

Portland,OR United States

B. Bandel Jeske and J. Hampton

The Pearl District



Transportation

Walkability

Green Development

Reuse

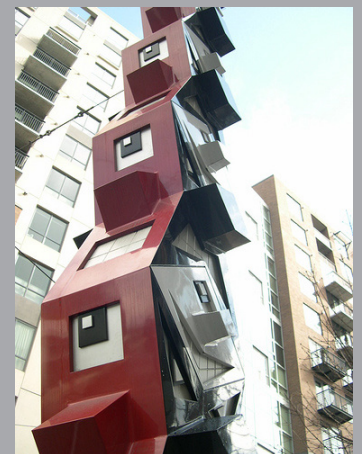
Pocket Parks

Stormwater processes

Photo credit: flicker.com

The pearl district incorporates access to **transportation** by providing a streetcar that runs through the neighborhood to downtown. It is an area with a high degree of **walkability** and is very pedestrian friendly with small **pocket parks** placed within the busy streetscape. By taking old warehouse buildings and reusing them as new loft condos, the district has brought a vision of **reuse** to the area and a feeling of history to the present day. The neighborhood highlights **green development** by uncovering the **stormwater processes** throughout the neighborhood.

Project for Public Places names the Pearl District a Great Place and recommends it as a model for urban development



“Change is a hallmark of the Pearl--whether it was rail yards replacing marshland, trucks replacing trains, condos replacing artists, or streetcars replacing autos.” -Pearl District Development Plan, 2001.

District Statistics

Population: 4,913

Households: 3,700

Owned: 52%

Rent: 48%

Average Household Size: 1.299

Households w/ Kids: 1.6%

Area: 1.21 km

Density Level: 4,060/km

Average Commute: 23 min

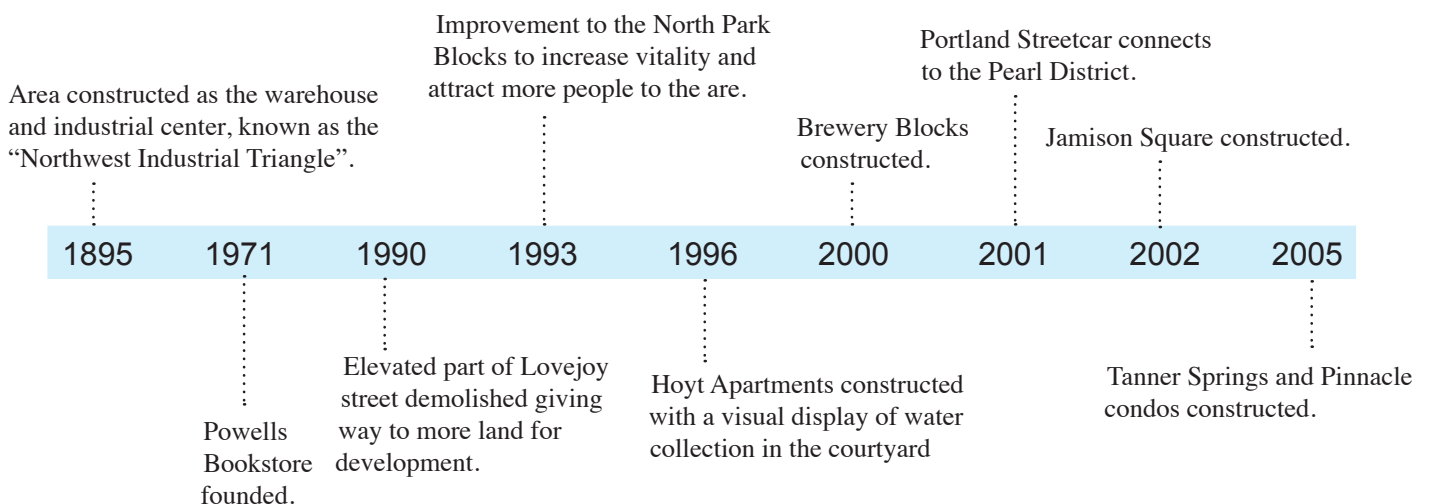
Location: north of downtown between W. Burnside Street, Wilamette River, NW Broadway, 405 Freeway

