



TO: Tualatin CFEC Project Management Team

FROM: Kate Rogers, MIG, Inc.

RE: Tualatin CFEC Walkable Design Standards – Focus Group Meetings Summary

DATE: January 10, 2025

Introduction

The project team for the Tualatin Walkable Design Standards project held two focus group meetings and one individual meeting in December 2024 and January 2025. The purpose of the meetings was to provide an overview of the project and get initial input on some of the gaps in Tualatin's code and potential code concepts for standards to support connectivity and walkability. The first focus group included transportation advocates who previously served on the City's Transportation System Plan (TSP) Community Advisory Committee. The second focus group included professionals involved in real estate development in Tualatin. The individual meeting was also with a local developer who was unable to attend the group meeting. This memo provides a summary of input received at these meetings.

Key Takeaways

- For the transportation advocates, the quality of the right-of-way and places to walk to are more important than on-site design. Lighting, pedestrian visibility, and places to sit/rest are especially important.
- There's general support for shorter block lengths and improved connectivity.
- There's some interest in midblock accessways, but there's concern about their safety, maintenance, and comfort. There should be standards to ensure they're usable. They should also connect to destinations.
- The development group encouraged flexibility in the code standards. There's support for reducing front setbacks. Less support for imposing maximum setbacks.
- Residential entry orientation may make sense on low-traffic streets.
- Parking location standards make sense for new commercial development. Use caution if applying to improvements to existing development.

Focus Group 1 (TSP Committee Members)

Tuesday, Dec 17 | 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

General Discussion: Walkability in Tualatin

What's your impression of walkability in Tualatin? What qualities of the built environment would make Tualatin more walkable?

- Fewer parking lots could improve walkability. Parking lots seem to be underused/outdated.
- It is simply too far to walk to stores. Shorter walking distances improve walkability. Accessibility for one group helps accessibility for all groups.

- Walkability is limited due to a lack of public seating, places to rest, and shade.
- Street lighting needs to be improved for safety and visibility.
- Roads have limited availability to cross and can be dangerous to cross in good conditions. Pedestrians can be hard to see.
- Sidewalks can be difficult to navigate with strollers. Easier to use the road.
- ADA ramps/curb cuts have made a major impact on accessibility, for the better.
- Perspective of wheelchair user: need better lighting on corners, smoother sidewalks, functioning crosswalk buttons. Grates around trees to prevent rolling individuals from getting stuck, people from falling.
- There is limited bike parking infrastructure.
- Kate clarified that this project is mainly focused on onsite components of design. However, it is helpful to hear what the concerns are in the right-of-way.

Neighborhood Connectivity: Block Length

Should the maximum block length be reduced so it's closer to the Model Code standard of 350 ft?

How can this be implemented in existing neighborhoods to improve connectivity? How can it be encouraged? If a private space has an informal pathway, how can it be maintained as a pathway in the future?

- Response: The code standards would be implemented in new development. It may be possible to dedicate private land for paths, but it would require a public access easement, dedication to the City, or other legal means to have this created in existing development.
- How can we create more places to walk to? Encourage people to open coffee shops/restaurants/businesses in neighborhoods?
 - Response: This may be outside of the scope of the walkability standards. If you mean businesses in a residential neighborhood, that may require changes to allowed uses in certain zones.
- To be more walkable, cities need things to walk to. More mixed usage/residential/commercial.

Block Length Discussion: Midblock accessways

Are midblock accessways a viable alternative to street connections?

- Accessways can make walks shorter, more direct routes.
- Need to be wide enough that two people with walkers/strollers/rollers can pass each other.
- Need to be lit, maybe down on the footpath level. Must be maintained and level.
- Needs to be ADA accessible. Long sidewalk panels can make sidewalks bumpy.
- Neighbors must be ok with the noise that could come with foot traffic. Property owners may not want these access ways next to their properties. Accessways may be uncomfortable if they feel like private spaces.

- Midblock accessways could be more welcoming if surrounded by greenways/native plants/green barrier.
- Infrastructure should be non-hostile.

Pedestrian Oriented Design: Residential Setbacks

For high-density residential zones, should minimum front setbacks be reduced? Should maximum front setbacks be added?

