coverage

For residential development with ground floor commercial/office, 100% lot coverage is allowed. There is no requirement that the ground floor commercial/office front the Connector.

Maximum FAR without TDRs

Allowed floor area ratio (FAR) is specified in 20C.40.40, and most Downtown districts have an FAR of 1.25 for commercial uses (without any transfer of development rights). Residential FAR not counted within allowed building height.

Residential Usable Open Space

Per Section 20C.40.60, at least 100 square feet of common usable open space shall be provided for each unit, up to a maximum area equivalent to 20 percent of the site. Units with at least 200 square feet of private open space, where the smallest dimension is no less than 10 feet, shall be exempt from common open space requirements.

Required Residential Facade Modulation and Exterior Building Treatment

In Section 20C.40.80, the City asks for “superior exterior cladding materials” and a high level of architectural detailing. Front and Side Street Facades must have modulation, and again there is a requirement for superior exterior cladding materials.

Comment:

Note that the Connector would presumably be considered a “rear” yard at this point per code. The City may wish to consider modifying language to have developers treat the Connector side as a second front yard.

IV. POTENTIAL TOOLS AND CITY ACTIONS

Potential Incentives

The 14-foot setback requirement for developments along the railroad right-of-way could be modified with approval of the Design Review Board if using the setback creates a better edge condition at the trail than the setback.

Adding active uses, transparency and amenities could be added to the list of items that are rewarded with density increases. This may be counter-productive to parking issues, but as Redmond’s transit improves with light rail, increased density and reduced parking may be acceptable to developers and lenders.

Below-grade parking could be allowed in public right-of-way under certain circumstances. There may be circumstances where parking could be built, but it would not be possible in places where it would conflict with the sewer trunk line. Parking is often the challenge for trying to create multiple facades with active land uses, especially with the water table typical along the Connector.

The Fee-in-Lieu of parking could be made more attractive to developers if it meant creating active uses along the corridor. The City could consider reducing parking requirements, but often the

parking requirements come from developers and lenders. If Fee-in-Lieu were more attractive and brought in funds, the City may be able to provide parking to serve the Downtown in locations less disruptive to the public realm.

The City may consider reducing the required open space requirement for residential uses along the corridor, provided there is excellent connectivity to the trail.

Shared Use Streets

The new connections between the trail and Downtown are very important for Redmond's pedestrian system. These shared use streets will serve a small number of vehicles coming and going from parking. They have great opportunity to be very attractive to pedestrians, and to become a signature street type for Downtown Redmond.

For the portions of Brown and Gilman Streets already approved with developments, public investment in a new standard of pedestrian streetscape should raise the bar for required quality. New streetscape standards should be incorporated into City requirements for developers so that the outlay in streetscape is done with new development.

Utilities

In some cases, the requirements of waste management and utilities set design parameters. The City should look into any obstacles to desired design solutions and look for ways to accommodate needed services and utilities without sacrificing public realm to building interface.

Making temporary uses and festival uses easy

While there are challenges to including permanent uses in new structures at this time, there may be opportunities to activate the trail with temporary uses. For instance, last spring there was a tent with a bicycle repairman set up next to City Hall; that type of use would be an excellent addition along the Connector. The Farmers Market has been discussed as a possible activator, but simpler uses can be encouraged by ease of permitting and accommodations for water, power and possibly storage and toilet facilities.

Public-Private Partnerships

The City may consider working with private developers to create active uses along the trail. This could include using a small space inside a proposed building so that the developer would have assurance that the space was rentable prior to the full completion of the trail. It could mean a more ambitious project, such as the construction of a community theater or other community-based use.

Public Property

The site adjacent to the proposed light rail station is a critical location to Redmond's future. That is particularly true if the adjacent "mixed-use" building on the north side of the Connector presents a landscaped parking garage along the façade. The City has control over the use and the design of this parcel, and should take full advantage of the opportunity to make it an asset to Redmond's future.