Portland Mall Revitalization: The Making of ‘Great Streets’

Robert W. Hastings, FAIA Agency Architect, TriMet Railvolution, November 2, 2007
Portland Mall Revitalization: The Concept of ‘Great Streets’

• “We can design our cities by the way we design our streets” - Allan Jacobs, author of *Great Streets* and professor emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley in San Francisco
Portland Mall Revitalization: goals

• Positively influence the future of Downtown, the City of Portland, and the greater metropolitan region.
Portland Mall Revitalization: goals

- A manifestation of the community’s will to create a multi-modal street that enhanced livability; create a ‘Great Street’ through all of downtown.
Portland Mall Revitalization: goals

• Acknowledges ‘Station-as-Place’ and ‘Urban Rooms’ opportunities to articulate downtown characteristics & qualities.
Portland Mall Revitalization: goals

- Establishes an ongoing Mall Management Group to coordinate Safety, Maintenance, Programming, and Redevelopment.
Portland Mall: genesis

- A direct response to Portland’s landmark ‘Downtown Plan, 1972
- Use concentrated transit to catalyze redevelopment
Portland Mall, 1978: The original goals

- Composite design; 3 Distinct Layers of Improvements
  - Elements: Landscape/Streetscape, Pedestrian/Bus Patron, Circulation/Transit
    - Interlocking of design elements; creates a special place
    - Create an elevated attitude of bus transit; system wide overhaul
    - Family of furnishings, harmonize with traditional flavor of Portland
    - Herringbone pattern; red brick sidewalks
    - High quality transit shelters; bronze & glass
    - Continuous canopy of large trees
    - Exclusive Use Bus Lanes
    - Non-continuous Vehicular Lane
    - Intersections; Exceptional Pedestrian Emphasis

Thomas J. Houha, FAIA- report, October 18, 1991
Portland Mall: Place making

- The Mall refocused the region to the possibilities of downtown as a place.
- Creating a unified public realm in which all participate.
Portland Mall: completed in 1978
(extended north to Union Station, 1988)

- Redevelopment followed, with smaller scale development in Old Town/China Town
- Transit complimented vehicular traffic access
- High quality transit/furnishings created a new civic realm
Crossing the Mall with Light Rail

• The addition of Light Rail (Banfield, 1985 & Westside 1998) through downtown highlighted the importance of the pedestrian safety and connections.
• Reinforced the importance of human scale: in buildings & movement.
Portland Mall: 25 years later

- High quality materials/design + high level of use + under funding of maintenance = deteriorating streetscapes
- Good pedestrian connectivity even with concentration of all modes
- 200’ block spacing influences pedestrian connectivity
2003 Mall Revitalization & South Corridor Light Rail Project issues

• South Corridor Project contrasts regional connectivity with downtown intensity.
2004 Mall Revitalization & South Corridor Light Rail Project issues

- South Corridor Project = The future livability of the region + the importance of downtown’s accessibility (economic, cultural, educational)
Portland Mall Segment
Portland Mall Revitalization: Project Goals

2003-6 Design Efforts
- Local Improvement District: intensive public input from City residents, business, and institutions
  - Ensured that light rail could extend south to I-405.
  - High quality transit elements and streetscapes.
  - Further public input on key design issues:
    - Intersections
    - Streetscapes
    - Roadway & track way
    - Street trees
    - Select on Mall parking spaces.
Portland Mall Revitalization: ‘Great Streets Principles’

- One of the most important components of a community’s public realm.
- Great streets convey the quality, character and aspirations that distinguish the community.
- Great streets are not about buildings and streets. They are about the people who use them now and will use them in the future.
- Reflecting the best features of the surrounding community.
- Other defining characteristics of great streets:
  - the ability to attract, stimulate and sustain desirable activity
  - balance diverse transportation modes
  - instill a sense of stewardship by the businesses and residents located on and near the street front.
Portland Mall Revitalization: Examples of ‘Great Streets

- Via del Corso- Rome
Portland Mall Revitalization: Examples of ‘Great Streets’

- Fifth Avenue, New York City
Portland Mall Revitalization: Examples of ‘Great Streets

- State Street- Chicago
  - Pedestrian scale within urban dimensions
  - Accommodation of multiple modes
Portland Mall Revitalization: Examples of ‘Great Streets’

- Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis
Portland Mall Revitalization: Examples of ‘Great Streets’

- Market Street, San Francisco
Portland Mall Revitalization: Examples of ‘Great Streets

- 16th Street Mall, Denver
Portland Mall Revitalization: ‘Great Streets Observations

