

# 4<sup>TH</sup> *FORWARD* PLAIN

## ACTION PLAN FOR VANCOUVER'S MULTICULTURAL BUSINESS DISTRICT





4TH  
PLAIN  

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Student  

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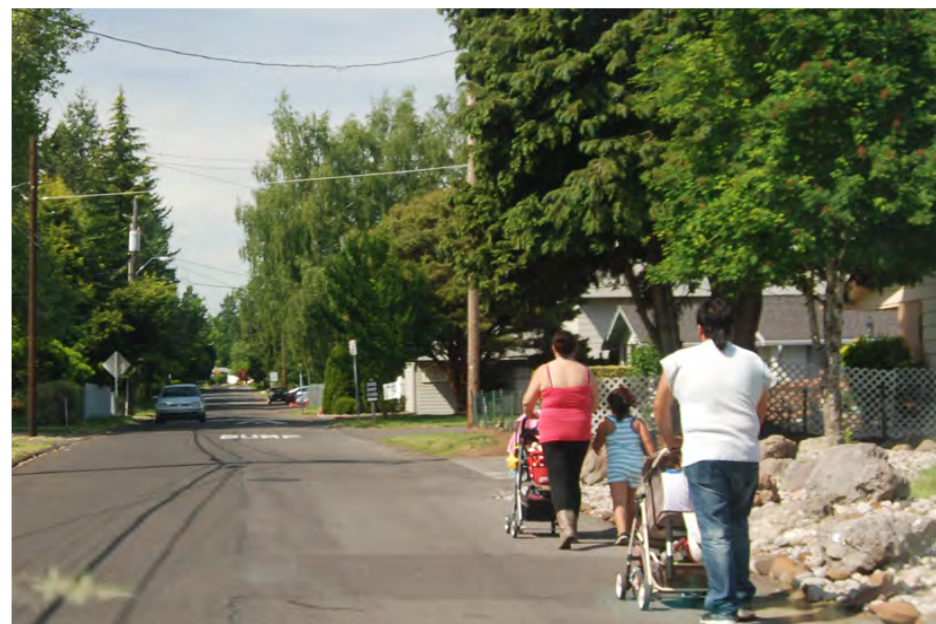
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# FOURTH PLAIN





MOVING FORWARD

Fourth Plain Boulevard was named for the place it led to: the fourth in a series of open meadows that defined the landscape of early Vancouver. During World War II, the Vancouver Housing Authority (VHA) constructed hundreds of homes in neighborhoods on Fourth Plain. Unlike many housing authorities of that era, the VHA chose not to discriminate by race when allocating homes, setting the mold for the Fourth Plain of today: a culturally diverse and welcoming community, and a place in its own right.

The Fourth Plain community organized around a vision for the corridor in 2007 by adopting the Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan. They envisioned a place that celebrates diversity, has safe streets, high-quality and accessible transit, and broadly shared economic security and opportunity. The construction of The Vine Bus Rapid Transit system on Fourth Plain, beginning in 2015, is a major investment that advances a part of this vision.

## *Fourth Plain Forward*

To continue implementation of the Subarea Plan, the City of Vancouver partnered with six students from the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program at Portland State University. The student team started with this question: given limited resources and the Subarea Plan's broad goals of growing economic security and opportunity, what future actions should the City take to foster an active and prosperous Fourth Plain for residents, business owners and visitors?

To answer this question, the team focused on identifying actions that support small businesses and the business district, provide economic opportunities for families, and leverage the benefits of transit investment. The team selected a study area to focus efforts during the limited time frame of the project: on Fourth Plain between Fort Vancouver Way and Fairmount Avenue, and the surrounding neighborhoods of Maplewood and Fourth Plain Village. The team analyzed existing conditions, engaged business owners, residents, and community leaders for input, researched best practices, and crafted a set of recommended actions.

## Challenges & Opportunities

*Fourth Plain Forward's* recommended actions are rooted in the challenges and opportunities faced by the community. Many Fourth Plain families experience economic distress and vulnerability. The median income of the study area is just two-thirds of the citywide median. The poverty rate of 36% is also more than double the city average. Three of four residents are renters, and one-third of renters are burdened by housing costs of more than half of their income.

Fourth Plain is a racially and ethnically diverse community that many immigrants call home. Almost 20% of study area residents are foreign-born. Latinos represent one-quarter of the community, and Latino and Asian families congregate in particular neighborhoods to share social connections and cultural experiences.

Fourth Plain's commercial district reflects this diversity. At least one-third of businesses are minority owned or cater to people of color, including five ethnically specific food markets. About 85% of restaurants in the corridor serve an international cuisine. Diversity is not limited to food—the corridor hosts culturally specific accountants, insurance agents, hair stylists, health services, and repair businesses.

About two-thirds of businesses are neighborhood serving. Our retail market analysis indicates that discretionary businesses—such as restaurants—need to attract customers from a wider area to thrive. Business owners expressed a need for support to aid marketing efforts. About 14% of commercial buildings are in poor condition and 15% are vacant, indicating a need for more housing to support retail and investment in existing commercial spaces.

Social service organizations are concentrated on Fourth Plain, making it an important resource for homeless and substance abuse recovery communities. Yet, the use of public spaces by these communities is perceived to deter families from the district. Graffiti and litter also obstruct a family-friendly

image. Perceptions of Fourth Plain as unsafe are not unfounded—six of the top 20 Vancouver neighborhoods in crime incidents per capita are on the corridor.

Fourth Plain's high traffic volume benefits retail use, but high speeds endanger pedestrians and reduce visibility of businesses. Pedestrian collisions are among the highest in the city. Intersection treatments and enhanced crossings can calm traffic, improve pedestrian safety, and contribute to a distinctive identity for the district.

Fourth Plain is host to important community assets, including several parks, faith-based institutions, schools, community centers, social services, and anchor institutions. Community members are organizing to create healthier, safer and more inclusive neighborhoods, and the City should support this civic energy in ways that also sustain the commercial district and local economy.

## Recommended Actions

The Fourth Plain Student Team recommends the City focus on five key goals and initiate a comprehensive set of actions:

1. *Cultivate a vibrant and welcoming business district* by funding a district manager that can plan cultural events, facilitate community placemaking, organize crime prevention and cleanup efforts, advocate for catalytic development projects, and facilitate property improvements.
2. *Stabilize and grow small businesses* by strategically targeting technical assistance, extending support to home-based microenterprises, and helping businesses access capital.
3. *Create a growth pipeline for food entrepreneurs* by developing a commercial kitchen business incubator, partnering with institutions and agencies to expand food business opportunities, extending the food truck pilot program, and sponsoring vendor stalls at the Vancouver Farmers Market.

4. *Prioritize pedestrian safety and access* by improving neighborhood connectivity to the corridor, installing pedestrian-scale lighting, creating gateway intersections, and developing a corridor-wide multi-modal safety and access plan.
5. *Foster inclusive transit-oriented development* by making current regulations more transit-supportive, initiating a comprehensive zoning study, and using incentives to stimulate new housing development around transit with a strong emphasis on affordability for a wide range of incomes.

Based on existing conditions and community input, the team identified and prioritized economic development strategies to address each goal mentioned above, with specific actions to implement each strategy. These recommended strategies and actions are outlined in detail in Chapter 4 of this document. The actions are designated as short-, medium- or long-term based on priority and complexity of implementation. The actions represent different approaches but link to broad goals of supporting small and culturally diverse businesses, expanding economic security and opportunity for families, and maximizing the benefits of transit investment. The actions are also designed for deep community partnership; the City can initiate actions, but the work and voice of residents, business owners and community leaders are integral to moving *Fourth Plain Forward*.

# INTRODUCTION



# 1

General  
Anderson



Grill & Chili

OUT LATE  
BRING A DATE  
GET A PEANUT  
BUSTER PARFAIT  
299 AFTER 9

Bikini Girl Baristas

NEW \$5

I.1 Project Context

I.2 Subarea Plan

I.3 Project Purpose & Goals

I.4 Planning Process

The *Fourth Plain Forward Action Plan* implements the economic development policies and goals of Vancouver’s adopted Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan. The recommended actions discussed in this document are intended to contribute to a larger effort for equitable development on the Fourth Plain corridor, and will help ensure that investments in the area benefit existing residents and businesses, including low-income and diverse communities.



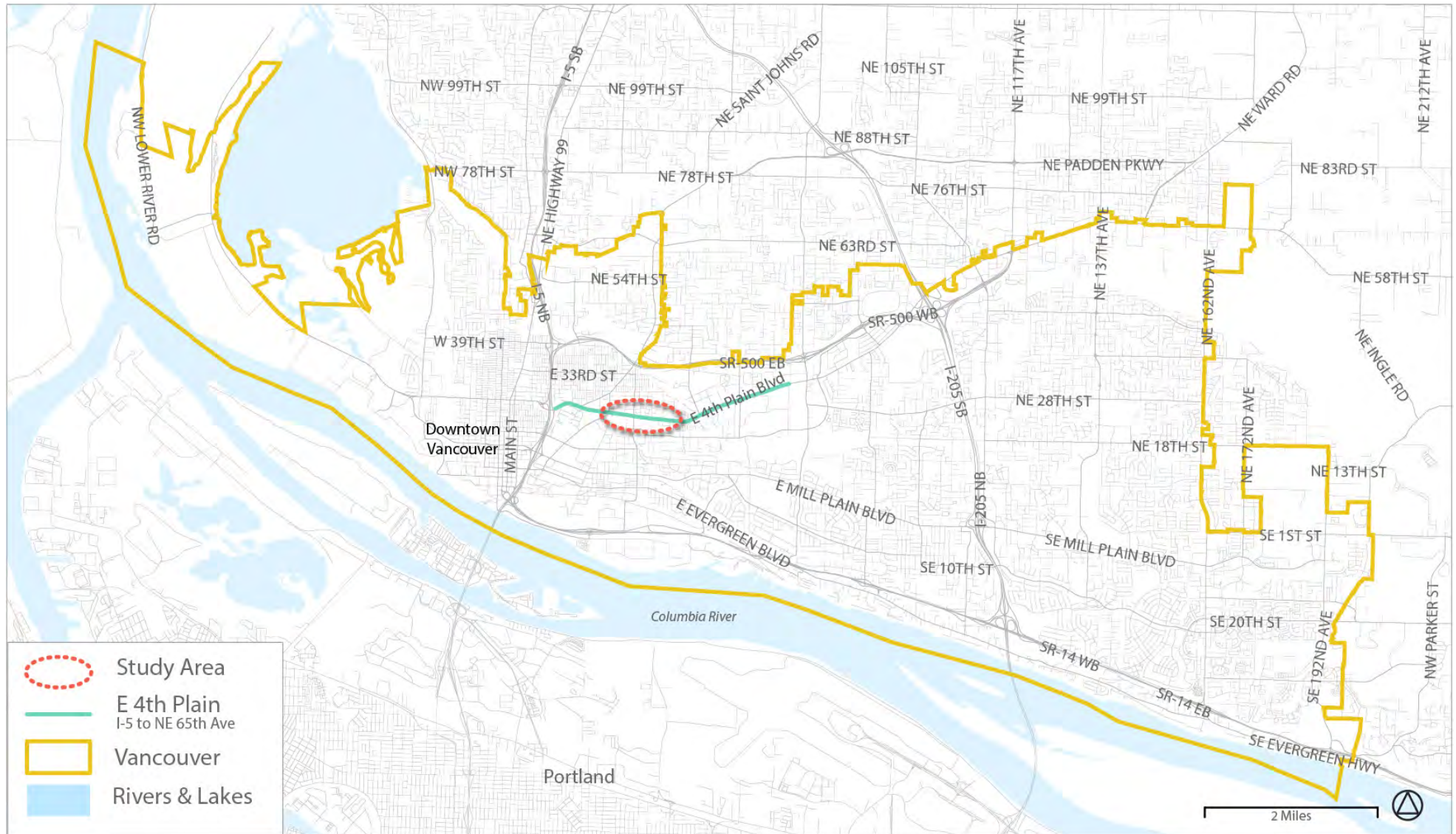
Fourth Plain residents walking the corridor

