

December 22, 2016

To: Jeff Levine, AICP, Director, Planning & Urban Development
Members of the Planning Board

RE: **502 Deering Center**

We are pleased to submit this application for a Level III Site Plan and Subdivision Review. We believe 502 Deering Center is an excellent project that purposefully demonstrates how key goals for the region, the City, the neighborhood and for our contemporary times might be met by a single small project. Goals such as village mixed-use, good urban design, mixed transportation use, small-lot infill, middle income housing, neighbor-to-neighbor collaborative planning, public access, and context-based design and others are described in the following pages and in the application.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions at all. We stand by to assist your process, and look forward to a smooth and efficient review. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Denis Lachman

C DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT & INTRODUCTION

Section 1 Written Introduction & Project Goals

Section 2 Shared Infrastructure, Pocket Park & Mixed Transportation

Section 3 Village Context & Visual Introduction to Project

Section 1 Written Introduction & Project Goals

Growing Portland: *The question is not whether Portland will grow, but how well it will manage the growth that is now certain to come. As the City looks to the future, it faces twin challenges: workforce development and housing. Careful urban design can address both issues by creating vibrant mixed-use neighborhood centers and reducing traffic congestions....*

To be successful, Portland must grow its workforce, broaden its property tax base and create greater housing opportunities for all social classes along its connecting thoroughfares and in select neighborhood centers on and off the peninsula. Portland must pay careful attention throughout to good urban design, learning from other successful cities.

Successful cities today build mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods that bring together housing, businesses, shops, cultural venues, green space and pocket parks, creating settings where residents can walk to shop, work, play, rest, engage and visit.

Over the next decade, Portland can and should aim to have half its population live and work in the city. Portland today teems with possibilities. we can make this city even more attractive to new residents, especially those needed to replace retiring workers; to new businesses that will come where talent resides; and to current and future residents who will enjoy a livable city of vibrant, connected neighborhoods. (Maine Sunday Telegram, Growing Portland: Commentary by Richard Barringer, Joseph McDonnell, John Dorrer, Ryan Wallace, 10/16/2016)

Location, Location, Location at the Heart of this Vibrant Mixed-use Neighborhood Center

Portland's recent success is fueling on-peninsula commercial and residential real estate to soar, causing spill over and increased interest off-peninsula. One of Portland's most desirable off-peninsula neighborhoods is Deering Center, well known for its schools, walkability, village center, University of New England and many other features. In fact, Deering Center already is, and has been for generations, a classic *mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhood that bring together housing, businesses, shops, cultural venues, green space and pocket parks, creating settings where residents can walk to shop, work, play, rest, engage and visit. "Perhaps more than any other neighborhood in Portland, Deering Center has the feel of a typical late-nineteenth century small town downtown (Maine Historic Preservation, Forest Avenue and Stevens Avenue, August 2015).* The hub of the neighborhood is its commercial village center, and at the heart of the village is this project - **502 Deering Center.**

Right Project, Right Time, Right Location, Right Goals

As Portland's development spills off the peninsula, and there is significant nearby development around the village center, such as UNE and the Mother House Project, there is increasing interest in Deering Center as an inviting and walkable village center and destination. Unlike other neighborhood centers that were formerly vibrant but have been eroded by ever encroaching

roadways and traffic (such as Morrill's Corner, Rosemont, Woodford's), Deering Center Village has remains fundamentally intact as a village center, so it needs no major investment rebuilding its "bones". A convergence of the right project, at the right time, at the right location with the right goals makes 502 Deering Center an ideal project for Growing Portland.

Overarching Goal: Building Community with Community Buildings

In the village there has been little renovation and no new commercial spaces for decades. 502 Deering Center's goal is to catalyze village and community vitality with Traditional Mixed Uses, such as commercial on the ground floor with residential units on upper floors. This mixed use building type is a perfect match with the current neighborhood business zone, so no zone change is required. Traditional Mixed Uses also encourage neighbors and Portlanders to walk, shop local and socialize - which are essential features for thriving community. In other words - building Maine communities with community buildings

Goal: Make Property Compliant with its Zoning

The property is zoned Neighborhood Business (B1-b), to *"provide appropriate opportunities for the establishment of smallscale ground floor commercial uses to serve a local market, while preserving residential uses and character above the ground floor..... Suitable locations for this zone may include (Main Streets) and sites with existing or traditional neighborhood retail and service uses."* No zone change is required. However the property is currently non-conforming with its B1-b zone because the existing house is set back from the street, and consequently does not meet the "Urban Street Wall" requirement. The new addition is purposefully designed to correct the Urban Street Wall and meet all other all B1-b requirements.

Goal: Build Traditional Mixed Uses

502 Deering Center's goal is to catalyze village and community vitality with Traditional Mixed Uses. **Commercial** on the ground floor with **Residential Units** on 2 upper floors will generate a beehive of activity, enlivening the village's already-healthy mix of traditional uses. The mixed use building type is a perfect match with its neighborhood business zone, so no zone change is required.

Goal: Improve Pedestrian Safety

Joint utilization of a single driveway reduces existing curb cuts from 3 to 1, which improves safety by eliminating existing dangerous back-outs across the sidewalk, especially with so many children in the area.

Goal: Build New Housing for Middle Income Portlanders

Portland has a serious housing shortage and 502 Deering Center responds by transforming the existing single family house with 1 dwelling unit into a mixed use project with 4 dwelling units. This housing shortage is especially critical for middle income residents and 502 Deering Center provides desperately needed and rare housing opportunities for average earners who have or seek to set long term roots here to live, work and play. This dynamic - existing limited supply and high demand - makes housing a premium.