- Tualatin is built out. Where is there room to develop?
 - Response: This is also what we've heard from staff. However, there are infill opportunities – smaller areas that could be filled in or redeveloped. Also, areas where larger single family lots could be converted to duplexes, have ADUs built on the lot, etc.
- Smaller is better – ADUs/duplexes.
- Minimum setbacks could help promote community by physically bringing people closer together.
- Being closer to neighbors and having access to shops/stores and having safer neighborhoods would be incredible.
- Having community surrounding you keeps you healthier and happier.

Focus Group 2 (Developers/Architects)

Tuesday, Dec 19 | 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM

General Discussion

- This is only going to be helpful for development if implemented intelligently. If done poorly, this can make development infeasible.
- Tualatin is frustrating because it lacks a central gathering space. Some trail systems don't connect, there is a lack of a true downtown.

Neighborhood Connectivity: Block Length

Should the maximum block length be reduced so it's closer to the Model Code standard of 350 ft? Are midblock accessways a viable alternative to street connections?

- What can you do about this? If everything is all built out where can this be implemented?
- Meeting reduced block length standards is not always worthwhile to develop financially. Do you want housing to be affordable, or do you want to have walkability?
- These midblock pathways are hard to maintain and expensive to maintain. They can also collect trash and can attract negative attention. Who is responsible to maintain these walkways?
- Can there be an either/or standard? If you have a longer block, have a midway access. If you have a shorter block, don't require it.

- There can be a mixture of block lengths, but it depends on where they go. Do they lead to a destination? Where do the accessways lead and connect to?

Pedestrian Oriented Design: Setbacks

For high-density residential zones, should minimum front setbacks be reduced? Should maximum front setbacks be added?

- When reducing setbacks, you can increase the utilization of land and promote affordability.
- What is around the development? On arterial streets, you may want more of a buffer with a larger setback. Context matters.
- Maximum setbacks reduce flexibility. Removing minimum setbacks improves flexibility.
- Small setbacks may not be a negative experience, but isn't the norm in Tualatin.
- Flexibility in setbacks is crucial, and should be scaled to building height.
- Developers and architects need to be able to prove that they are achieving stated goals, as opposed to blindly following rules/standards.

Residential Entry Orientation

Are there concerns with adding entry orientation standards for multi-unit housing?

- Context matters, you may not want an entry on the street for reasons of privacy/safety.
- Why does this need to be constrained in the code. These regulations could prevent intelligent design.
- However, the regulations may make sense in residential or mixed-use areas on low-traffic streets.

Parking Location in Commercial Areas

Should parking and loading areas be prohibited between the building and the street, and limited to a percentage of the street frontage?

- Do these requirements apply to existing commercial development? Does it apply when improving existing assets?
- These regulations can improve design of new development, but can kill a project if it applies to upgrades to existing development. Misapplied, this could kill off good infill development.
- We need broad language that allows intelligent design to prevail, yet reduce seas of parking lots.
- These standards make much more sense for new development. Existing development needs latitude. Needs to be driven by the goal, not the standard.

Final Thoughts

- Encourage pragmatism.
- Think about goals, not requirements.
- Allow for creative solutions.

- Our goal is to improve our community through quality design and planning.

Individual Meeting (Local Developer)

Friday, Jan 10 | 10:00 AM – 10:30 AM

General Discussion

- Participant does a lot of industrial and suburban office development.
- Main concern is that industrial clients don't want walking paths through their properties. It's a security issue, especially for tech companies. It's also a safety issue with the trucks.
 - MIG clarified that the CFEC rules do not apply to industrial districts, but they do apply to commercial districts. Provided some examples of the types of standards being considered. Also noted that we've heard similar statements from City staff.
- Access standards wouldn't be a concern in commercial districts. For example, we have office properties on Kruse Way in Lake Oswego where people walk by all the time.
- Parking location requirements wouldn't be too much of a concern for office or commercial.
- I've seen issues with road design standards for industrial areas. They need large sites that aren't constrained by small block standards.
 - MIG confirmed that block standards wouldn't apply to industrial districts or development.
- There was some discussion about the viability of mixed-use development. Caution against pushing mixed-use requirements, since they haven't been working in suburban areas. Can add to housing costs.
 - MIG confirmed that this project will not address permitted or required uses. It focuses on development standards and connectivity standards.