Fourth Plain Boulevard is a major east-west corridor located approximately one mile from downtown Vancouver, Washington (Figure 1.1). It is home to a culturally diverse population and business district that includes many Hispanic-, Eastern European- and Asian-owned small businesses. The corridor is anchored by major institutions such as Clark College, Clark County Public Health, and the VA Medical Center, and residents are served by many community assets including ample greenspace, schools, and social services. Fourth Plain will soon benefit from a \$53 million investment by C-TRAN (the regional transit agency), which is bringing bus rapid transit (BRT) to the length of the corridor.

The Fourth Plain corridor also faces a number of challenges, including a high poverty rate and income and education levels that lag behind the citywide average, as well as a significant homeless population. Much of the housing in the neighborhoods along the corridor is renter-occupied, and a large portion of households spend more than one-third of their income on rent. The physical character of Fourth Plain is largely auto-oriented, with dispersed retail and inconsistent streetscape and setbacks. High traffic counts and a lack of pedestrian infrastructure limit access and connectivity, and safety and crime are a concern for residents. The business district also experiences high vacancy rates, and a number of the buildings are in need of repair. *Fourth Plain Forward* recommends strategies to address these challenges, while building upon the corridor’s strengths and leveraging new investments.

# I.1 • PROJECT CONTEXT

Figure I.1 Context map



Like many jurisdictions, Vancouver grew rapidly in the 5-year period leading up to 2008. City planners developed several subarea plans to guide growth in key neighborhoods and corridors, including Fourth Plain. Starting in 2009, however, the economic downturn led to significant reductions in City resources and implementation of these plans was put on hold. Currently, Vancouver is experiencing a slow but steady economic recovery, and City planners and economic development staff are again preparing to implement the priorities identified in subarea plans.

The Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan was completed in 2007, with the intention of leveraging existing assets and addressing the challenges faced by the corridor. The resulting plan established a vision as well as goals and policies for the Fourth Plain corridor, and defined specific strategies to guide investment and shape future development. Below are some of the key elements of the vision as outlined in the Subarea Plan and informed by community input:

### People

- All people feel valued and safe. Diverse residents are welcomed.
- Residents and business owners are able to use their skills and experience to increase their economic security.
- Current residents are able to continue to live in the area.

### Business

- The corridor supports small businesses and attracts businesses that will assist in raising the income levels of residents.
- Business owners create an organization to advocate for their interests and to focus attention on the needs of the corridor.
- A mix of uses are encouraged at key intersections causing retail to cluster around these nodes.

### Community Character

- Fourth Plain is a city-wide destination for goods and services with an international flair.
- The community's history and diversity is celebrated.
- The public realm features places to gather and a streetscape that is well cared for and inviting with adequate lighting, street furniture, and plantings.

### Access and Mobility

- Pedestrian connections and crossings are available as pleasant, safe choices.
- Safe bike routes are available.
- Regional transportation systems are strongly connected to the region.

While some key changes emerged from the Subarea Plan—most notably, the creation of a zoning overlay district and designation of the area as a target geography for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds—implementation was largely limited by the economic downturn. Yet much has changed in the corridor since 2007: the economy and real estate market have recovered, new immigrants continue to find a home in the corridor, and C-TRAN will begin construction of the new Vine BRT service in the summer of 2015. This is an excellent time for the City to revisit the Subarea Plan with a renewed effort to advance its vision for Fourth Plain.



## I.3 • PROJECT PURPOSE & GOALS

The *Fourth Plain Forward Action Plan* (the Action Plan) is intended to guide implementation of the Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan by the City of Vancouver, in order to foster an active and prosperous corridor for residents, business owners, and visitors. Working from the economic development goals outlined in the Subarea Plan, *Fourth Plain Forward* identified the following project goals:

1. *Cultivate a vibrant and welcoming business district*
2. *Stabilize and grow small businesses*
3. *Create a growth pipeline for food entrepreneurs*
4. *Prioritize pedestrian safety and access*
5. *Foster inclusive transit-oriented development*

As this was an implementation-oriented project, the actions identified in the Action Plan are:

- *Rooted* in current community needs, challenges, assets and opportunities;
- *Designed* for the City of Vancouver to be the primary implementer or initiator;
- *Targeted* to specific places within the corridor where place-based strategies are necessary to achieve planning goals;
- *Prioritized* through an evaluation that considers multiple criteria, including community support, feasibility, evidence of effectiveness, efficiency, and equity.

## I.4 • PLANNING PROCESS

In January of 2015, the City of Vancouver partnered with our team of six students from the Portland State University Master of Urban and Regional Planning program to develop the *Fourth Plain Forward* initiative. We created the Action Plan through an iterative process of research, community engagement, and collaboration with City staff and partners (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Planning process



## I.4 PLANNING PROCESS

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### Existing Conditions

The Fourth Plain Student Team began the project by becoming familiar with Fourth Plain Boulevard. We made numerous visits, patronized local businesses, and reviewed relevant plans and ordinances. We then conducted a more formalized inventory of existing conditions on the corridor, analyzing demographic and economic data, conducting a land use and business inventory, recording observations about the physical character of the corridor, and conducting a detailed market analysis of the business district. The result of this process is **Appendix A: Existing Conditions Report**, which is summarized in Chapter 2 of this document.

### Community Engagement

In February of 2015 we began interviewing key stakeholders along the corridor in order to enrich our understanding of Fourth Plain's challenges and opportunities, and to contextualize previous and ongoing corridor revitalization efforts. In March we began visiting businesses and distributing two separate surveys to residents and businesses along Fourth Plain. We also began attending community meetings, including neighborhood associations and other organizations, to provide information about our project, solicit direct input, and distribute our survey. Between March and April we conducted two outreach events and one focus group. Our findings from these effort are presented in Chapter 3 of this document, and a review of the goals, design, implementation and limitations of our community engagement process is included in **Appendix B: Community Engagement Supplement**.

### Strategy Development

Based on the initial project goals, we conducted extensive research on best practices for planning and economic development in contexts similar to Fourth Plain. A scan of best practices literature, and both primary and secondary case study research, helped us begin to formulate strategies

to address the project goals. Through an iterative process informed by community and City staff input, we developed and refined a set of potential actions that could implement these strategies. We then selected and prioritized recommended actions based on an evaluation that considered multiple criteria. A summary of key findings from the best practices research, as well as example case studies and other resources, are provided in **Appendix D: Best Practices + Case Studies**.

### Recommended Actions

Our final recommendations present detailed actions that the City of Vancouver can take to foster an active and prosperous Fourth Plain for residents, business owners, and visitors. The recommendations are organized by the five project goals discussed above. We identify multiple strategies within each goal, and detail specific actions that implement each strategy (Figure 1.3). The City is the intended lead for each action, but where partnerships with other entities are necessary or beneficial, we identify potential partners. The actions are designated as short-, medium- or long-term based on priority and complexity of implementation, and high priority actions are highlighted. Below is a list of our recommended strategies, and a full discussion of recommended actions is presented in Chapter 4 of this document.

## I.4 PLANNING PROCESS

### Recommended Strategies

#### *Goal 1 - Cultivate a vibrant and welcoming business district*

- Allocate resources to organize and program the business district
- Partner with public institutions to shape development
- Invest in existing commercial spaces

#### *Goal 2 - Stabilize and grow small businesses*

- Implement small business technical assistance strategically
- Extend small business support to home-based microenterprises
- Help small businesses and microenterprises access capital and build assets

#### *Goal 3 - Create a growth pipeline for food entrepreneurs*

- Implement projects and partnerships to catalyze the growth of food businesses

#### *Goal 4 - Prioritize pedestrian safety and access*

- Improve neighborhood connectivity to the corridor
- Enhance pedestrian safety and comfort

#### *Goal 5 - Foster inclusive transit-oriented development*

- Enhance regulations for transit-oriented development
- Incentivize inclusive transit-oriented development

