

## **Summary: Oak Grove Community Walking Workshop – April 24, 2010**

### **McLoughlin Boulevard**

Tour Leaders: Åsa Bergman and Nathan McNeil

11-12 participants on two tours

#### **Overall**

McLoughlin Boulevard is seen as a problem; high speeds, lots of noise and air pollution and generally contribute to an undesirable environment. There were concerns that posted speeds are too high and cars travel even faster, that the area is unsafe and unpleasant to walk around and that crossings are treacherous. There was concern that there are not enough trees and other plantings to dampen the sounds of passing traffic, to counter the exhaust from vehicles and to absorb runoff. There were concerns about the high rate of vacancies and the fact that shops that do exist do not meet the needs or desires of workshop participants. There was also concern about safety and perceived safety along McLoughlin.

#### **Stop 1: Oak Grove Boulevard and McLoughlin (Fred Meyer parking lot)**

This intersection is dangerous and uncomfortable for pedestrians, bicyclists and even motorists. It encourages driving and discourages walking. The intersection lacks identity and could be anywhere in the U.S., but participants think Oak Grove Boulevard would be a better place than McLoughlin to mark Oak Grove identity. The central location of this intersection makes it valuable and should be taken advantage of. More trees would provide a good buffer between the sidewalks and the road, and pedestrian-oriented businesses could be clustered near this intersection so that people could park their cars and walk around, or arrive by foot or bike from the adjacent neighborhoods. The Fred Meyer parking lot and former Jiffy Lube site make for an abundance of parking and pavement, and a storm water swale might help.

#### **Stop 2: McLoughlin Way (in front of Hot Rod Pizza)**

McLoughlin Way lot has a lot of potential for development. It could become a plaza with sculptures and eye-catching light fixtures for those passing through on McLoughlin, or it could become a transit and small business hub, if combined with Oak Grove Square. It could turn away from McLoughlin entirely and open up towards the neighborhood. It seems too narrow and too close to McLoughlin to become a park, but a bio-swale could exist here, with educational features about how we treat our water in Oak Grove.

#### **Stop 3: McLoughlin and Chestnut**

Crossing McLoughlin between crosswalks is dangerous and difficult but often necessary, for example, at bus stops. Adding sidewalks is an improvement, and more pedestrian islands could be tried out, although they seem a bit dangerous. Pedestrian bridges could be a solution, but perhaps too expensive and maybe wouldn't be used. Because McLoughlin is a highway we might have to accept limited crossings. Focus the efforts on a few crossings, but make them really good. Only have bus stops at signalized/improved crossings.

---

---

## **Oak Grove Boulevard**

Tour Leaders: Alicia Crain and Carley Francis

10-11 participants on two tours

### **Transition: Walking along Oak Grove Blvd.**

Sidewalk quality, location and disconnection was noted and of concern. Participants were interested in better management and flexibility of choices around sidewalks, as well as more vegetation in planter strips. However, some residents generally do not like sidewalks because of a desire to maintain a rural feel of the area and because of the high infrastructure cost and low benefit on low-traffic streets. The intersection of East and Oak Grove was identified as a problem for all users, largely because of poor sightlines. Adding or retaining more trees and green was valued and creates a pleasant walking environment. Infill and redevelopment opportunities are of concern both because these can reduce green space and create unattractive or incongruous buildings within the typically older neighborhood houses. There were mixed opinions on the attractiveness of the area architecture.

### **Stop 1: Rupert and Oak Grove Blvd.**

Overall, there is interest in better use of space, maintenance of parking and provision of connected sidewalks and tree canopy. Some participants were generally comfortable with road speeds, the stop control around the jog on Rupert and other traffic movement issues, except for the lack of sidewalks. To some degree this was prefaced with the expectation of limited growth and/or traffic change in the area. It was noted that the experience at this intersection is entirely different in a car and on foot or bike. Many people would like to see sidewalk bumpouts at this location, but expressed concerns that it would put bicyclists in greater danger. Others would like to see a reduction in traffic speeds and voiced concerns about crossing Rupert, especially for children. There was a sense of a free-for-all at this location. Most people cross mid-block between the jog in the road because it is safer. Crosswalks at these two intersections were recommended. There was concern that putting in a sidewalk would eliminate access to the parking spaces, but also a desire to make this location more appealing

to pedestrians. Participants generally identify this as the Oak Grove historic district and thought signs or a gateway, potentially architectural, would be nice. Participants recognized that connectivity for emergency response must be maintained.

### **Stop 2: Arista and Oak Grove Blvd.**

Participants felt that more businesses and more visible activity at the street level are needed. There was concern for the feasibility of businesses given the low levels of foot traffic. However, it was also noted that the lower rents could be marketed as small or new business incubator space. Participants wanted more family oriented businesses, thought the high school helped generate a lot of business in the area, and felt that services that kept in mind the needs of Trolley Trail users would be good (food, drink, bathroom and bike repair). Other business recommendations included a brewery, ice cream/cupcake shop, specialty grocer, bakery and bookstore. Some participants warned that focusing too heavily on trail users could make the area unable to support itself in the off-season and so should focus on serving the neighborhood. Participants were dissatisfied with some of the buildings and uses along Oak Grove Blvd. (e.g. RV storage lot).

Most participants felt OK about multi-story buildings (2-4 floors), but were concerned about parking availability. However, most people agreed that parking is typically not more than 25% occupied on an average day. Many would like to see a complete streetscape redesign, with minimal or no setbacks, a consistent design theme, "Oak Grove" banners, things that would make it look interesting and inviting, as well as provide public gathering spaces for things like farmers markets. Many feel that the pedestrian environment is currently inadequate, making it difficult to navigate with a stroller, wheel chair, or other mobility devices. Some participants thought a formal boulevard treatment of this section of Oak Grove Blvd. would improve the pedestrian environment and slow traffic. Backing out of the angled parking was described as difficult due to poor sightlines. Some participants were interested in wide sidewalks with planted buffer strips and room for outdoor tables. Some larger changes were suggested including a north-south couplet of Rupert and Arista between Courtney and Oak Grove Blvd. and burying overhead power lines that run on Oak Grove.

The school fields were identified as important "park" space for the community. Some were interested in shared use of the fields and thought talking with the school about it would be a good first step. Sharing use of Sojourner for community gardening was also mentioned. Some thought capitalizing on the presence of three schools in a cluster as a way of educating children and youth could help foster a sense of community (i.e. community gardens, bioswales, pedestrian safety). The schools are seen as both a potential resource and a barrier. While they

have the potential for shared community use, they aren't used like this currently, and they take up a lot of space that could become better used to support a more vibrant business district.

**Stop 3: River Road and Oak Grove Blvd.**

This is a key intersection, which some thought was difficult/confusing for pedestrians and drivers, while others did not. It was noted that cars often turn across the bike lanes at this intersection and that some sort of buffer would help to protect bicyclists. This was identified as another good location for curb bumpouts. All agreed that it is a gateway to the business area. This area needs to be revitalized to draw people in – if it looks downtrodden, it will remain so. Some cautioned a need to make changes that are economically viable. East-west connectivity is not great and participants are interested in broad connections across the Willamette River to Lake Oswego, as well as better connectivity locally. Some participants thought a civic center might be a good use of the space currently occupied by Vista Grocery. At the very least, some thought, it should have consistent landscaping/streetscape design in order to create an identity or sense of place along Oak Grove Blvd.