Goal: Create a Village Pocket Park

A key building block for a thriving community is a public space - a welcoming, sunny, pause-and-meet spot. The new Village Pocket Park is an extraordinary opportunity to carve out precious private land in the village, devote private resources to its design, construction and maintenance, and program it as a public amenity for public use. The Village Pocket Park is perfectly situated to be a pause-and-meet spot along the Deering Center Walking Trail (yet to be created), that could cross the existing Portland Tails recreational trail to create a complementary recreational/urban trail intersection.

Goal: Demonstrate Smart Neighborhood Infill

Portland has many infill opportunities that need to be developed for smart and sustainable growth. These infill sites are typically small and restricted in size, which creates many steep design and financial challenges. Limited sites underperform for large developers, so it is smaller developers who must overcome with their many challenges. Because their surroundings are tight, expectations are high for them to fit well into their context. This project seeks to demonstrate how smart site and building design on a limited budget can fit while accomplishing multiple goals. Examples include a new urban street wall, new activity-infusing commercial space, new middle income housing, a jointly shared driveway, reduced impervious area and associated stormwater runoff, improved pedestrian safety by reducing curb cuts and eliminating back-outs across sidewalk, a new Village Pocket Park and mixed transportation use opportunities, such as enhanced bus, bike and walking amenities.

Goal: Demonstrate How Village Scale Mixed Transportation Use Can Reduce Car Use & Parking

Mixed Transportation is an approach that encourages a variety of transportation modes – walking, busing and biking - in addition to cars. The project seeks to demonstrate how making it easy and convenient encourages people to choose mixed forms of transportation. 502 Deering Center is perfectly situated to *create greater housing opportunities along its connecting thoroughfares and in select neighborhood centers on and off the peninsula.*

Goal: Meet Market Demand for “Live Small”

Some residents, including both downsizing boomers and upcoming millennials are committed to the concept of “living small” to reduce their cost and our carbon footprint. For many who cannot afford to live on peninsula, 502 Deering Center is an ideal opportunity - walkable, mixed transportation friendly in highly desirable close-in neighborhood.

Goal: Demonstrate Neighborhood-Friendly Development Process

We live in the neighborhood, so this project is **of the hood, by the hood and for hood**. As residents ourselves, we are committed to a neighborhood-friendly development process that keeps everyone informed. Frequent communication and clear graphic information helps gets everyone on the same page by fostering common understanding. For many, seeing is a step towards understanding, which in turn is a step towards shared support. In the spring of 2016, in advance of the City-required neighborhood meetings, we met with business owners up and down Stevens Ave, and received support and encouragement. In November 2016, we presented to the Deering Center Neighborhood Association, and again received support and encouragement. Building on this early support will be typical City required neighborhood meetings.

Goal: Demonstrate Collaborative Site Planning & Shared Infrastructure

502 Stevens Ave and 510 Stevens Ave are abutting properties both developing mixed-use infill projects. The two projects are collaborating to achieve better land and resource efficiency and good urban design than each could individually. Sharing a single driveway, utilities and stormwater management is a high priority for both projects, and sharing infrastructure is also a high priority City-wide for land and resource efficiency.

Goal: Design to Fit Gracefully in to Context

Deering Center Village has good Main Street architectural “bones”. The overarching design goal is to complement the existing context (emphasis on “we”), rather than make a strong attention-seeking design statement (emphasis on “me”). The design wants to be a graceful neighbor now and a century from now.

Section **2 Shared Infrastructure, Public Park & Mixed Transportation Use**

*Careful urban design can address ... issues by creating vibrant mixed-use neighborhood centers and reducing traffic congestions.... To be successful, Portland must pay careful attention throughout to **good urban design**, learning from other successful cities.... Successful cities today build neighborhoods that bring together housing, businesses, shops, cultural venues, green space and **pocket parks**, creating settings where residents can walk to shop, work, play, rest, engage and visit. (Maine Sunday Telegram, Growing Portland: Commentary by Richard Barringer, Joseph McDonnell, John Dorrer, Ryan Wallace, 10/16/2016)*

Abutting Projects Share Driveway & Utilities for Land & Resource Efficiency and Good Urban Design

502 Stevens Ave and 510 Stevens Ave are abutting properties both developing mixed use infill projects. The two projects are purposefully collaborating to achieve better land and resource efficiency and good urban design than each could individually. Sharing infrastructure is a high priority for both projects and is also a high priority City-wide for land and resource efficiency. This goal is stated explicitly in Portland Design Manual's standards for B-5 Urban Commercial Business zones (a more intense zone with higher expectations than this B1-b Neighborhood Commercial):

*a. Shared infrastructure: Shared **circulation, parking, and transportation** infrastructure shall be provided to the extent practicable, with utilization of **joint curb cuts, walkways, service alleys, bus pull-out areas, and related infrastructure shared with abutting lots** and roadways. **Easements for access for abutting properties and shared internal access points at property lines shall be provided where possible to facilitate present or future sharing of access and infrastructure.***

*d. Parking lots shall be located to the maximum extent practicable toward the **rear of the property and shall be located along property lines where joint use or combined parking areas with abutting properties are proposed** or anticipated.*