Context

The Pearl District is bounded to the north by the Wilamette River, to the east by N. W. Broadway Avenue, to the south by W. Burnside Street, and to the west by the 405 freeway. Originally platted in 1869 and developed in 1895, the area flourished until the middle of the twentieth century as a industrial, manufacturing, and warehouse hub with its own rail yard. Known as the “Northwest Industrial Triangle”, the area lost many businesses when changes in transportation shifted from rail to trucks. Low-rents and high vacancies attracted many artists and start up businesses, spurring conversions of the existing warehouses both legally and illegally into residences. Current planning actions began in earnest in the 1980s following the Central City Plan for downtown Portland, which laid the foundations for the Pearl District Development Plan. The 2001 Pearl District Development Plan aims to grow the district from 1300 to 12,500 residents, and from 9,000 to 21,000 jobs.

Gallery owner Thomas Augustine coined term “Pearl District” to refer to the surprising wealth of artist spaces within the industrial neighborhood. The addition of the streetcar in 2001 spurred growth in the area and enabled non-residents to better partake in the burgeoning social scene. At the same time, businesses have moved from being mostly industrial to being boutique and entertainment based enterprises. The area has a lively arts scene enriched by the presence of the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, the Art Institute of Portland, and Pacific Northwest College of Art. Area activities are programmed by the Pearl District Neighborhood Association and the Zimmerman Community Center. These groups promote events such as monthly First Thursday art walks, Friday Flicks, Friday Night Wine Dinners, and the farmers market . Business owners provide additional activities such as the Knit Happens workshop at Pearl’s Knit Knot Studio.

Pearl District History



The Pearl District



The Historic Warehouse District and the revitalized Pearl District. Photos courtesy of Hoyt Realty Group.



Public Art in the Parks
Photo credit: Jenny Hampton



Public Squares
Photo credit: flickr.com

The Pearl District

Components of the Pearl District

Connective Corridors

The Pearl has a transportation connective tissues of the streetcar that runs north and south along the edge of the pearl neighborhood. Streets were re-designed as woonerfs where cars, trucks, bikes, and pedestrians share the space, and traffic is forced to move slowly.

The district is laid out in a grid system with the River to the east and the 405 Freeway to the west. City planners kept the easily walked 200 ft. by 200 ft. block pattern found in other parts of the city.

Anchors

Architectural anchors throughout the neighborhood reference historical uses and green infrastructure; such as Powells Bookstore, the Pinnacle and Bridgeport condos, 10th and Hoyt Apartments, Elizabeth Lofts, and the Brewery Blocks.

Union Station is also a key anchor on the edge of the Pearl District, while planners hope that the new REI will bring more pedestrianization to the district's western periphery.

Neighborhood Parks

Throughout the neighborhood, there are many pocket parks that provide a place to stroll and play. The North park blocks provide a lush greenway, the Jamison Square provides a place for gathering, and the Tanner springs provides a place to learn. Re-design of the northernmost park, The Fields, is currently underway to provide more space for children and dogs.