Figure I.3. Recommendations framework



# EXISTING CONDITIONS



# 2

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Community Profile

2.3 Physical Conditions

2.4 Market Conditions

2.5 Planning Context

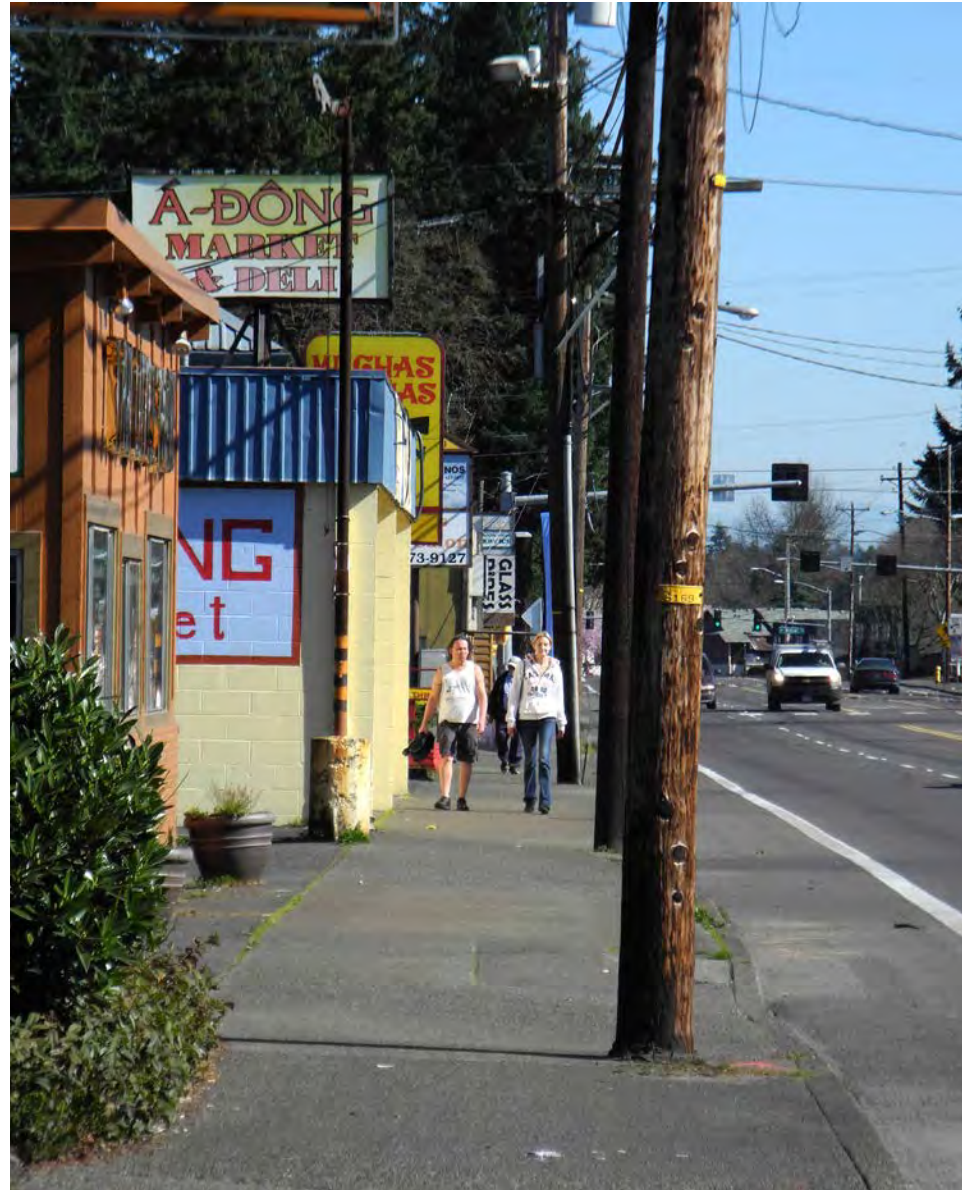
2.6 Summary

## 2.1 • INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the opportunities and challenges associated with Fourth Plain Boulevard’s current context. Our analysis starts with a community profile and continues with an examination of the physical conditions of the corridor, market conditions for businesses, and the planning context for the project. For the full analysis of existing conditions, please refer to **Appendix A**.

The Fourth Plain Student Team analyzed the portion of Fourth Plain that is bounded by I-5 to the west and NE 65th Avenue to the east (Figure 2.1). The areas adjacent to this portion of the street are referred to as the “Fourth Plain corridor.” We focused most of our planning efforts on a smaller segment of the corridor between Fort Vancouver Way and Rossiter Lane, referred to as the “study area”. This includes businesses and properties along this segment, as well as the residential community within a short walking distance (roughly one-quarter mile) of Fourth Plain. This chapter presents detailed data for the study area, but also looks at the larger Fourth Plain corridor in order to provide a better understanding of existing conditions of the whole area.

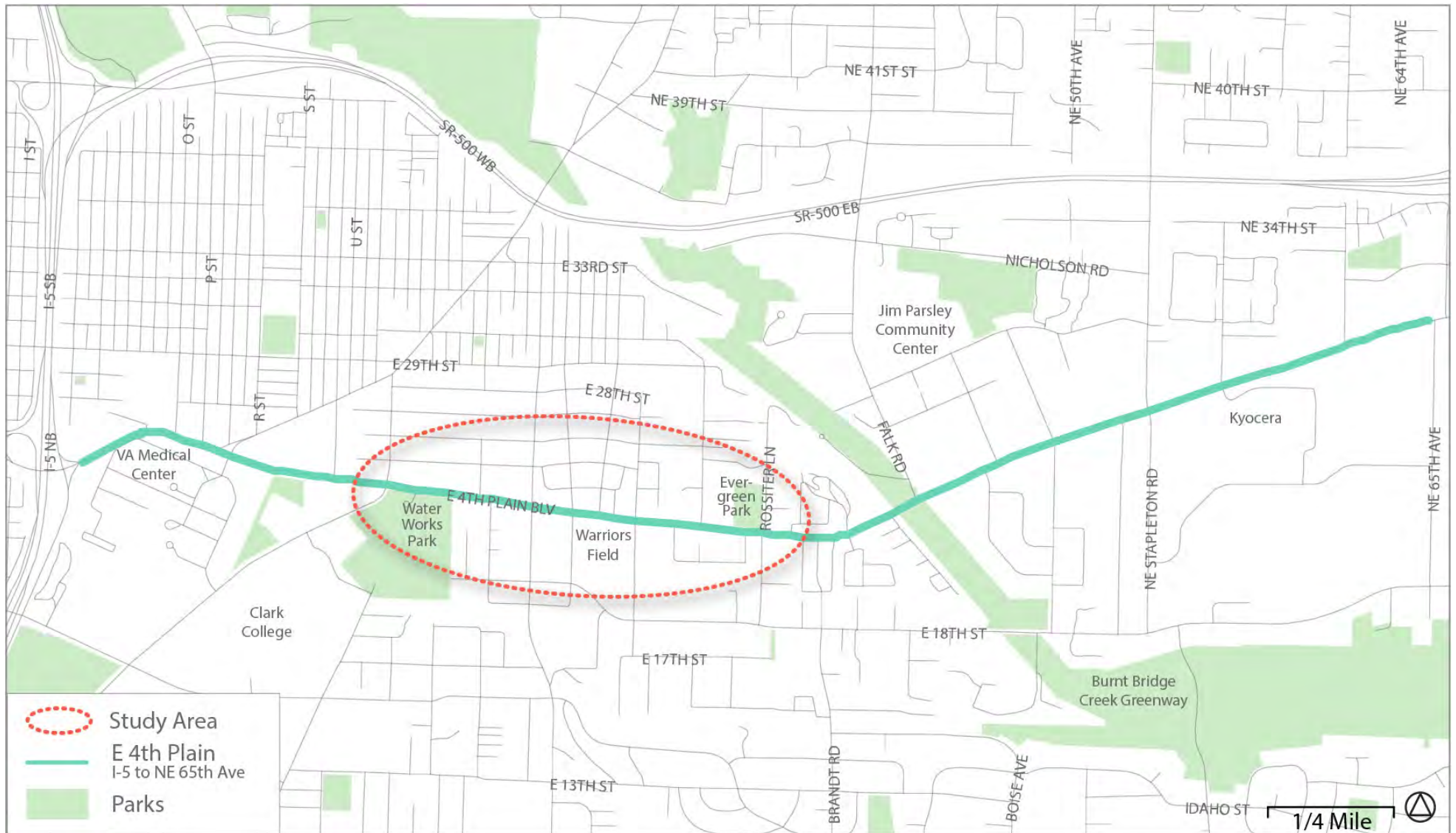
*Note about geography:* We began our focused research, analysis and outreach on a smaller segment of Fourth Plain between Fairmount Avenue and Rossiter Lane, and much of our existing conditions analysis reflects this geography. However, as our research and planning progressed, we concluded that a wider stretch of Fourth Plain (extending west to Fort Vancouver Way) would be a more appropriate geography to apply our recommended actions. This larger stretch of Fourth Plain shares a similar character, with some of the oldest development in the corridor and mostly smaller building setbacks. The commercial district along this stretch is also characterized by many small local businesses, a large portion of which are minority owned and offer culturally specific goods and services. Thus, this larger stretch from Fort Vancouver Way to Rossiter Lane has the opportunity to become a more formalized multicultural business district, and we refer to this segment as our “study area” throughout the rest of the Action Plan.



Fourth Plain between Norris Road and Neals Lane

## 2.1 • INTRODUCTION

Figure 2.1. Fourth Plain corridor and study area



## 2.2 • COMMUNITY PROFILE

Our sociodemographic and economic analyses point to a number of opportunities and challenges for the Fourth Plain community.

### Opportunities

#### Fourth Plain is welcoming to a diverse community

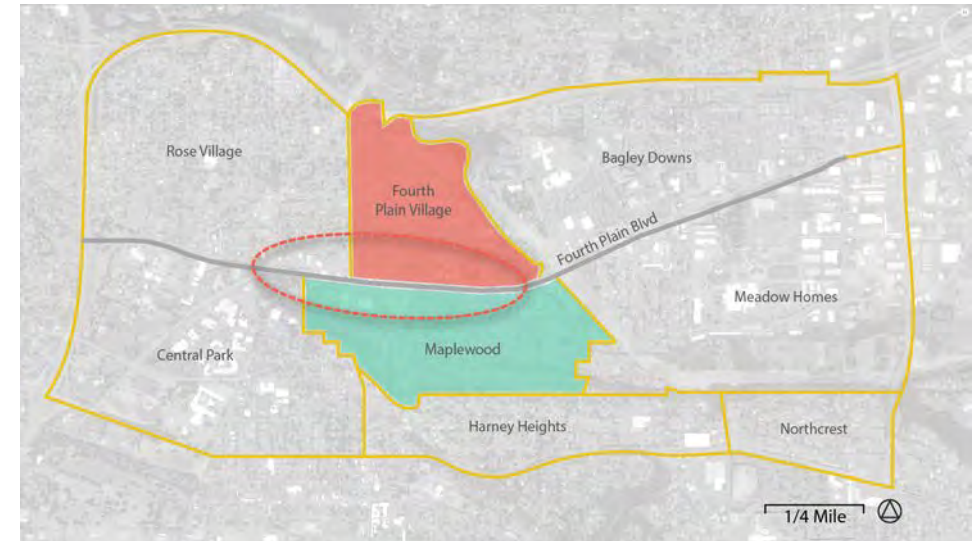
The neighborhoods of Fourth Plain (Figure 2.2) are home to a widely diverse population, including some of the highest percentages of Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and foreign-born residents in Vancouver. This supports a strong sense of community for many residents and business owners.

Communities of color (defined as racial minorities and those who are ethnically Hispanic or Latino) make up 40% of the corridor's population. The study area is even more diverse, particularly the neighborhood south of Fourth Plain (Maplewood), in which nearly half of residents are persons of color. Hispanics and Latinos comprise the largest ethnic minority in Maplewood, at 33% of its total population (Figure 2.3). Hispanics/Latinos also comprise the largest minority in the neighborhood to the north of the study area (Fourth Plain Village), though their share of the population is much lower than in Maplewood (15%).

