

Northwest Neighborhood Association

Meeting Minutes - May 19, 2025

Meeting Type: Hybrid (In-Person and Zoom)

Location: Kyoudou Center at the Gresham Japanese Garden, 219 S. Main Ave.

Time: 7:00 PM - 8:50 PM

Chair: Kat Todd, President

Attendees

In-Person:

- Kat Todd (President)
- Chris Fast (Vice President)
- John Bildsoe (Land Use Chair)
- 13 additional neighbors

Online (Zoom):

- Alex Kampf (Tree Committee Chair)
- Anita E. Marks (Tree Committee)
- Approximately 9 total Zoom participants

Presenters:

- Michael Gonzalez, Interim Urban Renewal Manager, City of Gresham
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Call to Order and Introductions

Meeting called to order at approximately 7:08 PM by President Kat Todd. Introductions were made by attendees both in person and online.

Note: Officer Charles Skeahan from the Gresham Police NET Team was scheduled to present but was unable to attend. Chair attempted to contact Officer Skeahan during the meeting but received no response.

Presentation: Proposed Downtown-Civic Urban Renewal District

Presenter: Michael Gonzalez, Interim Urban Renewal Manager

Michael Gonzalez presented an overview of the proposed Downtown-Civic Urban Renewal District. Key points included:

Background

- This would be Gresham's second urban renewal area (Rockwood was the first, established in 2003)
- Feasibility study conducted in 2023
- City Manager convened a task force to explore the plan
- In November 2024, Gresham voters approved a charter amendment allowing City Council to approve urban renewal plans without voter approval (aligning with state law)

Plan Details

- **Area:** Approximately 900 acres
- **Boundaries:** West side at Wallula, extending down to Eastman and crossing Powell, down to Highway 26 at the Burnside/Powell intersection, then back up the north side of Burnside to Wallula. Includes portions of the Civic and Downtown neighborhoods.
- **Duration:** 30 years (2026-2056)
- **Financial Capacity:** Approximately \$211 million in 2025 dollars (maximum indebtedness of \$381 million)
- **Growth Assumption:** 4.5% average annual property tax increase

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Explained

- Urban renewal freezes the property tax base at the time the district is created
- Existing taxing jurisdictions (city, county, schools, library) continue to receive taxes at the frozen base level
- Any incremental increase in property values generates additional tax revenue that goes into the urban renewal fund
- This does not increase taxes; it redirects how existing tax growth is allocated
- All funds collected must be reinvested within the district

Proposed Investment Categories

1. Community Identity (\$54 million)

- Storefront improvement grants
- Gresham Art Plaza improvements (splash pad, stage, wider paths, vendor storage)
- Main Avenue enhancements (Division to 5th Street)

- Wayfinding and interpretive signage
- Creative placemaking grants
- Residential rehabilitation grants
- Civic Neighborhood Park (approximately 2-acre neighborhood park)

2. Private Development Leverage (\$53 million)

- Public-private partnerships
- Commercial redevelopment and rehabilitation
- Residential development
- Strategic property acquisition
- Business development grants
- Seismic rehabilitation for buildings
- Housing development gap financing
- Downtown and Civic Mobility Hubs (parking structures with EV charging, bicycle parking)

3. Transportation and Utilities

- Infrastructure improvements (stormwater, utilities, streets)
- Burnside Road Boulevard reconstruction (Wallula to Eastman) with pedestrian-oriented features
- Main Avenue pedestrian and bicycle facilities
- Connection improvements to light rail

Timeline and Process

- **May 20, 2025:** Gresham Redevelopment Commission (GRDC) meeting - motion to start public review process
- **Following GRDC meeting:** 45-day minimum notice period to taxing districts
- **June-July 2025:** Briefings to Multnomah County, taxing jurisdictions, Planning Commission workshop
- **Mid-June 2025:** "Super notice" mailed to all city residents
- **August 2025:** City Council first reading and public hearing
- **September 2025:** City Council second reading and vote
- **Effective Date:** 2026 if approved

Community Input

- Draft plan and report will be available online (after May 20)
- Advisory committee to be formed to provide ongoing input
- Public comment period and hearing before City Council approval
- Email for comments/questions: urbanrenewal@greshamoregon.gov