- Reveal the activities and qualities that distinguish the city
- Accommodate all modes without compromise
- Require proper behavior of all activities
- Those who manage activities also sustain the street
- Establish and maintain a physical quality that inspires all who use it
Portland Mall: a Great Street
Portland Mall Revitalization: The Making of ‘Great Streets

- Creating the right balance

Renovate the Mall  Safety  Business Needs
Cost  Transit Capacity
Enliven the Mall  Downtown Attractiveness  Operability
Clarity

Protect and strengthen the office and retail core
Improve downtown transit service
Portland Mall Revitalization: Using transit to make a ‘Great Street’

Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue options:

Goals- Provide LRT & Bus Transit, Vehicular thru lane, Pedestrian Safety

Options-
• Flexible Island
• Left
• Shared Left
• Island
• Right
Portland Mall Revitalization: Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue Options

- Flexible Island
Portland Mall Revitalization: Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue Options

Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue options:

Options:

• Left
Portland Mall Revitalization: Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue Options

Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue options:

Options:
- Shared Left

Option A (no curb)

Option B (curb)
Portland Mall Revitalization: Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue Options

Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue options:
Options-
• Island

“Flipped” Island

“Original” Island
Portland Mall Revitalization: Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue Options

Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue options:
Options-
• Right

Wide Right with Wide Right Transit Priority

Just Right
Portland Mall Revitalization: Analysis of 5th & 6th Avenue Options

- Testing & Evaluation-Conceptual Design for Mall Revitalization: Transit Operations & Transportation Strategy
Portland Mall Revitalization: Using transit to make a ‘Great Street’

Impact/Response:
visual simulation

• “Just Right” is the winner
Portland Mall Revitalization: Using transit to make a ‘Great Street’

- Challenge of balancing Transit Operations (street) with Pedestrian & Transit Patrons (streetscape)

Up to four buses can fit without blocking trackway

Coordinated operation for safety, efficiency, and mobility challenged riders
Portland Mall Revitalization: Using transit to make a ‘Great Street’

- Challenge of balancing Transit Operations (street) with Pedestrian & Transit Patrons (streetscape)
Portland Mall Revitalization: Using transit to make a ‘Great Street’

- Safety
- Citizens for Accessible Transit
- Block By Block reviews
Portland Mall Revitalization: Using transit to make a ‘Great Street’

- Mock-up and testing design/engineering assumptions.
Portland Mall Revitalization: Using transit to make a ‘Great Street’

- Mock-up and testing design/engineering assumptions.
  - Refinement of Conceptual Design: Advanced 30% PE
  - Transit Operations: refining the ‘Right Side Weave’ with ‘Q-Stop’.
Portland Mall Revitalization: The Making of ‘Great Streets

• Finding common ground: reaching agreement (active listening)
Portland Mall Revitalization: The Making of ‘Great Streets

- Multi-use clarity = balance of mode needs.
Great Streets = Balancing Needs

• Transit Vehicle Needs
  - Light Rail
  - Bus
  - Maintenance
  - Emergency
  - Special Events

Up to four buses can fit without blocking trackway

Coordinated operation for safety, efficiency, and mobility challenged riders
Great Streets= Balancing Needs

- Public Vehicular Needs
  - Automobiles
  - Truck traffic
  - Delivery (FedEx, Armored Vehicles,
  - Bicycles
  - Other (skateboards, ‘Segways’)
  - Maintenance (Trash Collection, Repairs)
  - Public Safety (Police, Fire, Emergency)
Great Streets—Balancing Needs

- Pedestrian Needs
  - Crosswalks
  - Signage & Safety
  - Discourage mid-block crossing
  - Universal Access
Great Streets = Balancing Needs

- Streetscape Needs
  - Pedestrian Through Zones
  - Furnishings Zones
  - Public Art
  - Transit Board/De-boarding
  - Retail & Commercial Activation
  - Cultural/Public Institutions
  - Alternative Transportation Parking
Great Streets = Balancing Needs

- South Mall Streetscape Needs
  - Pedestrian Through Zones
  - Landscaping: storm water filtration
  - Public Art
  - Transit Board/De-boarding
  - Retail & Commercial Activation
  - Portland State University
Great Streets = Balancing Needs

Create a new place.
Bring pedestrian-scaled activity to the street through new retail services.

- Remove three existing awnings
- Add outdoor cafe, utilizing existing door
- Add twinkle lights to tree
- Add cafe heater utility lines
- Create exterior flower stand in under-utilized display windows
Great Streets = Balancing Needs
Portland Mall - “Great Street”

- Reveal the activities and qualities that distinguish the city
- Accommodate all modes without compromise
- Require proper behavior of all activities
- Those who manage activities also sustain the street
- Establish and maintain a physical quality that inspires all who use it