



# Street connectivity standards change

Implementing the regional transportation plan

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Metro's updated Regional Transportation Plan is a blueprint to guide transportation investments in the Portland metropolitan region during the next 20 years. Adoption of the plan, an important part of achieving the 2040 Growth Concept vision, marks the end of a five-year planning process.

Highlights of the 2000 plan include the need to:

- expand some roads and highways throughout the region
- expand bus and light rail service and the ability to walk to stations
- build new sidewalks and bikeways on existing streets
- limit delays for national and international freight movement
- implement strategies to ensure our system works efficiently
- identify new funding sources to keep pace with growth.



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Regional Services  
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Metro, the regional government that serves the 1.3 million people who live in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties and the 24 cities in the Portland metropolitan area, provides planning and services that protect the nature of our region.

## Planning for future streets



*The street and accessway plan was part of the on-site advertising at Fairview Village.*

Changes are in store for how local governments need to plan for future streets. The Regional Transportation Plan, adopted in August 2000, contains several significant changes. The old requirements for street connectivity, part of Title 6 of the Metro Urban Growth Management Functional Plan, will be replaced by new standards adopted in Chapter 6 of the 2000 Regional Transportation Plan.

The change was made to simplify the standards in response to comments from local planners from throughout the metropolitan region. Jurisdictions are encouraged to include the new requirements when updating local plans and development codes for functional plan compliance.

### Tasks for local planners

Local governments must complete two tasks to comply with the street connectivity requirements:

- future street plan maps must be created to identify the most critical future street connections to be built
- revisions to development codes must implement street connectivity standards as land is developed.

The tasks are outlined as follows:

#### Task 1 – Create a future street plan map

A future street plan map shall be created for all areas that are:

- contiguous parcel(s) of vacant or re-developable land of 5 acres or more

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- planned or zoned for residential or mixed-use development.

The future street plan maps shall identify all areas in a jurisdiction where key street connections should be provided. This plan should be adopted as part of a jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. It will provide guidance to developers and others who construct street improvements and should be made available to them as early as possible during the development permitting process.

When deciding where to require street connections, jurisdictions should consider the following:

- connecting to existing or planned street intersections and street extensions
- providing direct and logical access to surrounding areas
- limiting the need for cul-de-sac and other closed-end street designs