Discussion Points

- Questions raised about including historic cemeteries in the district (currently excluded)
 - Concerns about addressing empty commercial spaces (such as former Kmart property)
 - Discussion of Rockwood Urban Renewal District sunset (will reach maximum indebtedness in approximately 2-2.5 years)
 - Property taxes from Rockwood will return to general fund as new district begins, creating a relatively seamless offset
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Traffic Safety Discussion: NW Birdsdale Avenue

Topic: Traffic safety concerns on Birdsdale between W Powell Blvd and NW Division St

Issues Identified

- Excessive speeding (neighbors reported vehicles traveling 50+ mph in 25 mph zone)
- Limited sight lines due to hills and vegetation
- Narrow street with no sidewalks
- Frequent near-misses and accidents when entering/exiting side streets
- Multiple residents shared personal experiences with accidents or near-accidents
- Particular concern at intersections: 5th & Birdsdale, 3rd Street, and other side streets

Historical Context

- This is a long-standing problem (residents reported speed issues documented 6+ years ago)
- Birdsdale is classified as a "minor arterial" street in city planning
- Street currently approximately 50-52 feet wide (varies by location)
- City's ultimate vision: 74-foot right-of-way with 4 lanes, median turn lane, bike lanes, planter strips, and sidewalks
- Cost estimate for full build-out: approximately \$18 million (2025 dollars)
- Full build-out would require property acquisition and removal of approximately 50 mature trees

Solutions Discussed

- **Speed bumps:** Concerns raised about emergency vehicle access, noise from trucks/trailers, effectiveness on arterial streets
- **Stop signs:** Suggested at various intersections to slow traffic
- **Lower speed limits:** With appropriate signage
- **Enhanced enforcement:** Of existing speed limits
- **Stop sign at 4th & Bella Vista:** Suggested to address parking/visibility issues near the park

Previous City Engagement

- Kathy Tenney reported contacting city 3 years ago; speed readers confirmed excessive speeds
- Discussion of yellow warning light at top of hill before 5th Street (not implemented)
- City indicated Angeline/Division light would divert traffic (did not have desired effect)
- Residents reported being told they needed to collect signatures from Birdsdale address holders (number required unclear)

Current Status

- John Bildsoe (Land Use Chair) has been in email dialogue with Chris Strong and other city transportation staff for over a month
- Information gathering phase - collecting data on traffic calming options, costs, and requirements
- Birdsdale improvements ranked #7 on city's traffic safety project priority list
- City has limited budget for traffic calming projects

Motion Made

Alex Kampf moved that the Neighborhood Association ask the city to put in writing the parameters for adding speed bumps and get clarification on the number of signatures required.

Second: Scott

Discussion: Concerns raised that information may already be available on city website; John Bildsoe offered to share existing email correspondence with interested parties

Vote: 5 in favor (2 in-person, 3 online), 11 opposed (9 in-person, 2 online), 1 abstention

Result: Motion failed

Action Items

- John Bildsoe to continue dialogue with city transportation staff
- John Bildsoe to share existing email correspondence with any neighbors who provide their email address
- Board to investigate city code requirements for traffic calming measures
- Neighbors encouraged to send comments and questions to John Bildsoe for inclusion in city discussions

Approval of February 3, 2025 Minutes

Minutes were available for review. One correction noted: decibel level number needs to be added to noise violation section.

Action: Minutes approved with corrections to be made by recording secretary.

Board Reports

President's Report

- Thanked neighbors who attended the rainy Bella Vista Park cleanup on Saturday
- Possible concert with Solid Brass on July 14th (details to be confirmed)
- Neighborhood picnic being planned for late July or early August
- Reminder: Association holds only 3 general meetings per year (beginning of year, May, and one in fall) plus summer picnic

Land Use Report

- New land division application at 880 Wallula: Large lot to be subdivided, keeping original house and creating two additional single-family home lots

Treasurer's Report

- Current balance: \$273.93

Raffle

Two \$10 gift certificates raffled:

- Winner #538-267: Legacy Coffee (winner's choice)
- Winner #538-265: Frenzy Frozen Yogurt

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:50 PM.

Minutes prepared by: Chris Fast (from Zoom transcript with help of AI)

Follow-Up Items

1. Barb to correct February minutes with decibel level information

2. John Wilson to share traffic safety email correspondence with interested neighbors
3. Board to send email list signup information to new attendees
4. Finalize Solid Brass concert details for July 14th
5. Set date for neighborhood picnic (late July/early August)
6. Continue monitoring urban renewal district progress and community input opportunities