Shared Driveway Provides Multiple Benefits - In the village, land and resources are very limited and sharing a driveway is an efficient use of both. Impervious area and associated storm runoff are reduced. Joint utilization by 502 and 510 reduces curb cuts from 3 to 1 and removing existing curb cuts eliminates dangerous back-outs across the sidewalk, especially with so many children in the area. Sharing a driveway allows precious resources and land otherwise devoted to cars, to instead be reallocated to a Village Pocket Park and Mixed Use Transportation opportunities. See below for a more complete description. Sharing a driveway is also an example of how collaboration by neighbors can create opportunities with multiple benefits, beyond what is individually possible. In addition to the benefits of joint driveway utilization, utility infrastructure is also shared. Power, water and sewer all must be brought underground by deep trenching across Stevens Ave. Shared utility infrastructure by 502 and 510 to a common vault allows a single less invasive trench (rather

than multiple) with a single street closure. In addition, a common vault allows an unsightly power pole in front of the property to be removed, thereby improving the Stevens Ave streetscape

Public Space on Private Property: New Village Pocket Park & Patio

*Successful cities today build neighborhoods that bring together housing, businesses, shops, cultural venues, green space and **pocket parks**, creating settings where residents can walk to shop, work, play, rest, engage and visit. (Maine Sunday Telegram, Growing Portland: Commentary by Richard Barringer, Joseph McDonnell, John Dorrer, Ryan Wallace, 10/16/2016)*

The overarching goal is a new project that catalyzes increased economic and social activity in the village center, specifically by encouraging neighbors and Portlanders to walk, shop local and socialize - which are essential features for thriving community. A key building block for a thriving community is a public space - a welcoming, sunny pause-and-meet spot. *“It takes a space to make a community, and a community to make a space”*. The new Village Pocket Park is an extraordinary opportunity to carve out precious private land in the village, devote private resources to its design, construction and maintenance, and program it as an amenity for public use. A sign might say *“Welcome to Deering Center Pocket Park. Please sit, enjoy and respect our park”*.

Designed for Both Park and Patio – Land and resources are limited in the village, so the public pocket park is designed to flexibly accommodate multiple uses (like countless other public spaces around the globe where land and resources are also limited). For example, tables and chairs can be brought out each afternoon and evening to transform from public Park to a restaurant’s private seating/eating Patio. Even a small park/patio provides ideal opportunities for mini performances, (such as the neighborhood’s annual Porch Fest), arts and youth activities. The Patio is an outstanding amenity for a restaurant.

Access, Visibility & Features Set the Stage for Activity – The Park/Patio is accessed directly from the Stevens Ave public sidewalk, or from within the restaurant (when it’s a Patio). The Park/Patio is easily visible from the street, making it inviting. It is physically near street activity, but separated enough to be experienced quietly. The Park/Patio has specialty paving that makes it level, safe, attractive and universally accessible. Southeast orientation provides morning sun, while the building protects from the north wind. Pervious paving minimizes stormwater runoff. Plantings (native drought tolerant) soften edges. Reused granite foundation facing slabs provide bench seating + sculptural interest and a Neighborhood Kiosk provides neighbors with happenings. This pocket park sets the stage for many uses, from quiet one-to-one pause-n-meet, to active events such as performances by local school groups, sidewalk fairs, Porchfest (existing neighborhood music event) and many others. Though small in size, this pocket park is poised to make a potentially large contribution to the village identity and pride of the neighborhood and village.

Mixed Transportation Use Reduces Car Use & Parking

Deering Center Village is a concentration of commercial and social activity, and its compactness means land is very limited for sites, buildings and parking. This project, and its neighbor 510 Stevens Ave, are in the heart of the village. Mixed Transportation is a fresh and smarter approach that offsets parking by encouraging use of other transportation modes, primarily Walking, Public Transit (bus) and Biking. This project seeks to be an example how small infill development on limited sites can purposefully dedicate features to support a mix of transportation options, in addition to cars.

Shared Driveway Specifically Creates Mixed Transportation Opportunities – Sharing a driveway allows precious resources and land otherwise devoted to cars and parking to instead be reallocated to mixed transportation opportunities, as described below:

Features That Encourage Walking – The neighborhood is renowned for its walkability, and this project offers features to encourage even more. Public seating, safe connections, lighting, signs, benches for resting or pausing to watch or visit are all incentives that encourage walking. Removing the existing curb cut eliminates dangerous back-outs across the sidewalk, especially with so many children in the area. In addition, the Village Pocket Park encourages walking because it is perfectly situated to be a pause-and-meet spot along the Deering Center Walking Trail (yet to be created), that could connect UNE with Deering High School/ Burbank Public Library. The existing Portland Tails recreational trail crosses from Evergreen Cemetery into Baxter Woods diagonally across from the site, creating an exciting opportunity for a complementary recreational /urban trail intersection. Possible sign “Deering Center Village welcomes you to sit here and walk to many local destinations. UNE 500 steps, DHS 500 steps, Burbank Library 400 steps etc”.

Features That Encourage Public Transit – 502 Deering Center is perfectly situated to *create greater housing opportunities along its connecting thoroughfares and in select neighborhood centers on and off the peninsula.* There is an existing bus stop in front of the property, and this project purposefully enhances it for use by residents of 502 who live above, for residents of 510 who live next door, and neighborhood users. A granite bench (reused foundation block) provides permanent seating sheltered from the weather by the upper floor bay above. The SE facing bench captures morning sun, while the building protects from north wind. The overhang’s down light provides safe illumination and safety. The corner bench is purposefully located for excellent sight lines to both inbound and outbound buses. From the protected bench, out-bound riders can see their bus approaching from several block away, then cross the street to catch it. With real-time bus route status, residents who live above can drop (downstairs)-n-ride.