Interestingly, concentrations of the two largest ethnic minority groups (Hispanic/Latino and Asian) are shifting. The Hispanic/Latino population is becoming increasingly concentrated in Maplewood, while the reverse is true in Fourth Plain Village. At the same time, the Asian population is becoming increasingly concentrated in Fourth Plain Village, though it still remains under 10% (Figure 2.4). This discrepancy between neighborhoods to the north and south of the study area also emerges for the foreign-born population, which is more concentrated in Maplewood, and has declined in Fourth Plain Village. This indicates that more immigrants are moving into Maplewood, and might also suggest that immigrant families are leaving Fourth Plain Village to settle in other neighborhoods. It may be an early sign of displacement within the area, since Fourth Plain Village has somewhat

higher housing costs than Maplewood. It could also be that immigrant Latinos are less able to afford housing in Fourth Plain Village and are settling in Maplewood where housing is more affordable.

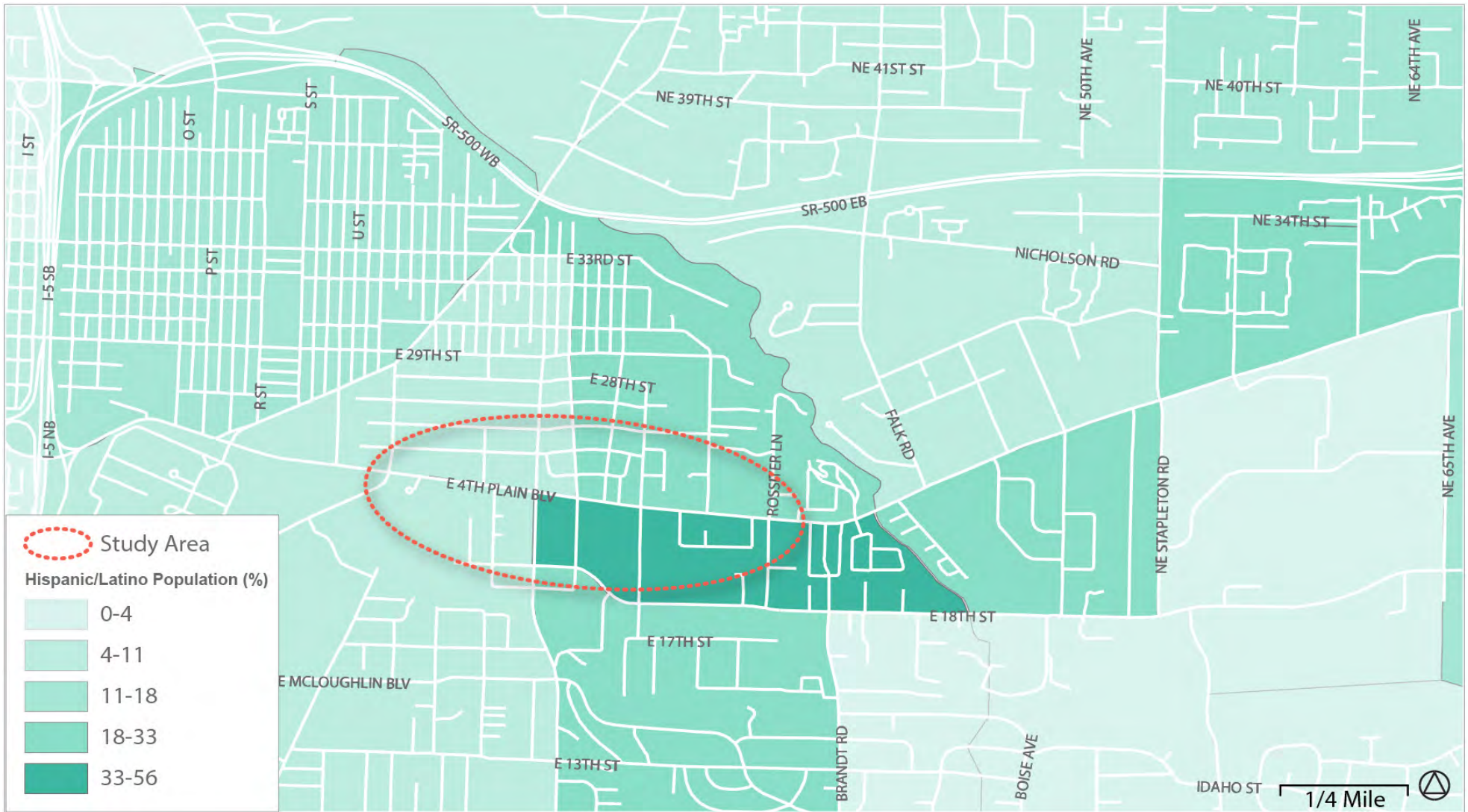
Figure 2.2. Neighborhoods of Fourth Plain





## 2.2 • COMMUNITY PROFILE

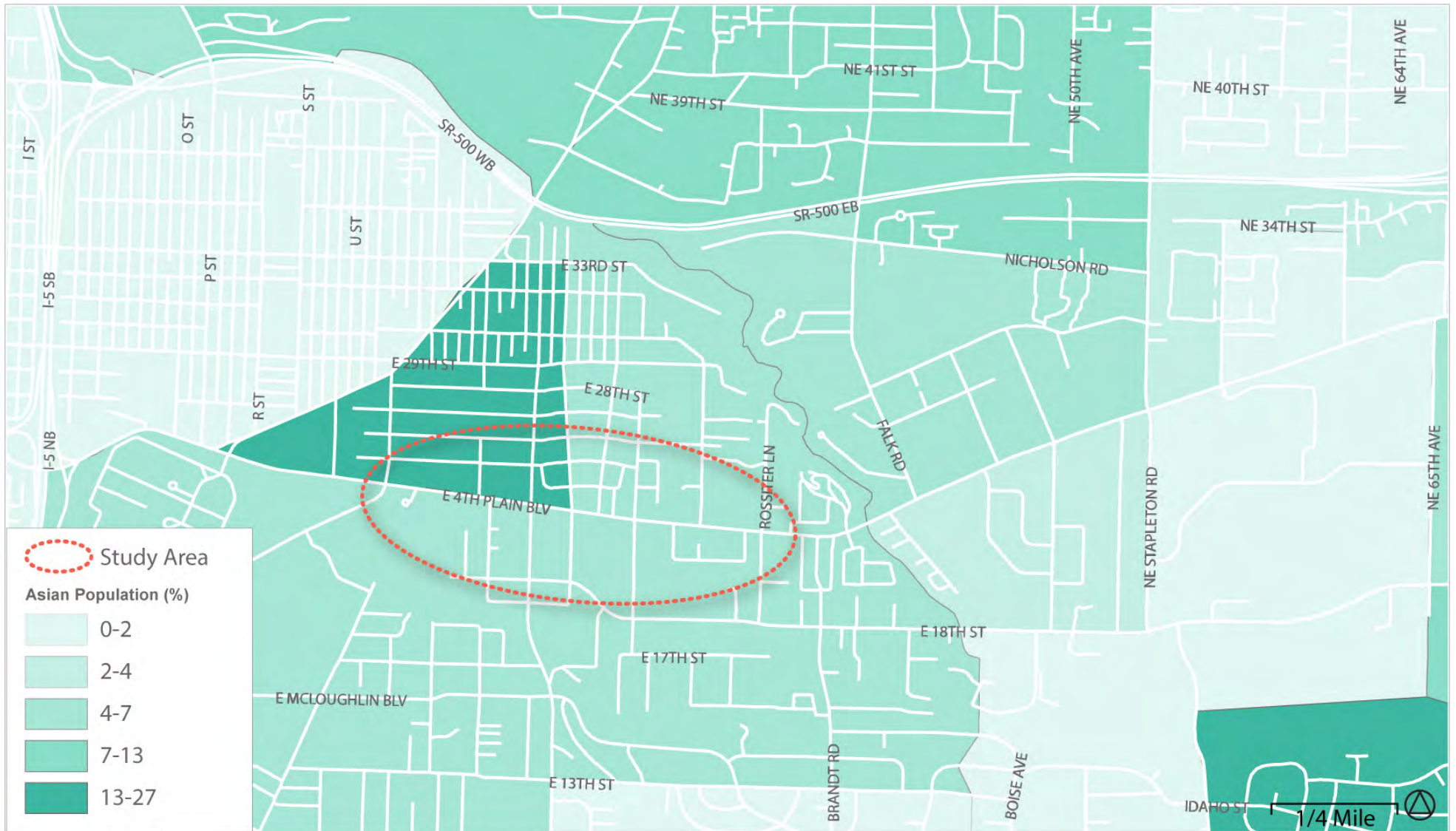
Figure 2.3. Percent Hispanic or Latino



Source: US Census data by block group, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2009-2013

## 2.2 • COMMUNITY PROFILE

Figure 2.4. Percent Asian



Source: US Census data by block group, American Community Survey 5-year estimates, 2009-2013

## 2.2 • COMMUNITY PROFILE

### Supporting small businesses benefits neighborhood residents

Businesses within the study area largely employ workers who live near Fourth Plain.<sup>1</sup> This supports the notion that assisting businesses on Fourth Plain will also help nearby residents. Analysis of employment by sector reveals that self-employment is higher in Maplewood than it is for the rest of the Fourth Plain corridor. Self-employment rate is of particular interest because this is one way to assess the potential for microenterprise development, as these ventures often start out of homes. Supporting small-scale entrepreneurship with strategies such as commercial kitchens and business incubators may be a feasible way to encourage and grow new and existing small businesses and to increase wealth for Fourth Plain corridor residents. The self-employment data suggest that this may be particularly effective in the Maplewood neighborhood.



Intersection of Fourth Plain and Norris Road

1. Source: U.S. Census Bureau OnTheMap, 2011

### Challenges

#### Many residents experience economic challenges

Household incomes in the study area are significantly lower than in Vancouver as a whole. Maplewood's median household income (MHI) is only 54% of Vancouver's MHI of \$48,979, while Fourth Plain Village's MHI is a bit higher at 69% of the city's. Residents of the study area also experience high poverty rates, with nearly 30% of households in Fourth Plain Village—and over 40% in Maplewood—suffering from extreme poverty.<sup>2</sup> The study area also experiences low educational attainment, with over 20% of the population having earned less than a high school education (compared to 11% for the city as a whole). Low incomes may limit the ability of neighborhood-serving businesses to succeed on Fourth Plain.

The Fourth Plain corridor is predominantly renter-occupied. In Maplewood, 80% of households rent their homes, and the same is true for 69% of households in Fourth Plain Village. Poverty within the study area is exacerbated by the fact that a large number of households are rent burdened (defined as spending more than 30% of household income on rent). Nearly one-third of renter-households in the study area are severely rent burdened, spending at least half of their income on rent each month. Rent burden has serious implications for household stability, potential for displacement, hardship, and family stress.

2. Extreme poverty is defined as earning less than the federal poverty rate. The federal poverty rate for a family of four in 2013 was \$23,834 (Source: U.S. Census Bureau).