Streetcar and Bus Routes
Photo credit: movingtoportland.net

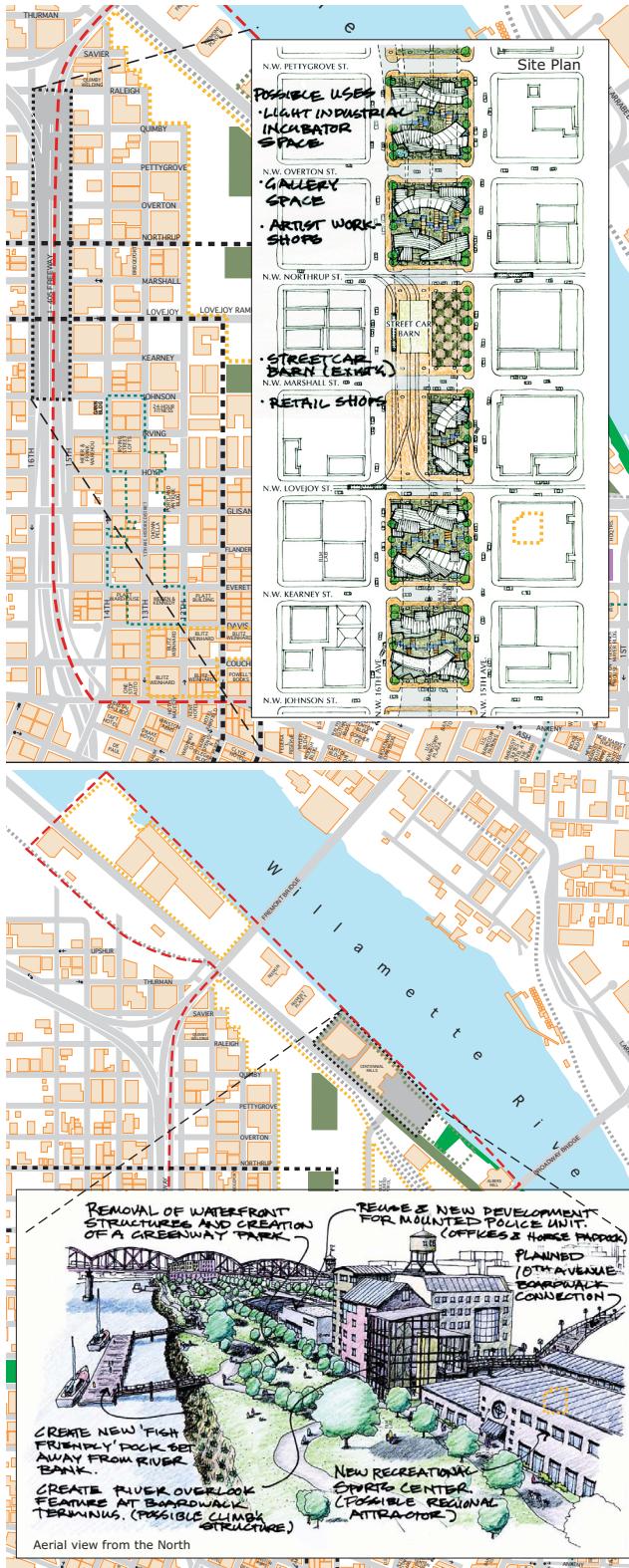


Residential Built and Proposed
Photo credit: movingtoportland.net



“Portland has emerged as a model city, at the forefront of creating a vibrant, quality urban environment, and the Pearl District only bolsters its reputation.” -Sierra Club, 2004.

Growth Catalysts and Planning



The Portland Streetcar launched in 2001, linking the Pearl District to the downtown core and the regional light-rail system. In the nine years since, the city estimates that \$1.3 billion dollars worth of building has occurred along the streetcar route. In order to achieve the density needed to support the streetcar the city made an agreement with developer Homer Williams in which Homer agreed to upzone forty acres of land in the Pearl District from 15 dwelling units per acre to 125 dwelling units per acre.

In October, 2001 the Portland City Council approved the *Pearl District Development Plan: A Future Vision for a Neighborhood in Transition*, a document that stems from twenty-five years of research and discussion regarding the future of the district. The 26 person steering committee presented the plan to the public on two occasions before it went before the City Council for final approval. Efforts were made to keep the qualities and businesses that had initially spurred interest in the district. The planners hoped to focus on “preserving historic buildings, supporting or providing opportunities for artists, and investigating ways to lessen the impacts of the changing neighborhood on established, independent businesses” (Pearl District Development Plan, page 5). The plan included recommendations that encouraged the owners of historic buildings to list them on the National Register of Historic Places, and provisions to assist these owners with the costs of seismic retrofits. The plan also recommended changes to existing code that promotes active ground floor development, and prohibits surface parking lots along streetcar lines. Emphasis was placed on providing a rich and diverse pedestrian space with small ground floor retail spaces, and setback limits that could be adjusted if a business owner wished to have outdoor seating in front of his or her business. Finally, the planners aimed to attract families to the existing mix of empty-nesters and young professionals with the developments of parks, a future charter school, and the implementation of an affordable housing program.