Features That Encourage Biking – Ample, safe and covered bike parking encourages neighborhood residents who may not wish to bike all the way into downtown a convenient alternative - leave their car at home and instead bike to the village. Coordinated with real-time bus route status for efficiency, they can park their bikes and hop n ride the bus. Note: this is a 21st century update of Deering Center’s historic 19th and early 20th century transportation pattern, when residents commuted to downtown by streetcar. Bike parking also encourages neighbors to bike into the village to patronize businesses.

Features That Encourage Electric Cars - Electric cars reduce emissions, and to encourage their hassle-free convenient use, a charging station may be provided. The charging station may be part of a larger network or corridor that serves both patrons and neighbors with electric vehicles, and even encourages others to buy these environmentally friendly vehicles.

Cars Share – Car shares (Uhaul CarShare or Zipcar) may be an option to allow some urban dwellers to reduce their car ownership and vehicle trips.

Section **3** Village Context & Visual Introduction to Project

The Neighborhood

“Geographic center of city with lovely homes and a feeling of togetherness. The longtime bedroom community features tree-lined streets, a high school and time-saving businesses..... All within a short walk are staples of the neighborhood ... schools, the Burbank branch of the Portland Public Library, and businesses....”. (Press Herald, Welcome to Portland: Deering Center, 12/2015)

Deering Center is the quintessential traditional American neighborhood. It is much loved as a family-friendly, walkable residential neighborhood close to downtown today, as it was in the 19th century, when it was still an independent town. With about 4000 residents, a median household income of \$66,830, median age of 43 (2015), 51% of households are owner-occupied and over 80% have a college degree, plus abundant schools, recreation and amenities, Deering Center is one of Portland’s most active, affluent and desirable neighborhoods.

Walkable Village

Today, Deering Center’s most notable characteristic – besides the handsome, treelined residential blocks – is the strip of local businesses and public institutions along Stevens Avenue, a miniature town center. (Press Herald, Welcome to Portland: Deering Center, 12/2015)

The neighborhood’s heart has always been, and continues to be, its village center, a collection of local businesses, services and civic and education institutions. At the heart of this village center will be 502 Deering Center, a new mixed-use building.

Walkability was the underlying pattern when Deering Center was first settled as an independent town. Today, there is renewed interest in car-independence and active living. Walkability is a function of safety and convenience. Deering Center has an abundance of opportunities - local businesses, professional services, civic institutions, schools and recreation - all within a **3 Minute Village, 5 Minute Village** and **10 Minute Village**. Superb walkability remains one of the outstanding

features that make Deering Center one of Portland's premier neighborhoods, especially for families and boomers.

Deering Center Micro-Community

The geographic heart of Portland, Deering Center, is sometimes regarded as one of the "best kept secrets," in terms of living situations. With the average rent hovering around \$1,461, below the city-wide average, and wide, tree-lined streets close to time saving businesses, Deering Center is a desirable neighborhood.... Deering Center is an example of the kind of up and coming, micro-community that Portland could leverage to house the people that can't find a livable space on the peninsula.

Urban infill spilling into the Deering community would be good news. The redevelopment of vacated schools and institutional buildings, could also create new housing options in this working-class neighborhood. But in order to assure that Deering continues to grow more attractive to potential individuals and families, they need to have reliable transportation to Portland's cultural core..... An increased variety in public transport options and routes, would discourage car usage (and the subsequent space needed for parking), while also addressing the "psychological demand to live on the peninsula." Most people that are itching to live downtown, would probably settle for Deering Center, if they knew they could zip into the Old Port, quickly, easily and affordably.

The city of Portland needs to encourage building projects within our fringe neighborhoods, expand the transit services and gently nudge people off the peninsula so they'll find neighborhoods with enough shops, space and charms to make their lives as enjoyable as it might be downtown. (Neighborhood By Neighborhood: Solutions To Portland's Housing Crisis, Portland Phoenix, May 13, 2016)

Visual Introduction to 502 Deering Center
from a presentation to the
Deering Center Neighborhood Association
Annual Meeting, November 2016



**Portland Growing:
Not whether, but how.**

Press Herald, Oct 2016

**Project's
Overarching Goal:
strengthen the
vitality of our
neighborhood
commercial center**

HALF - MILE NEIGHBORHOOD

HALF-MILE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

The Half-Mile Neighborhood concept is based in the notion that you should be able to walk to basic services in your neighborhood. Schools, parks + recreation, shopping and public transportation should be accessible within 2600 feet of where we live, a nine minute walk. The Portland Peninsula offers this lifestyle – we propose to expand its presence throughout Portland by strengthening the vitality of neighborhood commercial centers.

