

Shellmound Way General Plan Amendment Concerns

City Council and Bike/Ped Committee Members-

I'm writing to voice my support for General Plan amendment for the relocation of Shellmound Way. However, there is one condition that must be added and three concerns that should be addressed before the General Plan is amended.

Referring to the relocation of Shellmound Way, Page 2 of the Planning Commission Staff Report quotes the Kimley-Horn study;

"This measure will allow more southbound queue stacking distance between Shellmound Way and Powell Street and prevent queues from extending to westbound Shellmound Way. **This increased queue capacity for southbound movement is the only benefit of this alternative** because the shift of queue from Shellmound Way to Christie Avenue does not result in actual reduction of the number of queuing vehicles for this section of the loop."

The highlighted statement fails to acknowledge another very important consideration; bike/pedestrian connectivity and the breaking up of a 'mega-block'.

From the General Plan Guiding Principles:

4. **A walkable, fine-grained city, emphasizing pedestrians.**

The General Plan establishes that **all of Emeryville will be easily traversed on foot. A fine-grained pattern of blocks and streets is a fundamental prerequisite of a walkable and accessible city;** the General Plan promotes walking through encouragement of active uses, **creation of smaller parcels/blocks and inter-connections as large sites are redeveloped, and improved sidewalks, pathways, and streetscapes.** Where larger buildings may be appropriate, these shall be constructed with smaller footprints to preserve views and ensure pedestrian access. Where appropriate, in people-intensive places – such as retail, office, and residential districts – **pedestrians will have priority over automobiles,** and buildings shall be articulated and designed visually to engage and offer comfort to pedestrians.

Given the proposed amendment's failure to address the bike/pedestrian impact, I do not feel that finding b on page 4 of the Planning Commission Staff Report can be met.

Findings

b) The proposed amendment is consistent with the General Plan Guiding Principles, unless the Guiding Principles themselves are proposed to be amended;

I urge The City to revise the proposed General Plan amendment to include the condition of replacing the Shellmound Way, as currently shown in the General Plan, with a bike/pedestrian connection. This connection is critical to breaking up the 'mega-block' and improving bike/pedestrian connections in this Pedestrian Priority Zone. It also provides another connection path to the Emeryville Amtrak Station and could, potentially, connect to a new bike/pedestrian bridge over I-80.

During the General Plan update process we (Steering Committee) put great emphasis on seeking opportunities to create a fine-grained pattern of blocks. We looked at the block sizes of Portland, OR – a poster child for walkability.

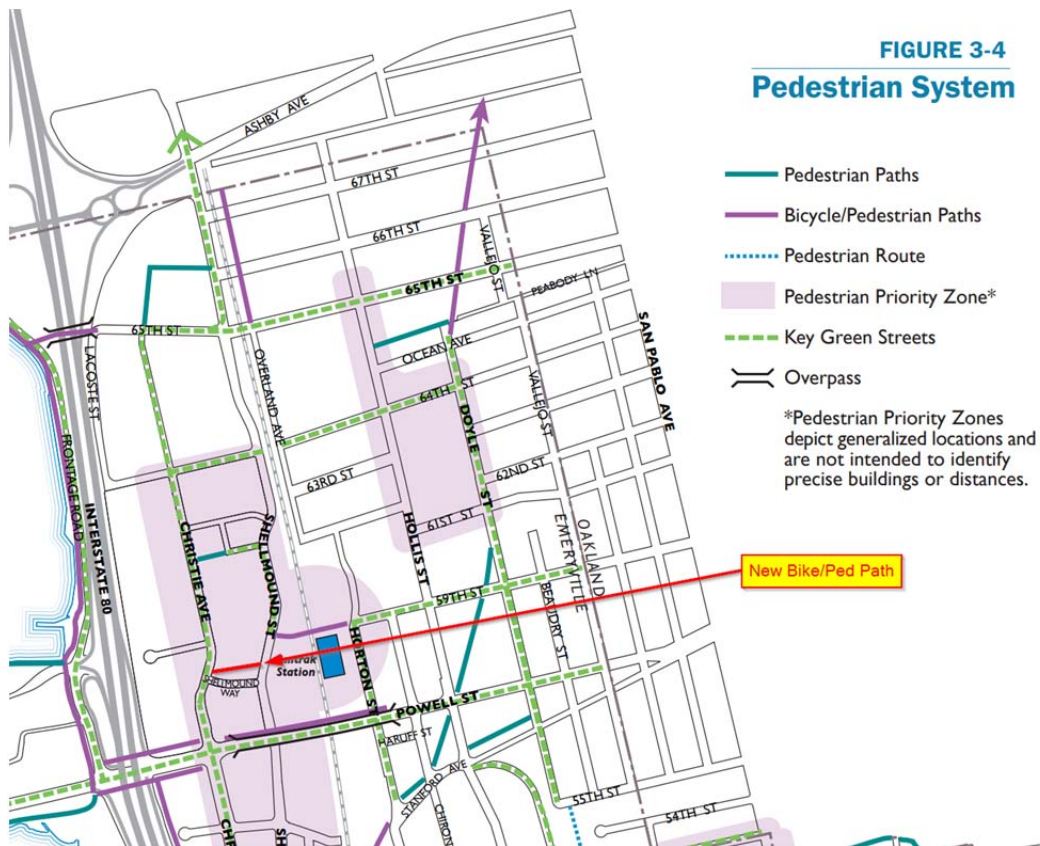
Portland's downtown features narrow streets—64 feet (20 m) wide—and square, compact blocks 200 feet (61 m) on a side, to create more corner lots that were expected to be more valuable. The small blocks also made downtown Portland pleasant to walk through.