## 2.2 • COMMUNITY PROFILE

### Perception and reality of crime

While overall crime in Vancouver has recently been falling, some locations on Fourth Plain were identified by neighborhood residents as having a reputation for crime. Unfortunately, this perception is supported by crime reports, which show some clustering of crime along Fourth Plain. Six Fourth Plain neighborhoods appear in the top twenty Vancouver neighborhoods by crimes per capita, but only one in the top five (this is out of 66 total neighborhoods in the City) (Table 2.1). Maplewood ranks as the neighborhood with the 9th highest crime rate, while Fourth Plain Village is the 18th highest.

Analysis of reported incidents within the corridor in 2014 also suggests that the Maplewood neighborhood experiences a higher concentration of crime than other areas of the corridor (Figure 2.5), and also has a higher rate of violent crime. 36% of crimes in Maplewood in 2014 were violent crimes, compared to 19% in Fourth Plain Village.<sup>3</sup>

Table 2.1. Top 20 Vancouver neighborhoods by crime rate (of 66 total)

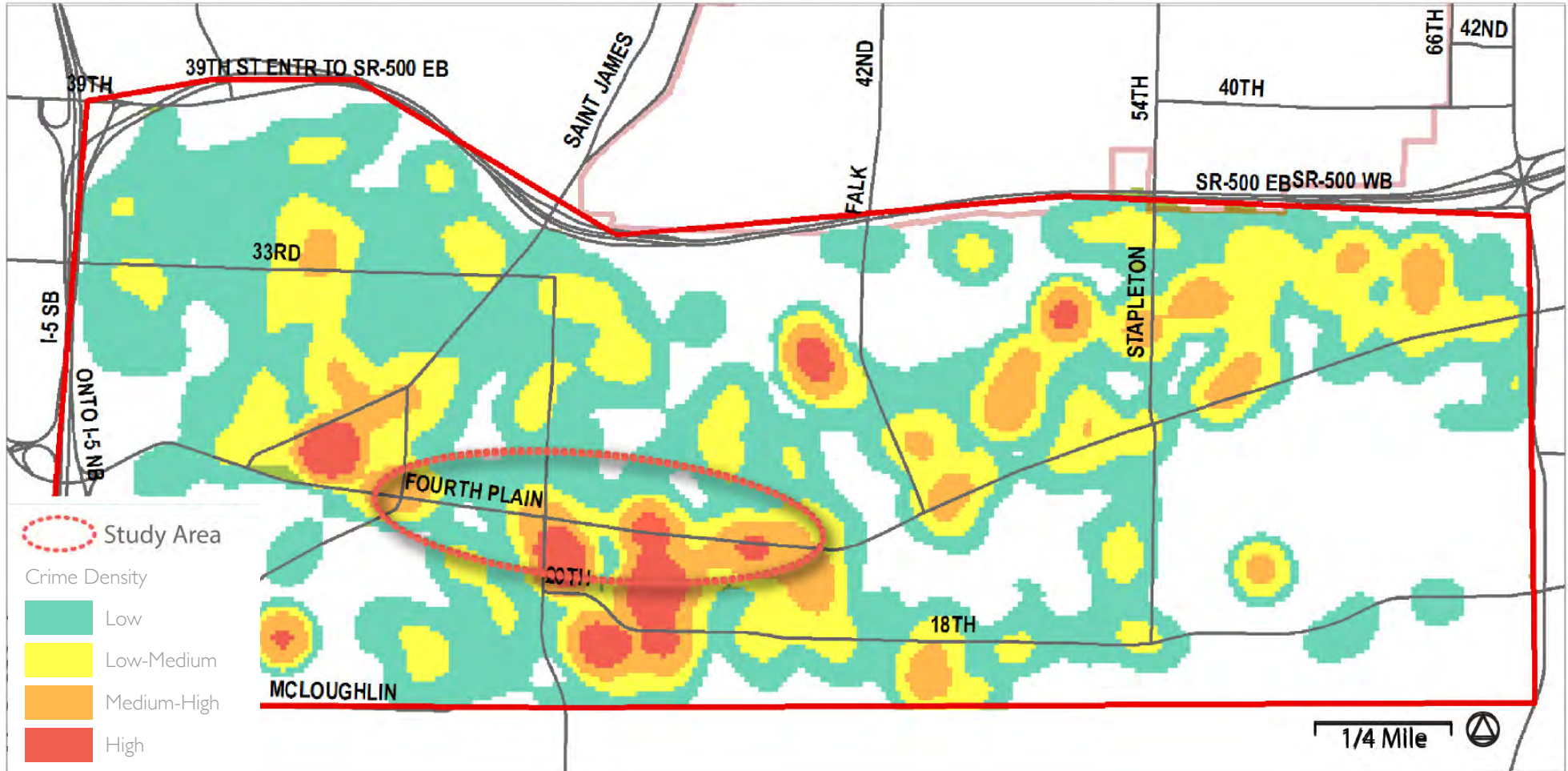
rank	neighborhood	crimes per 1,000 residents
1	Esther Short	728.7
2	Meadow Homes	332.1
3	Columbia Way	299.6
4	Hudson's Bay	281.1
5	Marrion	279.6
6	Central Park	275.3
7	VanMall	236.4
8	Arnada	232.2
9	Maplewood	220.9
10	Bagely Downs	220.0
11	Shumway	218.4
12	Northcrest	204.5
13	Rose Village	199.3
14	Roads End	194.1
15	Bennington	184.3
16	Hough	173.4
17	Fruit Valley	169.6
18	Fourth Plain Village	169.5
19	West Minnehaha	158.5
20	Carter Park	149.2

Note: Fourth Plain neighborhoods shaded green  
Source: Vancouver Police Department, based on reported incidents in 2014

3. Source: Vancouver Police Department, based on reported incidents in 2014

## 2.2 • COMMUNITY PROFILE

Figure 2.5. Density of reported crimes in 2014



Source: Vancouver Police Department, based on reported incidents in 2014

## 2.3 • PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Over the course of this project, we spent numerous weeks on the corridor and in the surrounding neighborhoods conducting field observations and speaking with community members who visit Fourth Plain on a daily basis.

### Opportunities

#### The Vine BRT will greatly improve transit service

Fourth Plain is C-TRAN's highest ridership corridor, and is currently served by three bus lines. C-TRAN will soon construct The Vine—the region's first bus rapid transit line—along Fourth Plain, connecting riders to downtown Vancouver and the Westfield Mall. This is expected to greatly improve the frequency and predictability of service, with enhanced station areas that will provide wider sidewalks, better lighting, and attractive shelters.



Image: [www.thevine.c-tran.com](http://www.thevine.c-tran.com)

Rendering of the proposed Vine BRT station at Grand Boulevard and Fourth Plain (Source: C-TRAN)

#### A wealth of community assets

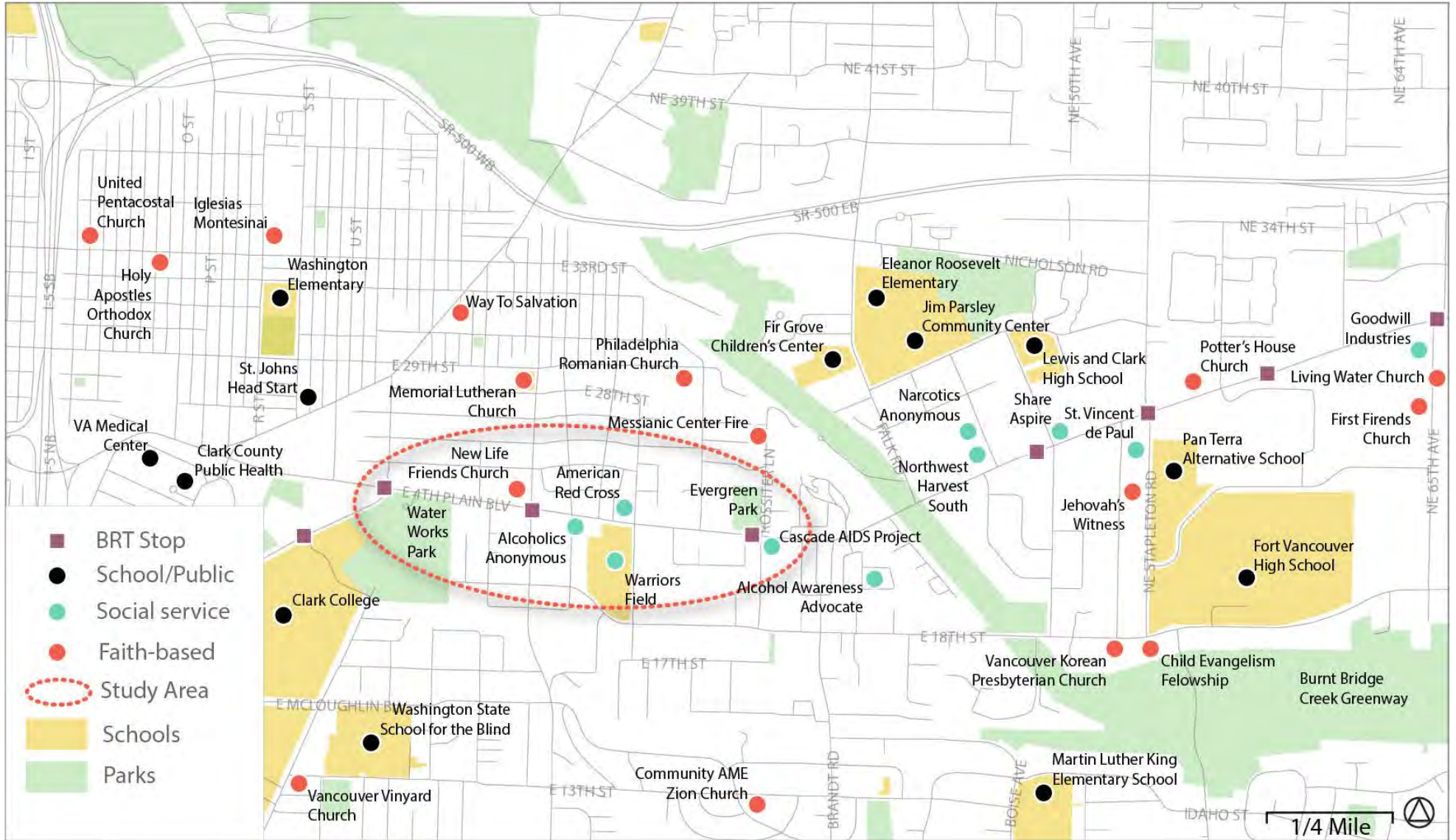
Fourth Plain and its surrounding neighborhoods are home to a number of community assets (Figure 2.6). Large institutions such as Clark College and the VA Medical Center anchor the west end of the corridor. Vancouver Public Schools has a strong presence in the area, operating the Jim Parsley Community Center and maintaining Warriors Field, in addition to the area's many public schools. Numerous social service organizations and faith-based institutions serve the local community. Fourth Plain also benefits from several large parks and green spaces, including Water Works Park, Evergreen Park, and the Burnt Bridge Creek Greenway.