- UNIVERSITY
- SCHOOL
- GROCERY/MARKET
- ▲ METRO HUB

- TRAIL CIRCULATION
- RAIL CIRCULATION
- MAIN VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

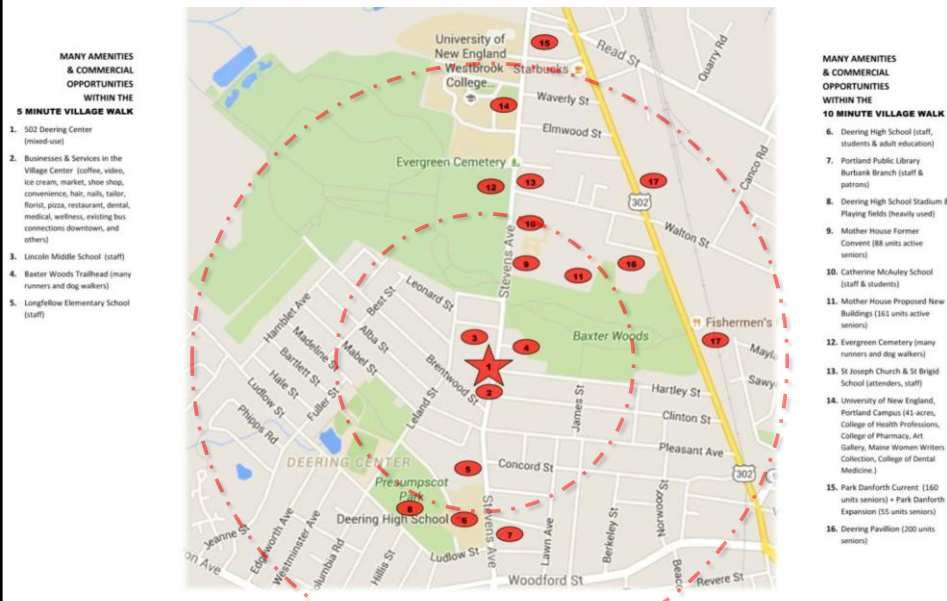


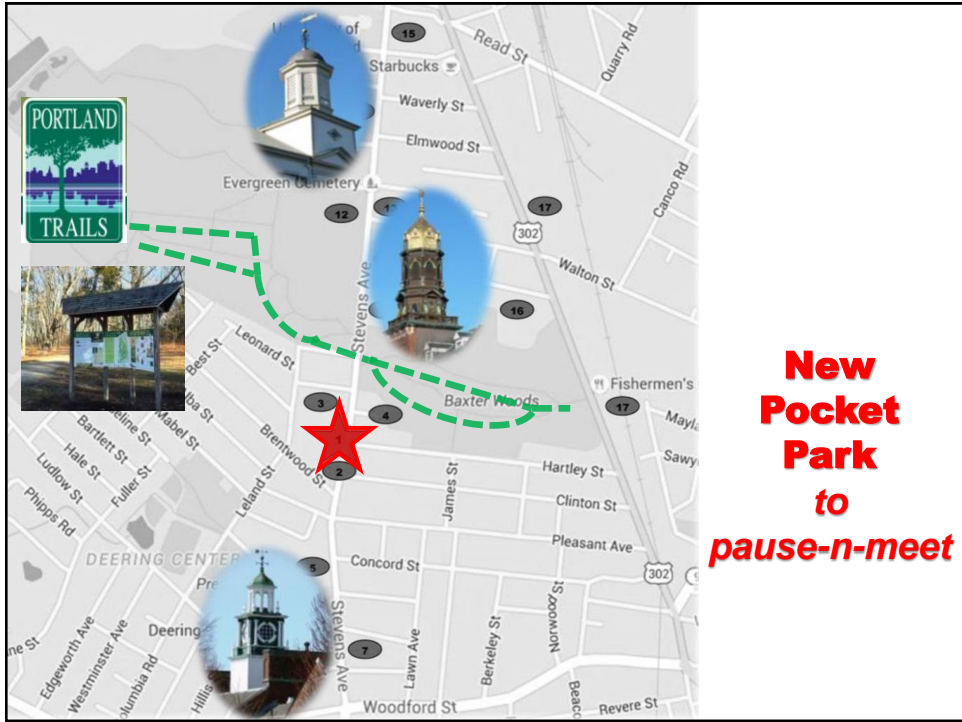
Deering Center at the intersection of Stevens and Pleasant Avenues in the 1940s (MHS).

Perhaps more than any other neighborhood in Portland, Deering Center has the feel of a typical late-nineteenth century small town downtown. The concentration of imposing civic and institutional buildings, small group of commercial storefronts, and interspersed residences with long streets of homes adjoining, gives Stevens Avenue this special character. The nearby Evergreen Cemetery and Baxter Woods Park add to the effect. Other areas in Deering once had a similar character, including Woodford's, Morrill's, and Allens Corners, but modifications to the streets in those locations to accommodate arterial traffic to the outer suburbs have altered their character and made them unsuited to pedestrian activities. Deering Center is still an entirely walkable neighborhood, which contributes greatly to its character.