Downtown Portland, Oregon - Wikipedia  McAfee SECURE
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downtown_Portland,_Oregon

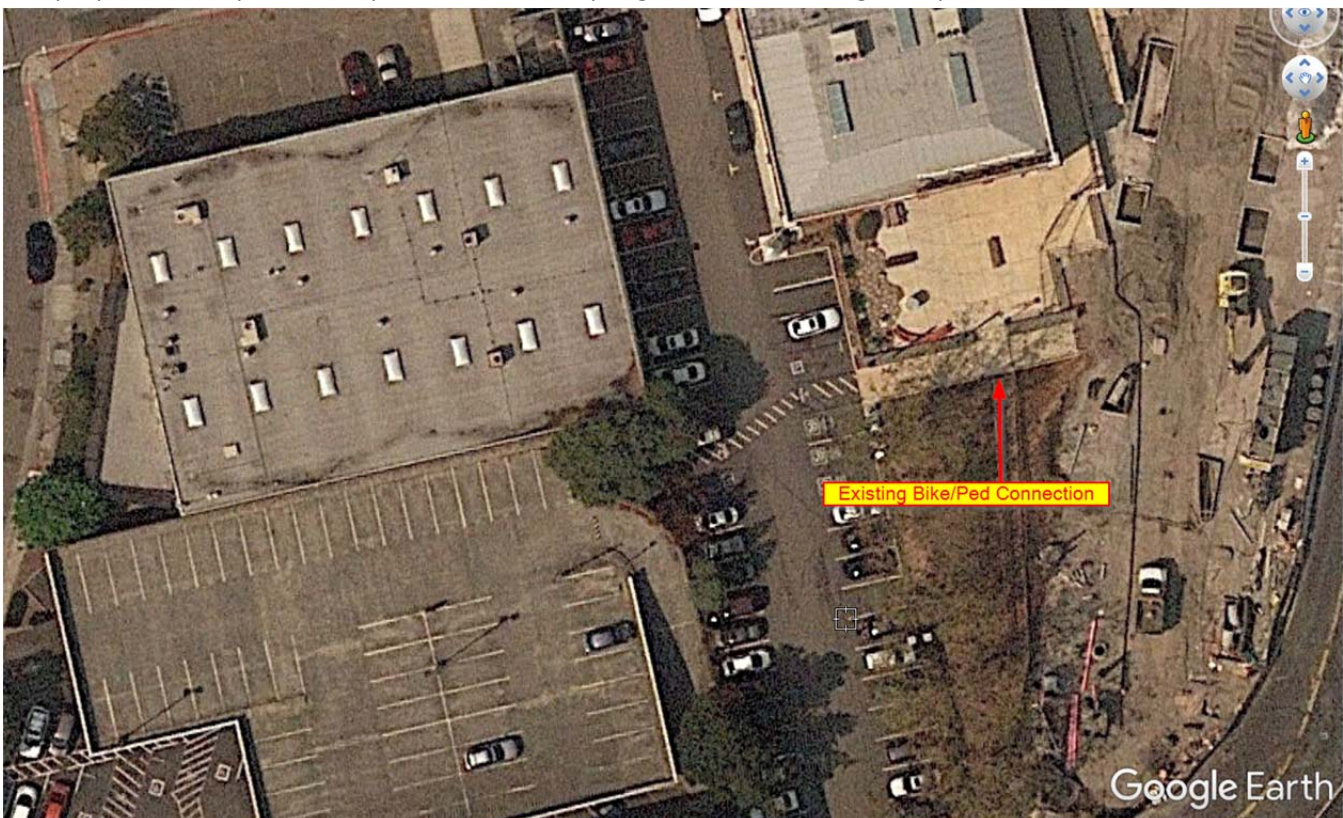


The path that I'm proposing would create a block that is approximately 200' long – the typical length of a city block in downtown Portland.





The proposed bike/pedestrian path would directly align with the existing bike/ped connection at the Public Market.





Why is it important to show this bike/pedestrian connection in the General Plan?

- If we don't show this connection, the chances of getting this connection are diminished.
- Identifying path clearly communicates requirements to the developer of 5850 Shellmound.

Benefits:

- Breaks up mega-block to provide much needed connection between Christie Avenue and Shellmound Street.
- Provides safe, direct, comfortable connection to transit and Bike Share.
- Bikes / pedestrians can avoid the hostile environment of Shellmound Way.

Impact on 5850 Shellmound Street development:

- Open space is required for the project. Requiring a path at the location shown should not significantly impact project cost.
- By identifying where we want the open space to be focused, the developer can incorporate this design feature at the beginning of the design process and minimize redesign.
- The path provides a community benefit that will help the developer achieve density/height bonus points.

Before the General Plan amendment is finalized, it would be prudent to address the following concerns:

1. Identify how the Gateway site will be accessed in the future
2. Identify how the City owned properties on Christie Avenue will be accessed by cars
3. The FAR for the 5850 Shellmound Way site should be re-evaluated and modeling should be done to assure that a high-rise can be built on this site given the existing FAR constraints.

Items 1 and 2 may be directly impacted by not relocating Shellmound Way. Item 3 may determine the feasibility of a high-rise on the 5850 Shellmound Way site. These items may require additional General Plan amendments. Until we have addressed these items, we should not proceed with the General Plan amendment.

Thank you for considering these issues.

John Scheuerman