The success of the Pearl District also rests on several redevelopment tax abatement programs. These incentive programs began in 1998 as part of the farther reaching River District Urban Renewal Plan, which granted tax incentives for improvements to the River District. One 10 year tax abatement can reduce \$1500 and \$2000 residential rents by \$300 per month. Qualifying condo owners in historic buildings benefit from a historic preservation tax abatement program that freezes property tax assessment amounts at pre-restoration levels. This bill had lapsed for most condos, but a extension was recently passed which extends the special assessment program through 2025.

Top: Conceptual plan for the freeway edge. Bottom: Conceptual plan for the Centennial Mills redevelopment along the river front. Images courtesy of the Pearl District Redevelopment Plan documents.



Explore the Pearl is published by The Oregonian and the Pearl District Neighborhood Association as a visitors guide and resource for residents.

Bottom Image: As Puma and Aidedas are moving out, Chinese shoe maker Li-Ning is moving in along side Lovejoy Bakers.

Photos courtesy of explorethepearl.com



New in the Pearl

STORY BY JENNIFER L. HANSON
PHOTOS BY JOHN M. VINCENT



Lovejoy Bakers

Calorie counting (or decision making?) just became a lot more difficult in the Pearl, thanks to **Lovejoy Bakers** and its treat-filled glass rotunda. Inside, you'll find a world of rustic sophistication, filled with the sights and smells of fresh-baked temptations.

Sure, you'll start with a loaf of artisan bread — perhaps a rustic sourdough or maybe a baguette. But can you really walk away from fresh-baked cookies, pastries, croissants or butterhorns? Seasonal ingredients such as pears, pumpkin and butternut squash only up the ante. And in the end, you may just decide to linger at the cafe over an espresso drink, or stay for lunch.

Dan Griffin, formerly head baker at Pearl Bakery, partnered with Pizzacato owners Marc and Tracy Frankel to create a space where farmhouse fresh meets upscale urban. The giant windows allow passers-by to watch bakers in action.



Inside, the work table and oven are just two feet behind the front counter.

"It takes a lot of training to (keep the bakery clean) and also interact with the customers. It's extremely difficult to do that," Griffin says. "But at the end of the day, we get our gratification from the customer. If we make something, we don't want to sit back in the

kitchen and pat ourselves on the back. We want to see the smiles on faces — whether it's a child eating a cookie, or an adult eating a croissant."

This winter, look for cinnamon gooey-buns, which Griffin promises will be "loaded with sugar." In addition, the bakery plans to create wedding cakes, and may even offer baking classes.

Open daily, 6 a.m.-3 p.m.

939 NW 10th
503-208-3113
lovejoybakers.com

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Lessons Learned

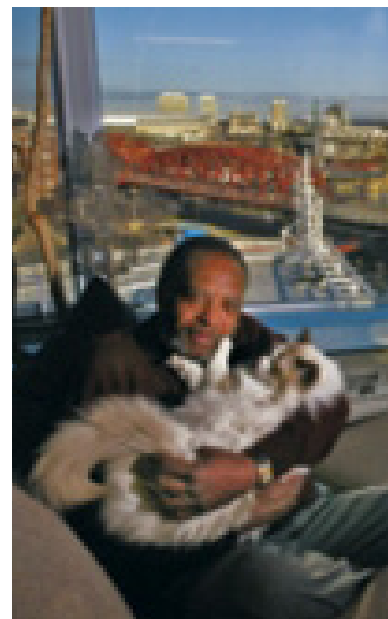
Most concerns about the growth of the Pearl District center on gentrification and the subsequent loss of businesses and residents that pre-date the development plan. Initially, light industry was largely pushed out of the area in favor of creative, office, and retail jobs. The 2001 plan accounts for this move by stating that increased property values would enable businesses to relocate without financial burden. At the time, the city aimed to develop the Guilds Lake area to be a long term location for the light industry that was being forced to leave the downtown area and the Pearl District. The plan also notes that increased rents were driving small businesses out of the neighborhood and had hoped to address this with the creation of “incubator buildings” that would have fewer amenities in order to remain affordable. Many smaller businesses were able to stay, yet others were forced out when rents doubled in the years between 2000 and 2005.