Deering Center Village – Entirely walkable

5 min/1/4 mile walk & 10 min/1/2 mile walk



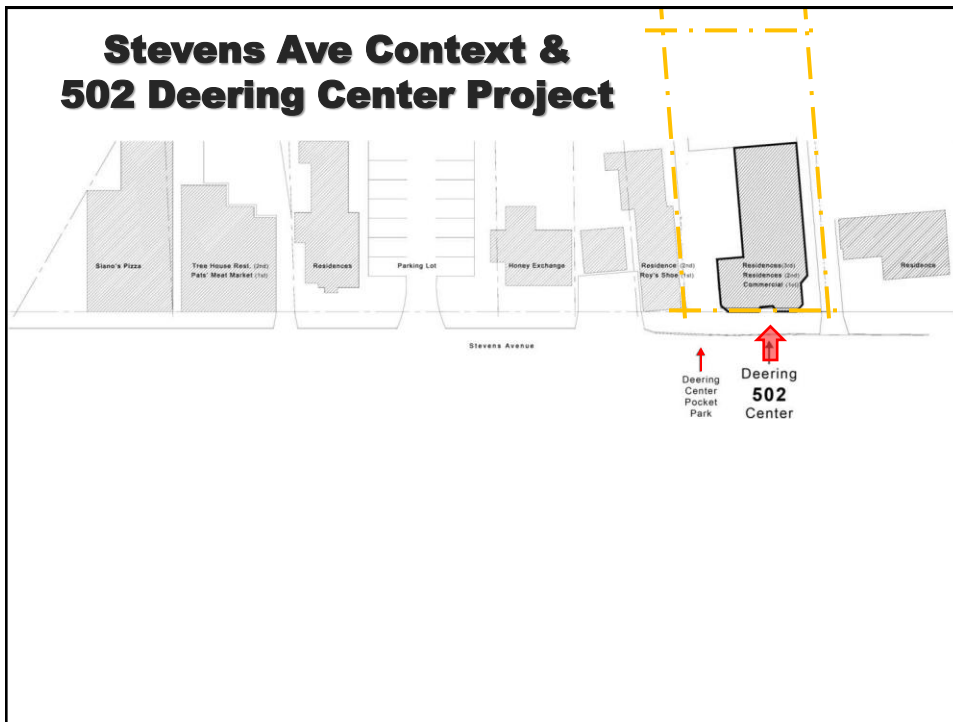


**Its takes a place to
make a community,
and a community
to make a place:
example pocket
pause-n-meet
places around Portland**



Lachman Architects & Planners

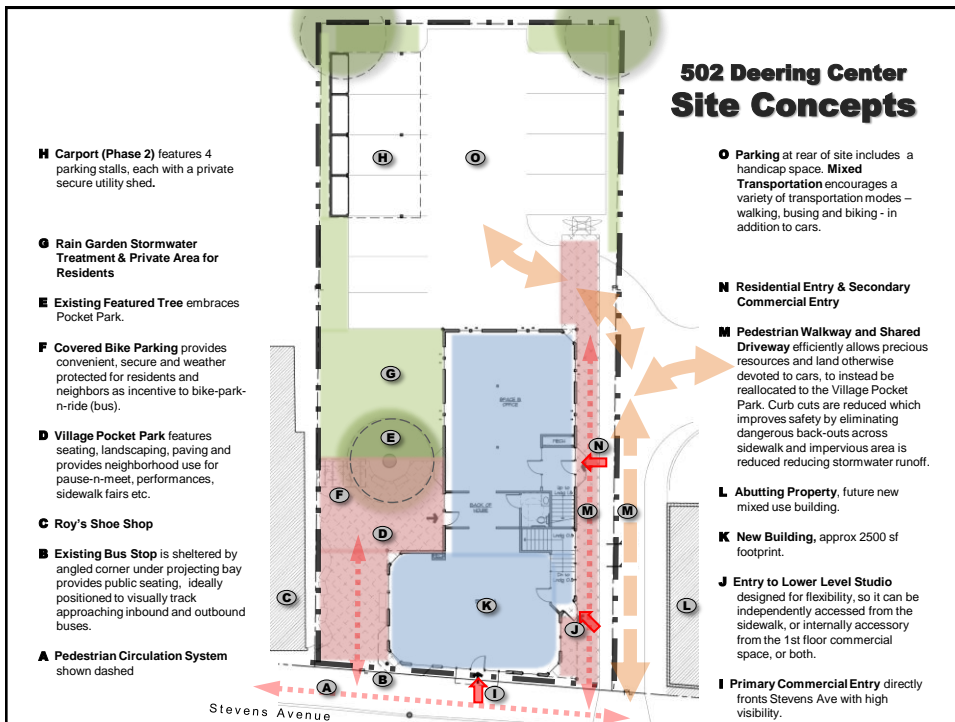




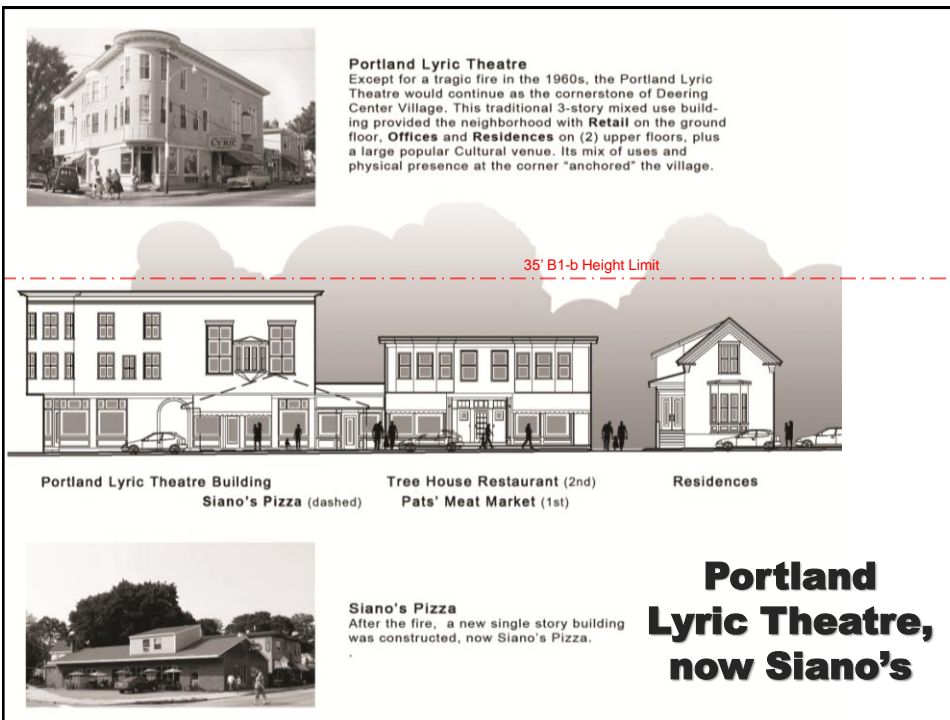
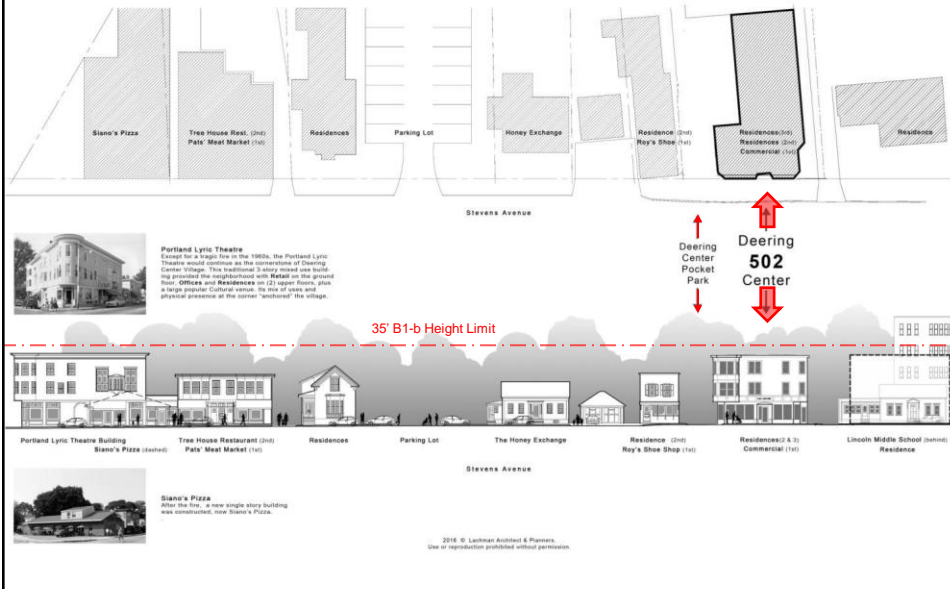
502 Deering Center Site - Existing