Children playing in Evergreen Park

## 2.3 • PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Figure 2.6. Community assets



Source: Physical inventory collected by student team, supplemented by Google Maps data

## 2.3 • PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

### Challenges

The appearance of the corridor forms a negative impression for many

Fourth Plain Boulevard is typical of an auto-oriented, suburban arterial street. The corridor lacks physical unity because of inconsistent building setbacks and large parking lots that separate businesses. It also suffers from a lack of street trees, landscaping, and a distracting number of utility lines.

A primary detractor for many is the physical condition of the businesses along Fourth Plain. Unfortunately, for pass-through traffic traveling at high speeds or for people who do not visit the corridor often, an association may be made between the quality of the property and the quality of the product. We assessed the condition of buildings during our land use inventory of the corridor, categorizing buildings as one of three conditions: poor, fair, or good. We gave buildings a poor rating if they had noticeable structural damage that needed repair. We gave a fair rating to properties that only had cosmetic deficiencies, such as chipping paint or graffiti. We assigned a good rating to properties that had no noticeable structural or cosmetic issues.

For the businesses, 21 were in buildings of poor condition, 59 were fair, and 70 were in good condition. Of the restaurant stock, a disproportionate number of the local Asian and Latino businesses were in either fair or poor condition (69%). By way of comparison, only one of the 12 chain restaurants on the corridor was rated in poor condition. This disparity in property conditions is a significant disadvantage to the local Asian and Latino restaurants.



The street is cluttered with utility lines and signs for businesses



Many buildings are in fair or poor condition



## 2.3 • PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

The corridor is auto-oriented, yet pedestrian activity is common

Fourth Plain Boulevard and the surrounding neighborhoods are full of people getting around by foot, yet the pedestrian environment is often uncomfortable. The narrow sidewalks mostly lack buffers from the street and are frequently disturbed by driveway curb cuts. Many of the neighborhood streets surrounding Fourth Plain lack sidewalks, and some streets do not connect to the corridor, which greatly limits pedestrian access.

Fourth Plain is a wide, busy arterial street. Though much of the corridor has a speed limit of 30 miles per hour, cars typically travel much faster. During our community engagement process, several community members expressed that they felt unsafe crossing Fourth Plain, even at crossings protected by a high-intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) beacon. This concern is justified, given that pedestrian traffic collisions are frequent along Fourth Plain. The map in Figure 2.7 depicts the concentration of pedestrian collisions from 2010-2014. The map shows a hotspot of collisions in our study area.

Despite uncomfortable conditions, there is also a fair amount of bicycle activity on Fourth Plain. Striped bicycle lanes extend along a small segment of the corridor, between Grand Boulevard and Hazelwood Drive. However, even where lane markings do exist, informal observation indicates that many bicyclists choose to ride on the sidewalk rather than traveling with traffic. This can make the narrow sidewalks even more difficult to navigate. It is important that Fourth Plain be welcoming to people walking, biking, and taking transit, since the number of people doing so is likely to increase with the construction of The Vine.



Pedestrian activity is common on Fourth Plain



People of all ages typically ride bicycles on the sidewalk

## 2.3 • PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

Figure 2.7. Concentration of pedestrian collisions, 2010-2014



Source: City of Vancouver

## 2.4 • MARKET CONDITIONS

The team performed a business inventory, retail market analysis and redevelopment potential analysis to understand the opportunities and challenges faced by businesses, property owners, and developers.

### Opportunities

#### Strong market for neighborhood-serving businesses

Fourth Plain is primarily a neighborhood-serving commercial district, despite the street carrying significant citywide and regional traffic. Roughly 67% of the businesses in the corridor are the type of retail goods or services for which people do not usually travel far from home, such as groceries, personal service businesses (e.g., salons and barbershops), auto repair, tax and insurance services, and gas stations. In general, market conditions are strong for neighborhood-serving retailers. Fourth Plain neighborhoods are relatively densely populated—providing solid local demand—and these businesses do not have to compete with large shopping centers. Our market analysis indicates that there may even be capacity for more of these neighborhood-serving retailers, including hardware stores, florists, salons and barbers, drug stores, and pet care. The City should also consider ways to help existing neighborhood-serving retailers attract pass-through traffic to expand their customer base.

#### Culturally specific businesses benefit from a loyal, local customer base

Many of these neighborhood-serving shops reflect the diversity of Fourth Plain's communities. The corridor is home to many specialty food stores, including two Latino markets, two Asian markets, and one market for Eastern European food. These markets provide access to fresh produce and foods that allow immigrant communities to sustain cultural traditions in their new home country. Our analysis indicates that the market for specialty foods and groceries may be saturated, so these markets succeed because they attract a high share of the diverse local populations. Many other

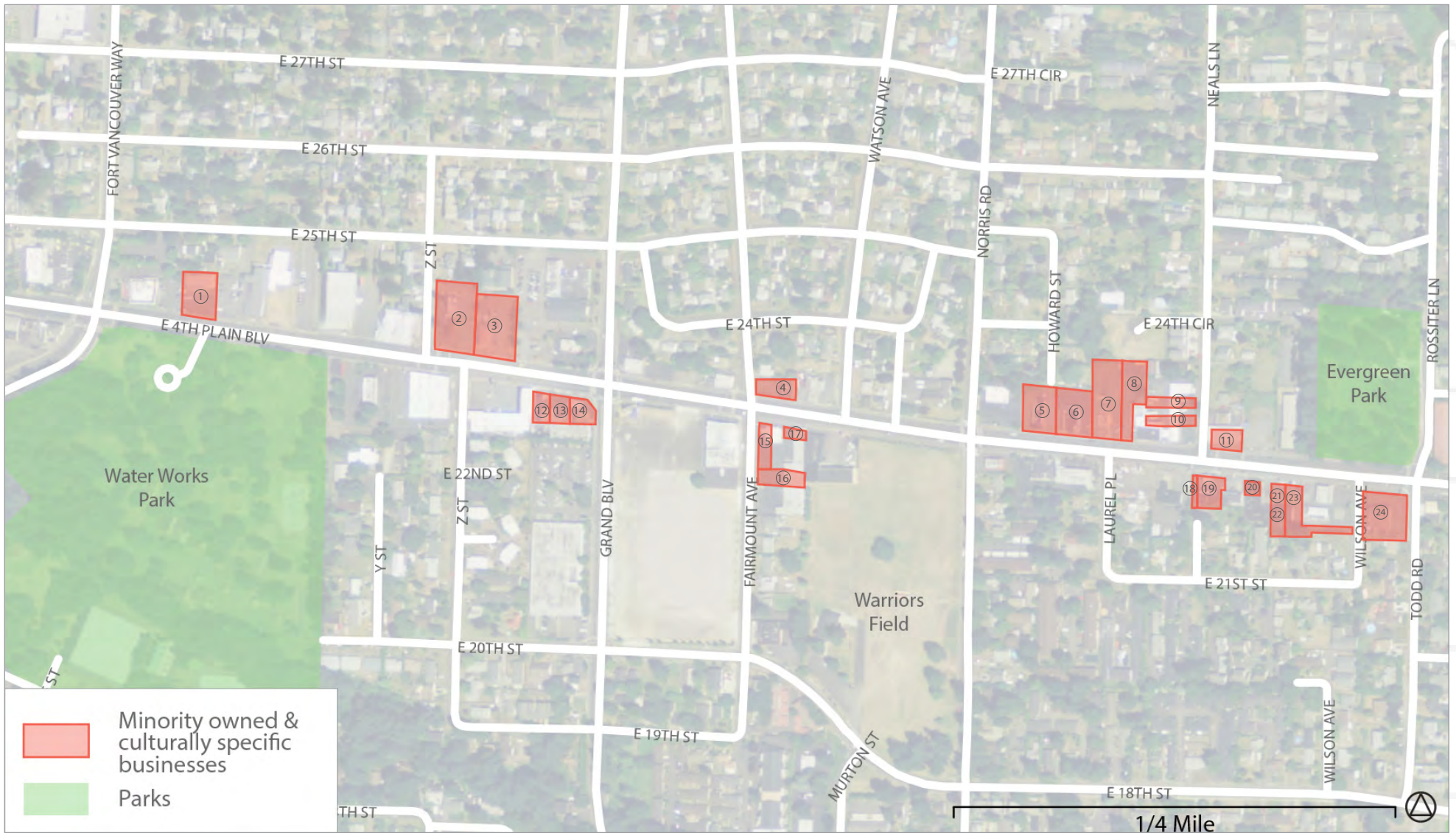
businesses—including hair and nail salons, barbershops, health services, and repair shops—also cater to a specific racial or ethnic community. Figure 2.8 highlights the culturally specific and minority owned businesses identified within the study area. This includes any business that we know to be owned by a person of color or recent immigrant, or any business that clearly caters to a racial or ethnic minority population. These businesses give the district a distinctive identity that can attract non-local shoppers, but they also serve as amenities to the diverse local population. Culturally specific goods and services are one reason why Fourth Plain is a unique and important place for people of diverse backgrounds.

#### Restaurants can draw customers from a wider market area

Restaurants are the most common retail category on the corridor—accounting for 25% of all businesses—and one of the only types of retail on Fourth Plain that has strong potential to draw customers from a citywide or regional market. Among the 20 full-service restaurants on the corridor, 85% serve an international cuisine, including Latin American, Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese. These restaurants closely mirror the racial/ethnic composition of the neighborhoods surrounding the corridor, indicating that they draw heavily from the local population. The relative share of each type of restaurant even approximates the relative size of the each racial/ethnic community; Latino restaurants are the most common with nine locations, and Asian follows close behind with seven restaurants. Food is often a cornerstone of business districts in communities of color and immigrant communities, allowing immigrants to apply their cultural knowledge of food preparation to provide a product that is often seen as authentic or novel. Immigrant restaurant owners also cater heavily to their own ethnic communities, providing both a product and a cultural gathering place that may be difficult for these communities to find elsewhere. For this same reason, restaurants may also be able to compete effectively with regional shopping centers.

## 2.4 • MARKET CONDITIONS

Figure 2.8. Minority owned and culturally specific businesses



This map identifies any business that we know to be owned by a person of color or recent immigrant, or any business that clearly caters to a racial or ethnic minority population.

