

2002

AIA/IDP CHARETTE

CONTEXT

Early Days

In 1861, James Stevens platted an area on the east bank of the Willamette River that included lands bounded by Glisan Street, First Avenue, Hawthorne Boulevard and the river. Later, in 1870 this area became the incorporated City of East Portland. At this time Burnside's dirt track stretched east from the banks of the Willamette River. East Portland and Albina merged with the City of Portland in 1891.

The "East Portland: Grand Avenue Historic Design Zone" boundary encompasses an approximately 20-block area roughly bounded by S.E. Ankeny to the north, S.E. Main to the south, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard (Union) to the west and Seventh Avenue to the east. The historic period of significance is 1883-1930.

This area straddles a network of sloughs and marshes extending from the river into the gently rising plain, which comprised the City of East Portland from 1861-91. This plain gradually ascends from the river dotted by several buttes connecting with the foothills of the Cascade Mountain Range to the east. Most early development west of Grand Avenue occurred on fill or wharves. Grand Avenue at this time divided the waterfront industrial uses from the predominantly residential and agricultural uses to the east. The

Morrison Street and Hawthorne Boulevard Bridges linked east with west providing streetcar and automobile connection between downtown and the east side.

Burnside Street originally was named B Street as part of the "Alphabet District" in northwest Portland that was laid out by Captain Couch. B Street extended from the waterfront to 16th Avenue, where it joined Washington Street to continue westward. What we call Burnside Street west of 16th today was considered an extension of Washington, not B Street. This combination of B and Washington Streets formed the principal east-west thoroughfare from the river and led to Tuality Road, a rough road winding through present-day Washington Park over the west hills to the Tualatin Plains. Burnside became notorious in the 1860s for liquor and card rooms that drew the sailors from the large dock at the foot of B, C, and D Streets. The street's reputation for saloons and sailors made it almost impossible for respectable businesses to be located on B Street (a.k.a., Brothel Street). Portland was considered the most "dangerous port in the world" because of the "Shanghaiing Trade" that existed. Stopping for a drink in such notorious establishments as Erickson's Saloon, the



Snug Harbor Saloon, and the Valhalla Saloon, people became unsuspecting victims who found themselves beneath the streets in tunnels and being carried out to the waterfront and sold for "blood money". By 1892, the street's name was changed to Burnside, after David W. Burnside, an early Portland merchant. By this time, the area north of Burnside was home to railroad, Union Station or hotel workers, who lived in the older, less expensive homes available there. This area also had a more racially diverse population than other parts of the city, and housed a large proportion of Portland's African-American population at that time. Four churches serving predominantly African-American congregations were established in northwest Portland between 1862 and 1901.



This is a time when the cities of earth are planning for the future. It is neither new nor heretical to engage in a city plan. Proof is abundant that to build for the greater practical efficiency is to build beautifully. This is the purpose of the Greater Portland Plan. It is the purpose of the Plan of Paris, of the Plan of Berlin, of the Plan of Chicago, of a hundred others.

Let any Portlander view the cities of this country and abroad and he will come back enthused with the thought of such systematic improvements as will make Portland the peer, in many instances the superior, of any of the great centers he has seen. He deplores a spirit, which would build in a small way, incommensurate with the opportunity of greatness presented to this city. Disapproval of a Plan for the continued better building of the city along the lines of convenience, utility and beauty, is a confession of narrowness. In the report on the great Plan of Chicago these expressions are used: "If many elements of the proposed plan seem familiar, it should be remembered that the purpose has not been to invent novel problems for solution but to take up the pressing needs of today, and to find the best methods of meeting those requirements, carrying each problem to its ultimate conclusion as a component part of a great entity – a well ordered, convenient and unified city."

-The Greater Portland Plan, Edward H. Bennett; October 1912.

View facing north at Burnside and Broadway as envisioned in the Bennett Plan, 1912; Widening of Burnside (OrHi 11332, 96092, 98812); View looking west from site across Burnside Bridge to Downtown, 2002; View down S.E. Third Avenue (Opposite)