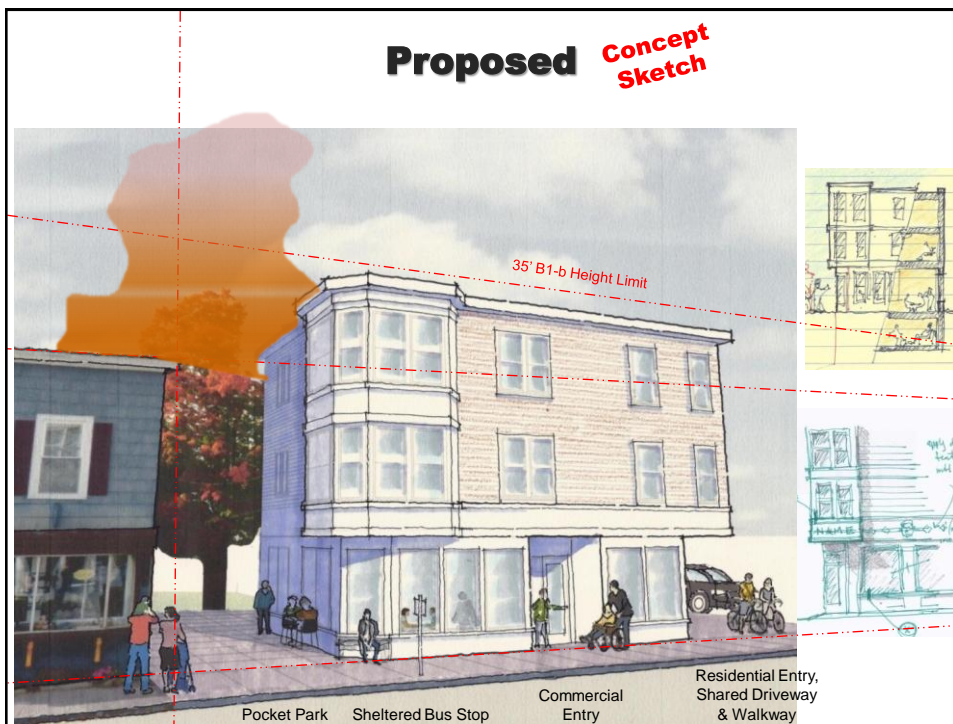


Stevens



Stevens Streetscape – Bldg Height & Mass





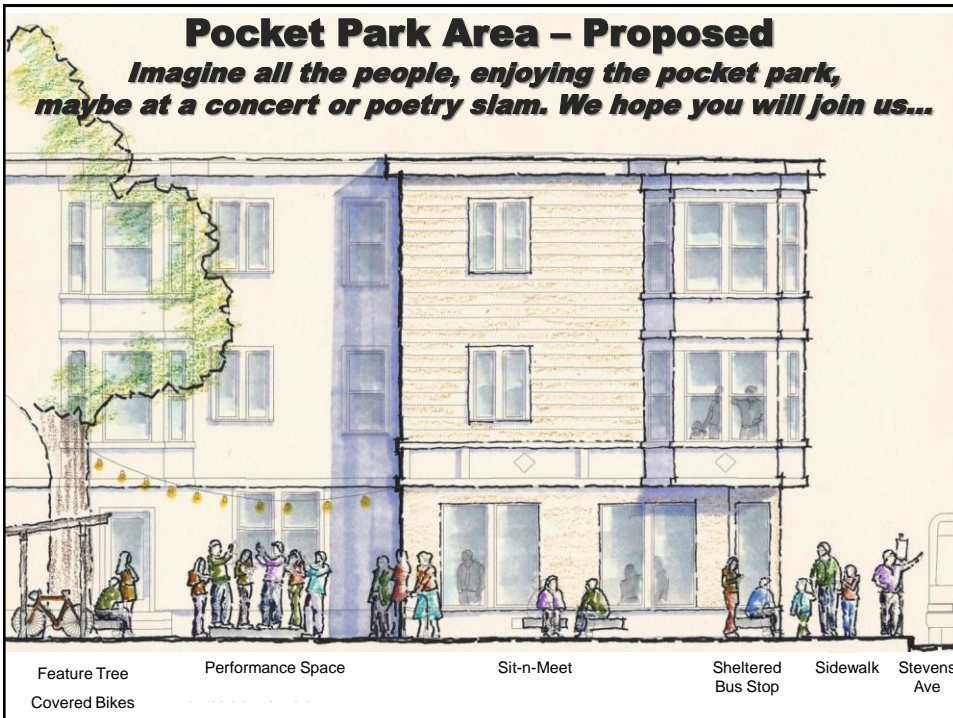
Pocket Park Area – Existing



Bus Stop

Pocket Park Area – Proposed

Imagine all the people, enjoying the pocket park, maybe at a concert or poetry slam. We hope you will join us...



Feature Tree
Covered Bikes

Performance Space

Sit-n-Meet

Sheltered
Bus Stop

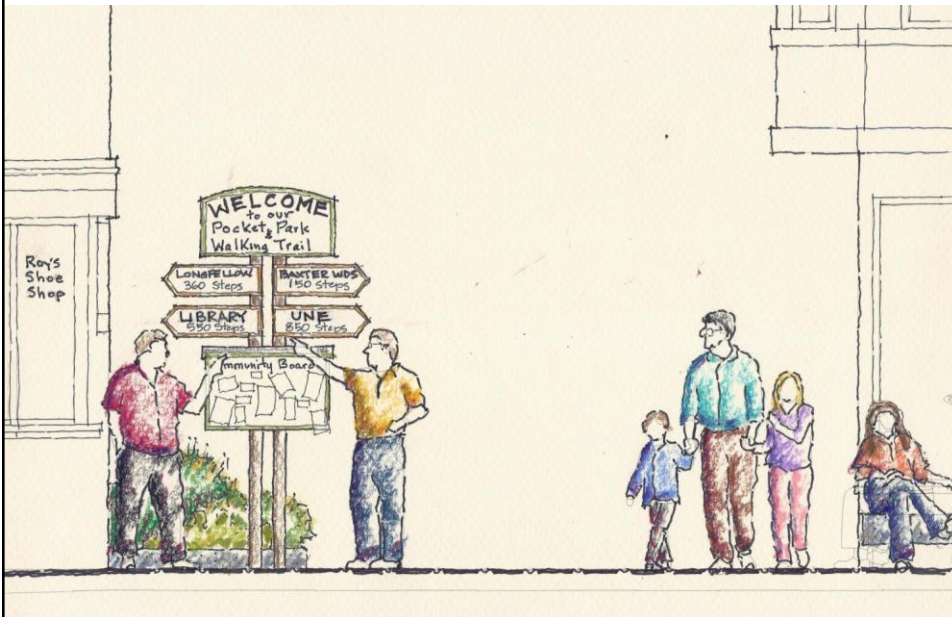
Sidewalk

Stevens
Ave

Sheltered Bus Stop



Neighborhood Kiosk & Sheltered Bus Stop *along the Trail & at the Park*



Single Tenant Configuration (Preferred)
Space A 2480 sf (2580 of gross foot print - 120 of 2nd fr stair)
Ideal for Restaurant, Bakery/Cafe, other?

Double Tenant Configuration Big/Little
Space A Big 2000 of (2580 of gross foot print - 120 of 2nd fr stair - 400 of Space B)
Ideal for Restaurant, Bakery/Cafe, other?
Space B Little 400 of gross.
Ideal for Office, Retail, other?

Double Tenant Configuration Front/Back
Space A Back 1615 sf (2580 of gross foot print - 120 of 2nd fr stair - 945 of Space B Front)
Space B Front 945 of gross.

Triple Tenant Configuration
Space A Back 1615 sf
Space B Front 400 of gross.
Space C Front 485 of gross.

**902 DEERING CENTER
Commercial Lease Flexible Configurations**
Multiple configurations maximizes lease options.
Concept 1112116
Ludman Architects & Planners

Project Goal:
of the hood,
by the hood and
for the hood
commercial floor plan
is flexible to
accommodate
neighborhood-based
uses & combinations

- Food
- Retail
- Co-working
- Classes (kids & adults)
- Artists' Studios
- Wellness
- Others

**UNIT 2B
Unit B**

**UNIT 2A
Unit A**

Residential Units
Space,
Energy &
Budget
Efficient

Unit B (Back)
3BR/2B 1300 sf

Unit A (Front)
2BR/1B 1000 sf



Highlights & Takeaways

Contribute Vitality: social + economic activity = vitality

Local: of the hood, by the hood, for the hood

Mixed Transportation: covered bus stop + covered bike parking + walk friendly + car share (perhaps) = reduce car dependency

Collaborate: neighbor collaboration + shared driveway = pocket park

New Businesses: 2000 sf new commercial = economic & people activity

New Residents: (4) units, middle income = economic & people activity

Pocket Park: it takes a place to create a community and a community to create a place

High Standards: good neighborhood fit, set & meet high expectations for new development