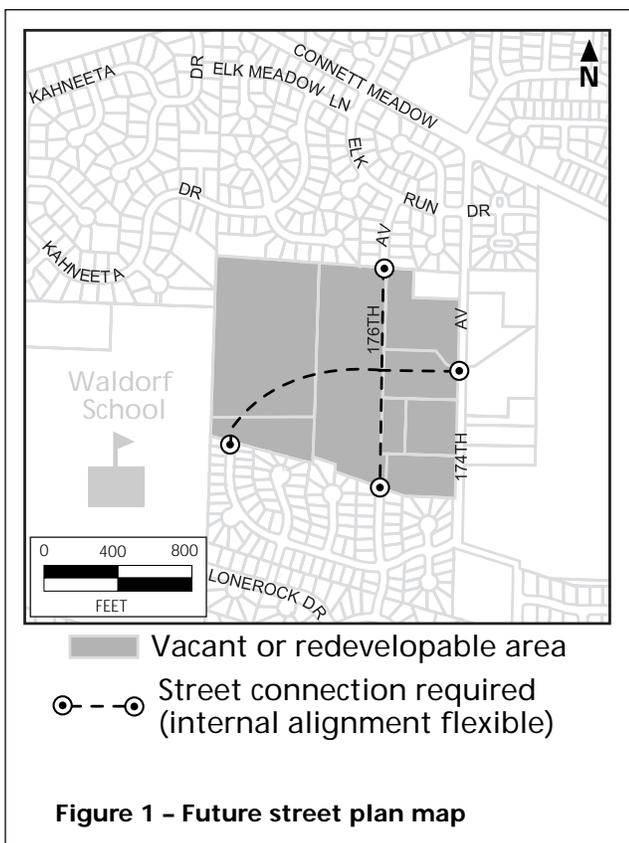


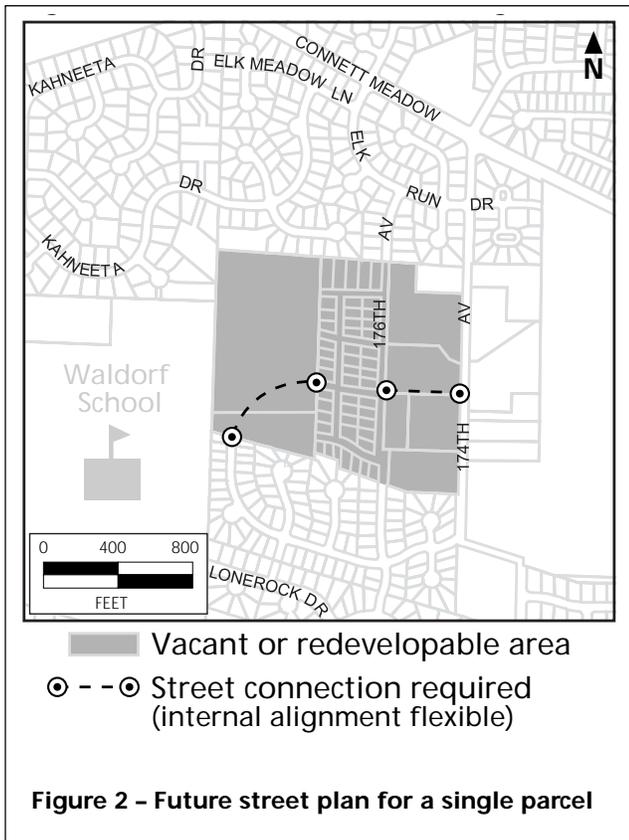
Figure 1 illustrates a future street plan map that local planners could create to meet functional plan requirements.

- code requirements for new street construction (see Task 2) that will provide additional connections as development occurs.

## Task 2 - Revise development code and design guidelines

The second task is a revision of the development code and design guidelines to meet regional goals for street connectivity. Development codes shall require all new residential or mixed-use development that proposes or is required to construct or extend street(s) to provide a street map that:

- Provides full street connections with spacing of no more than 530 feet between connections, except where prevented by barriers. Acceptable barriers to providing street connectivity include topography (steep slopes); freeways; railroads; pre-existing development; lease provisions, easements, covenants or other restrictions existing prior to May 1, 1995, which preclude street or accessway connections; and water features where regulations implementing Title 3 of the Urban Growth Management Functional Plan require different standards for street facilities.
- When full street connections are not possible, provides bike and pedestrian accessways on public easements or rights-of-way in lieu of streets. Spacing of accessways between full street connections shall be no more than 330 feet, except where prevented by barriers.
- Limits the use of cul-de-sac designs and other closed-end street systems to situations where barriers prevent connections to adjacent streets.
- Includes no closed-end street longer than 200 feet or having more than 25 dwelling units.
- Includes street cross-sections demonstrating dimensions of right-of-way improvements, with streets designed for posted or expected speed limits.



*Figure 2 demonstrates a street map for a single parcel that a developer would provide to meet code regulations.*

Street design code language and guidelines must allow for, and should encourage, the following considerations in support of the development requirements:

- Consideration of narrow street design alternatives. For local streets, no more than 46 feet of total right-of-way, including pavement widths of no more than 28 feet, curb-face to curb-face, sidewalk width of at least 5 feet and landscaped pedestrian buffer strips that include street trees.
- Short and direct public right-of-way routes to connect residential uses with nearby commercial services, schools, parks and other neighborhood facilities.
- Consideration of opportunities to incrementally extend streets from nearby areas.