## 2.4 • MARKET CONDITIONS

- ① Central Tire Shop
- ② Don Taco
- ③ Taco Time
- ④ Pho Hang Phat
- ⑤ Thai Little Home
- ⑥ A-Dong Market
- ⑦ Servicios Latinos
- ⑧ Elvia's Hair Salon
- ⑨ Grupo Horizonte
- ⑩ FriMex
- ⑪ Vancouver Auto
- ⑫ Miguel's Auto Repair
- ⑬ Q-Nails
- ⑭ 24 Hour Food Mart
- ⑮ Daisy's Salon
- ⑯ Lam Hair and Nails
- ⑰ Guelaguetza Restaurante
- ⑱ Suds City Laundry
- ⑲ Becerra's Groceries
- ⑳ Alphabiotics
- ㉑ La Puguita Alteraciones
- ㉒ 4 Caminos
- ㉓ Silver Dragon



### Challenges

#### **Businesses dependent on a wider market area need strong marketing strategies**

Restaurants are one of the businesses that must attract customers from outside the immediate neighborhood in order to thrive. Our market analysis indicated that restaurants may be saturated within a three-mile trade area. Auto repair shops and home improvement businesses in the study area may face a similar challenge. Like restaurants, these businesses are used less frequently, and therefore need to attract people from a wider area to succeed. Average incomes and population density near Fourth Plain may not be high enough to support many of these businesses only from the local neighborhood population. These businesses and the district in general need to have compelling marketing strategies and a strong reputation in order to attract non-local customers and grow their business.

#### **Commercial spaces are underutilized**

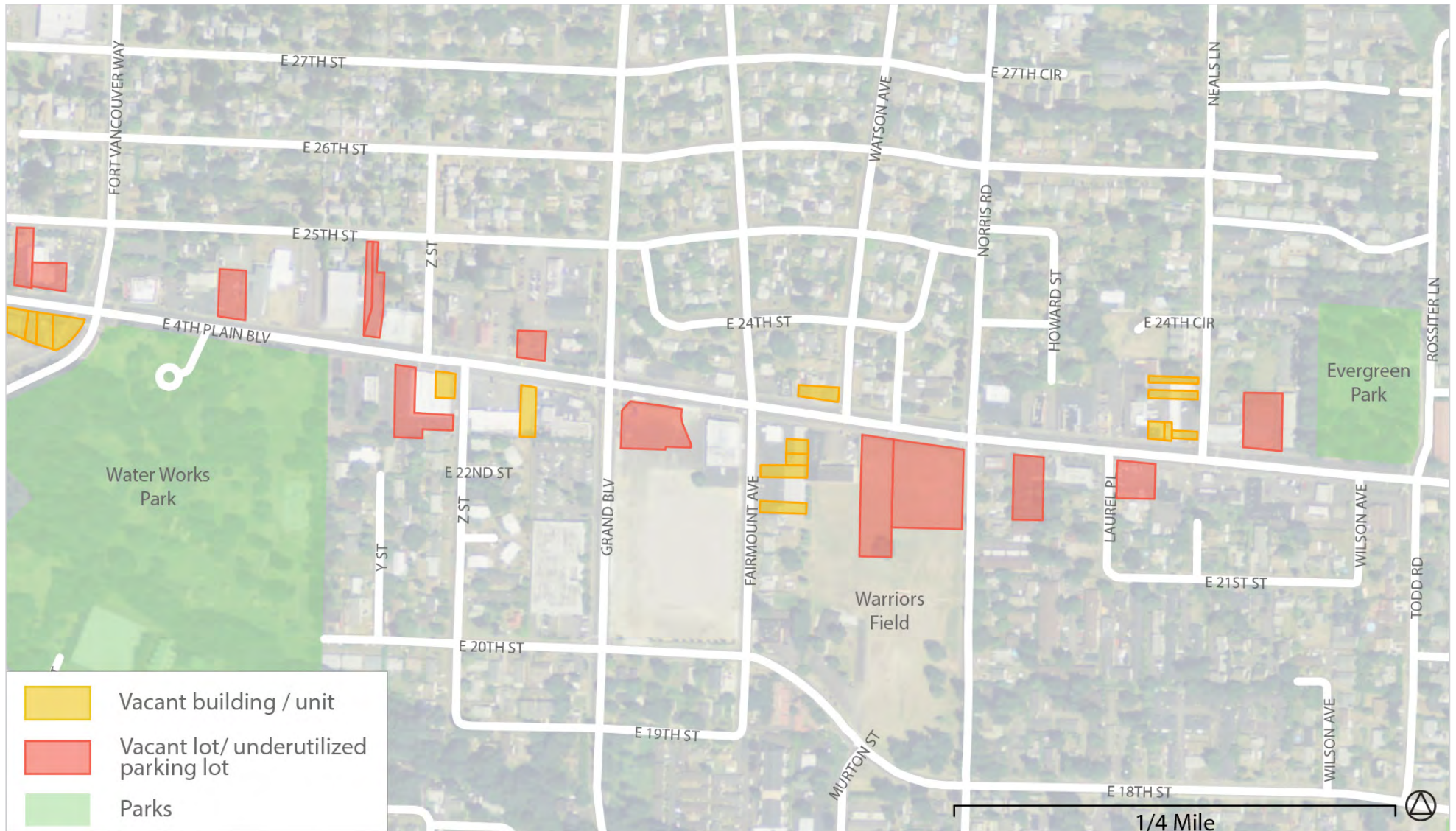
The commercial vacancy rate on Fourth Plain is 15%, significantly higher than the optimal rate of around 5% (Figure 2.9). The high vacancy rate may indicate an imbalance in the overall mix of housing and commercial development, as the citywide housing rental vacancy rate is 2%. More housing could help to create the demand necessary to fill vacant commercial spaces. Some commercial spaces may be too large for the neighborhood-serving retail for which there is a stronger market. As depicted in Figure 2.9, many of the vacant spaces do not have a frontage on Fourth Plain, which offers less visibility to passing traffic. In addition to new housing development, the appearance and configuration of these spaces need substantial improvement in order to attract tenants and create a more active commercial district.

#### **Redevelopment of commercial lots is unlikely in the near term**

A commonly used indicator of the potential for redevelopment is the land-to-improvement value ratio. Based on this ratio, redevelopment of the commercially zoned lots directly adjacent to Fourth Plain is unlikely in the near term. Redevelopment potential is higher when land values are high relative to building values. Land values are a proxy for the potential rental rate a new development can achieve. If the potential rental rate is high, and the value of the current building is low, it indicates that demolishing the current building and redeveloping the site with a multi-story development may be economically viable. Our analysis finds that very few parcels in the study area have a land-to-improvement value ratio that indicates strong potential for redevelopment. This is partly attributable to the relatively new building stock of some existing commercial properties, as well as relatively low land values. The addition of BRT to the corridor will have some effect on land values, but likely not enough to immediately spur redevelopment. There are many underutilized parking lots and some vacant lots in the corridor, however (Figure 2.9). This finding underscores the need for the City to design incentives that can make development more feasible and to take actions to attract high-quality development on the few vacant lots available.

## 2.4 • MARKET CONDITIONS

Figure 2.9. Vacant parcels, buildings and storefronts



Source: Land use inventory performed by Fourth Plain Student Team

Plans and regulations from multiple jurisdictions—including the City of Vancouver, Clark County, C-TRAN, and various neighborhood associations—help define the broad goals of the larger community and provide support for specific policies and actions along Fourth Plain, while also placing these actions within a regulatory context. Key takeaways, opportunities, and challenges from the plans most directly related to Fourth Plain Forward are discussed below. All other relevant plans are summarized in **Appendix A: Existing Conditions Report**.

### Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan

The Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan forms the basis of the Fourth Plain Forward initiative, whose purpose is to guide the plan’s implementation by the City of Vancouver. The City initiated the Subarea Plan in 2005 to address the concerns of residents and business owners on and around Fourth Plain Boulevard. The resulting plan establishes a vision as well as goals and policies for the Fourth Plain corridor, and defines specific strategies to guide investment and shape future development. The Subarea Plan was adopted by the City and incorporated into the Vancouver Comprehensive Plan in 2007.

### Opportunities

The Subarea Plan established a vision for Fourth Plain that is still highly relevant today, even though the area has seen a number of changes since the plan was adopted. Following is a summary of the vision that the plan details for the corridor: Fourth Plain is welcoming to people of diverse backgrounds and allows residents of all income levels to continue living in the area. The corridor is supportive to small businesses, and business owners work together to advocate for their interests. The commercial district is a distinct destination where the community’s history and diversity are celebrated. Development is concentrated around key intersections and nodes, and pedestrian connections are convenient, safe, and pleasant. Finally, the corridor is safe and accessible to all transportation modes, including bicyclists and transit riders.

### Challenges

The Subarea Plan’s concept of focusing development around ‘pulse points’ is a sound strategy for fostering compact development that is more friendly to pedestrians. However, the pulse points identified in the plan may not be the most appropriate scale or location for the current conditions on Fourth Plain. We believe that it may be more appropriate to focus new development around the Vine BRT stations that will be constructed by 2016, in order to better support transit ridership.

It is important to recognize that while this Action Plan is focused on economic development—primarily for the chosen study area—it is part of broader efforts by the City of Vancouver to implement the Subarea Plan. Recommendations made in this Action Plan will likely inform the City’s actions along other portions of the corridor, outside of the study area. The City will also continue to implement other goals and strategies outlined in the Subarea Plan that are outside the scope of this project—including housing, safety, and transportation.

### Fourth Plain Boulevard Streetscape Design Plan

The Streetscape Plan was developed in 2008 and includes detailed design concepts that build on the vision and goals established by the Subarea Plan. This plan defines the portion of Fourth Plain that coincides with the study area (Fort Vancouver Way to the Burnt Bridge Creek Greenway) as the ‘Village Design Area.’ This area is home to some of the oldest development in the corridor, and has the best potential for ‘village’ or ‘Main Street’ character. The plan recommends a streetscape design that is suited to this stretch of the corridor, including treatments that are intended to enhance the safety and character of the street.



### Opportunities

The Streetscape Plan sets the ideal vision for an enhanced streetscape on Fourth Plain that includes wider sidewalks, street furnishings and street trees, short segments of landscaped medians, and ‘gateway’ treatments at key intersections, such as concrete paving, ornamental lighting, and other distinctive design features. The plan is the adopted standard for any future improvements on the corridor, and implementation has included the installation of several new protected crossings on Fourth Plain, and the forthcoming construction of new sidewalks along Neals Lane and Rossiter Lane in 2016.

### Challenges

Streetscape improvements are challenging on Fourth Plain due to the constrained right-of-way. The full street design outlined in the Streetscape Plan is incumbent upon acquisition of right-of-way from private property owners, which can be very expensive. Also, the requirements are largely dependent on new private development and very little development has occurred in the study area, with the exception of the new Walmart located at Grand Boulevard.

### Zoning

Land adjacent to Fourth Plain Boulevard has a mix of zoning designations, including commercial, higher-density residential, lower-density residential, and light industrial areas, as well as a special zone for the Central Park neighborhood. The study area also falls within the Fourth Plain Corridor Overlay District (Figure 2.10).