In 2001, the Pearl District Development Plan anticipated future growth would culminate in 12,500 residents and 21,000 jobs in the district; however, the recent recession has caused many stores and restaurants, both independently owned and national chains, to close their doors. Analysts blame the high prices and retail redundancies that accompanied the initial frenzied growth with the recent closings. The vacancy rate in North Portland is currently at 18 percent, which has caused a drop in residents requiring the services offered in the district. Yet, despite complaints of high rents, spaces are renting for prices in-line with other Portland neighborhoods.

Some Portland residents are critical of the neighborhood. Posts on an OregonLive.com message board critique the district for being “hoity-toity” and expensive, for lacking adequate parking, and for having “too many panhandlers”. Additionally, non-residents resent the subsidies that tax monies provide to pay for the tax abatement programs. Other respondents defended their urban oasis for it’s walkability and the easy access to amenities and stores.

According to an article in the Portland Tribune there is more economic diversity in the Pearl District than most would expect when they visit the area. Amounts of available low income housing do not yet meet full district targets, but more affordable units are slated to be built in the next two to three years. The district also includes Section-8 housing through the Housing Authority of Portland. Eligible renters are given vouchers that make up the difference between what they can pay and what area rents are set at. While this program isn’t specific to the Pearl District, it does enable lower income residents to live there.

Despite efforts by planners to create a family friendly neighborhood the Pearl District tends to be populated by singles and couples without children. Some prospective residents have complained that they were discriminated against for having children, but investigations remain inconclusive at this time. Commissioners are currently reviewing proposals for a new development that would consist solely of three and four bedroom units, with priority being given to developers whose plans include day-care and playgrounds. A k-2 school with six classrooms is slated to open in 2011.



A resident of Pearl Court, one of the Pearl District’s low income apartment buildings. Some rents in these affordable buildings are as low as \$471 per month. Photo courtesy of the Portland Tribune.

Connections for Mt. Baker

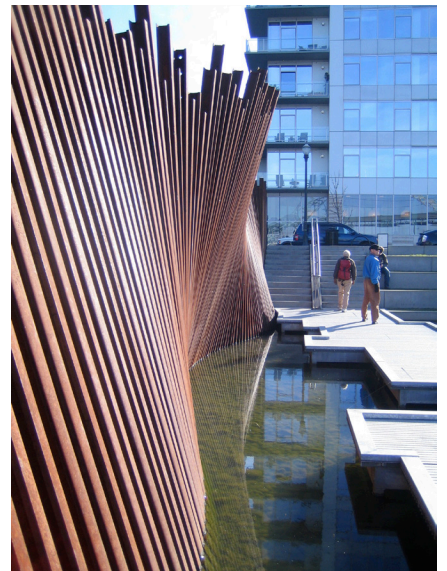
Keeping **transportation** and a walkable neighborhood in mind helps to establish a pedestrian friendly community.

Using **green infrastructure** and highlighting when appropriate to help shed light on process.

Reusing buildings to give a sense of history and sustainability.

Providing intimate places throughout the neighborhood, such as **pocket parks**, that help to bring people together.

Making sure that there is adequate **Stormwater Treatment** throughout the site to deal with the PNW weather .



"The Pearl District - the industrial buildings are like crusty oysters and the lofts and galleries in the area are like the pearls." Local gallery owner