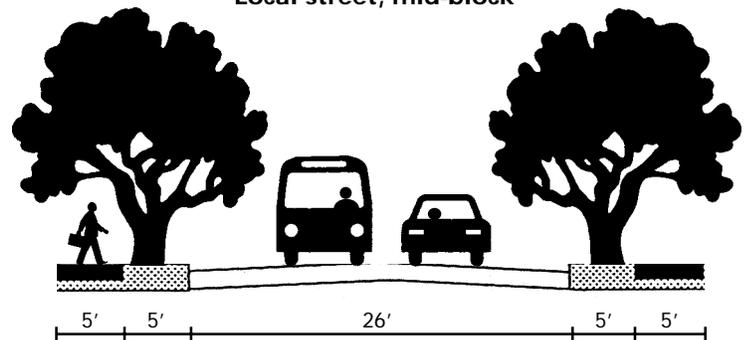
- Consideration of traffic calming devices to discourage traffic infiltration and excessive speeds on local streets.

Jurisdictions may, but are not required to, identify acceptable barriers to required street connectivity on their future street plan maps. They are strongly encouraged to post signs with notice of the intent to construct future streets at all points where streets are to be extended.



*Happy Valley provides notice to potential buyers in a new subdivision of the intent to extend this street as future development occurs.*

**Figure 3 - Street cross-section example  
Local street, mid-block**



*Figure 3 shows a street cross-section that could be submitted for approval by a developer during the permitting process.*

# Frequently asked questions

## **Q. Does any street count as a full street connection?**

A. Any street that provides auto access during normal street use hours qualifies as a street connection. This includes streets that may be closed for special events or that provide narrow points to limit access to one direction.

## **Q. Can private streets or accessways be counted for street connectivity requirements?**

A. Yes, as long as they provide public access to or through the relevant land parcel and meet allowable design standards for an improved public street or accessway. Private accessways must have a public easement.

## **Q. How do regulations on development in environmentally sensitive areas affect street connectivity requirements?**

A. Construction of roads in environmentally sensitive areas should comply with local regulations regarding development. If a road or pedestrian/bike facility is not allowed by local code in an environmentally sensitive area, connectivity requirements do not mandate construction. The first reasonable opportunity to provide a connection that does not impact the sensitive area should be made, however. Metro's GreenStreets study will provide additional guidance on balancing street connectivity and environmental issues by the summer of 2001.

## **Q. Is street connectivity required for industrial or commercial areas?**

A. Metro does not require street connections through these land uses. Local jurisdictions are encouraged to develop their own standards to address street connectivity for areas not addressed by the Metro requirements.

## **Q. Do the connectivity requirements apply to all new residential or mixed-use development?**

A. Yes. The planning and mapping requirement is only required on parcels identified as part of a contiguous area of vacant or re-developable land of 5 acres or more. However, development regulations shall require all new residential and mixed-use development that will construct or extend streets to address the connectivity requirements.

## **Q. What parcels are considered re-developable?**

A. Re-developable land is defined in the functional plan as land on which development has already occurred, but due to present or expected market forces, there exists the strong likelihood that current development will be converted to more intensive uses during the planning period. This definition requires local planners to exercise professional judgment about local development conditions.

## **Q. Are large apartment complexes required to provide street connectivity?**

A. Yes. As residentially zoned land, they must meet street and pedestrian/bicycle access connectivity requirements. The street and accessways may be privately owned and maintained but must meet a jurisdiction's street or accessway design requirements and provide public access during normal street usage hours. Private accessways must have a public easement.

## **Q. What is a closed-end street?**

A. A closed-end street has only one egress to any other existing or planned street. Cul-de-sacs, dead-end and looped streets are examples of closed-end streets.

For more detailed information, call Metro's Transportation Department, (503) 797-1757. To receive printed materials on the 2000 Regional Transportation Plan, leave a message on the transportation hotline, (503) 797-1900 option 2.