### Opportunities

The Fourth Plain Corridor Overlay District is the primary regulatory change that emerged from the Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan. The stated

purpose of the overlay is to “facilitate transition to an attractive, consistent, and pedestrian-friendly streetscape that accommodates multiple modes of transportation, and supports long term economic development.” The standards apply only to new or replacement buildings or structures, as well as building expansions of more than 25%.

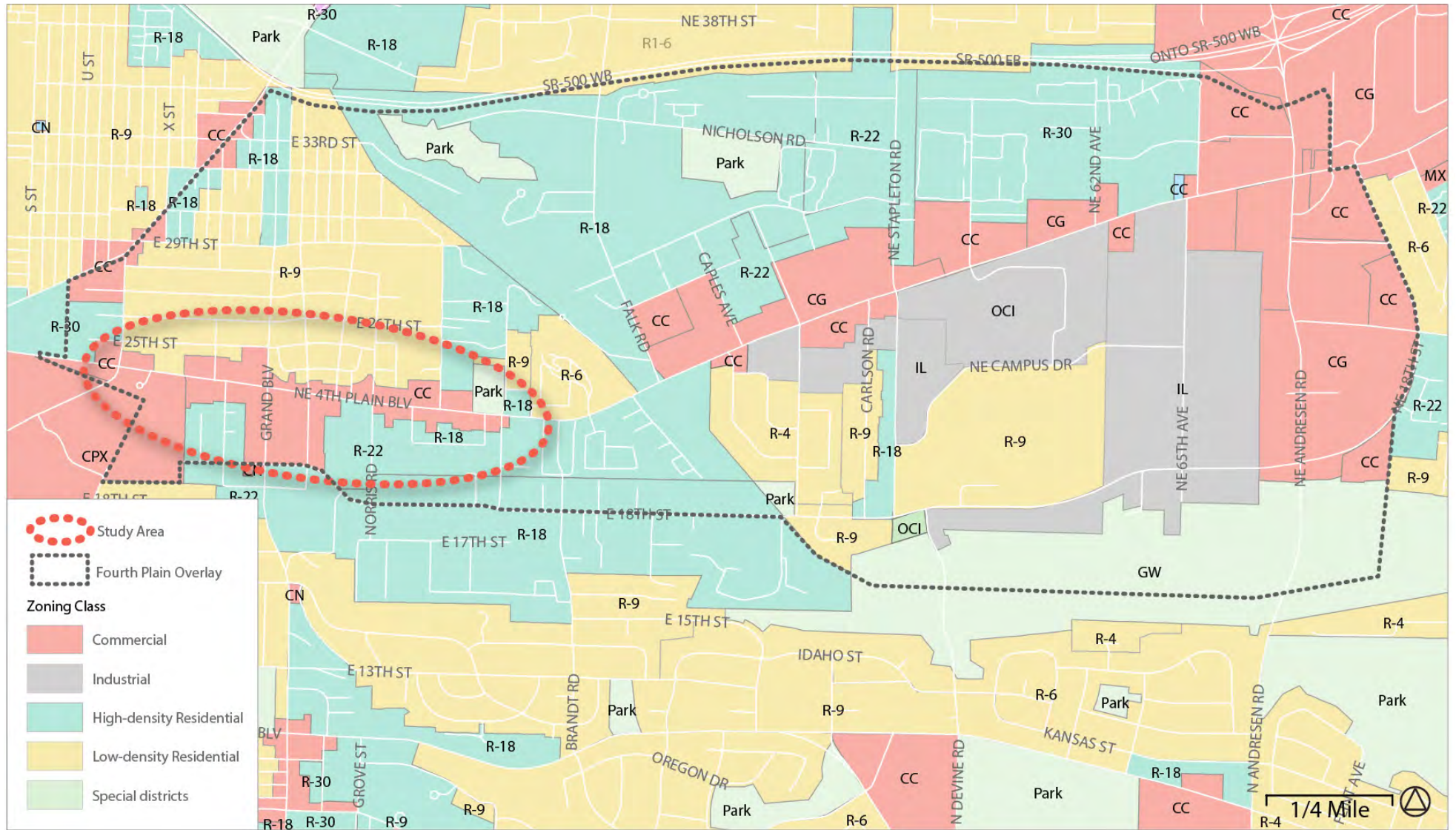
The overlay helps realize the Subarea Plan’s vision for a more pedestrian-oriented environment by prohibiting most auto-oriented uses, requiring that buildings be oriented to the street with minimal setbacks (maximum 12 feet), requiring that buildings provide visual interest at the ground floor, allowing taller building heights (up to 75 feet), setting stricter parking limits, and providing incentives for exceeding urban design standards.

### Challenges

The zoning overlay only applies to parcels in the subarea that are directly adjacent to Fourth Plain. While this should help improve conditions right along the corridor, it will not contribute to more compact development in the nearby neighborhoods. The base zoning may also be insufficient to foster the sort of higher-density development that is usually necessary to support a strong business district and high transit ridership. Within the study area, nearly all of the parcels abutting Fourth Plain are zoned for commercial use, while a few parcels are zoned as higher-density residential. The Community Commercial (CC) zone that defines this stretch of the corridor does allow residential uses, but not on the ground floor; so any new housing would have to be part of a mixed-use development. Since mixed-use is much more complex and challenging than straight commercial or residential development, this may be an impediment to greater density on Fourth Plain.

## 2.5 • PLANNING CONTEXT

Figure 2. 10. Zoning



Source: City of Vancouver

## 2.5 • PLANNING CONTEXT

Higher-density residential zoning does cover much of the residential neighborhoods to the south of the study area, and a portion of the neighborhoods to the north, but it is unclear whether this provides sufficient capacity for residential density. The R-18 and R-22 zones allow maximum residential densities of 18 and 22 units per acre, respectively, and allow building heights of up to 50 feet (roughly four stories). However, the lower-density R-9 zone covers much of the neighborhood to the north of Fourth Plain, and is intended mostly for single-family detached homes, with some allowances for duplexes and townhouses. This lower-density zoning may impede higher density development around the new BRT station at Grand.

### Community Development Block Grant Program

The City of Vancouver receives funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the form of Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). In 2007, subsequent to the Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan, the City identified the subarea as a target geography for neighborhood revitalization with CDBG funds. For the purposes of the CDBG program, this area is referred to as the Central Vancouver Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area (NRSA).

### Opportunities

As the Central Vancouver NRSA goals are strongly aligned with those of Fourth Plain Forward, CDBG funds are considered to be a key potential funding source for any recommended improvements and programs. The only challenge that this poses for the project is that funds are limited and some recommended actions will take priority over others for funding.

(All other relevant plans are discussed in detail in **Appendix A: Existing Conditions Report**).

## 2.6 SUMMARY

### Opportunities

Fourth Plain is welcoming to a diverse community

Supporting small businesses benefits neighborhood residents

A wealth of community assets

The Vine BRT will greatly improve the transit environment

Strong market for neighborhood-serving businesses

Culturally specific businesses benefit from a loyal, local customer base

Restaurants can draw customers from a wider market area

The Subarea Plan's vision for a vibrant and welcoming Fourth Plain is highly relevant today

The Streetscape Plan sets the ideal vision for a safer and more attractive streetscape

The Fourth Plain Corridor Overlay District helps facilitate transition to an attractive, consistent, and pedestrian-friendly streetscape that accommodates multiple modes of transportation, and supports long term economic development

CDBG funds are a key funding source for recommended improvements and programs

### Challenges

Many residents experience economic challenges

Perception and reality of crime

The appearance of the corridor forms a negative impression for many

The corridor is auto-oriented, yet pedestrian activity is common

Businesses dependent on a wider market area need strong marketing strategies

Commercial spaces are underutilized

Redevelopment of commercial buildings is unlikely in the near term

The Subarea Plans pulse points may not be the most appropriate scale or location

Streetscape improvements are largely dependent on new development, and are limited by the narrow right-of-way

The zoning overlay only applies to parcels that are directly adjacent to Fourth Plain, and the base zoning may be insufficient to foster the sort of higher-density development that is necessary to support a strong business district and high transit ridership

CDBG funds cannot finance all recommended actions

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



# 3

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Engagement Phases

3.3 Methods

3.4 Key Findings

3.5 Engagement Moving Forward

## 3.1 • INTRODUCTION

A key objective of this project was to root our research in the needs of the community, and to prioritize potential actions according to the greatest opportunities and challenges facing Fourth Plain today. We define the ‘community’ as the collective residents, businesses, and community organizations that call the corridor and its adjacent neighborhoods home. This chapter summarizes the methods used to engage the community, as well as the key findings that emerged from the process.

By spending time on the corridor and gathering input from stakeholders, we gained valuable insight into the Fourth Plain’s history, urban characteristics, community assets, and unique qualities. Residents and businesses shared with us their day-to-day experiences living and working in the corridor, which ranged from running a Latino insurance branch, to searching for a park to spend time in as a family. By engaging with the community, our team gained a critical perspective on the real social and economic conditions facing the corridor’s residents and businesses. Through their insights, we gained a deeper understanding of the distinct needs of the area, which allowed us to better identify and refine recommended actions for the City.



April 4th tabling event at Jim Parsley Community Center

### PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

**70+** Residents  
**40** Businesses  
**3** Community Organizations

Although this chapter provides a broad overview of the entire community engagement process, it focuses primarily on the most consistent concerns we heard from the community, which we organized into key findings. It is important to note that multiple engagement methods were used to obtain feedback from the community, and that each set of techniques yielded variable outcomes in terms of data, validity, and representation. The key findings were constructed through a cross-referencing of both qualitative and quantitative information, collected through both formal and informal engagement methods. For a more detailed review of the goals, design, implementation and limitations of our community engagement process, please refer to **Appendix B**.

## 3.2 • ENGAGEMENT PHASES

We conducted the community engagement process in four phases. The first phase focused on making initial inroads with the Fourth Plain community. Building from prior engagement done by our partners at C-TRAN around the incoming Vine BRT system, we identified five stakeholder groups to structure the engagement process. We paid initial visits to the corridor’s businesses, had our first interactions with residents, and sought new relationships with Fourth Plain’s civic actors, community organizations, public agencies, and institutions.

A prevailing priority throughout the engagement process was building and maintaining trust with the community. The second phase built on this trust and emphasized obtaining feedback about the specific kinds of investment and City-led actions that could support the needs of the businesses along Fourth Plain. Through one-on-one, personal interactions with stakeholders, we were able to gain richer, more nuanced insights into the needs and priorities of the corridor’s business community, which served as an active guide for researching best practices and developing potential actions.

In the third phase, we asked business owners to comment on this long list of potential actions in an effort to gauge the level of community support for particular types of City-led support. We then translated this feedback into the evaluation criteria used to distill the long list of potential actions into our final recommendations. The feedback obtained during this phase constituted the ‘community support’ evaluation criterion.

In the fourth and final phase, we assessed the community’s willingness to continue participating in the ongoing implementation of Fourth Plain Forward. This is will be an important and ongoing area of work for the City, so Appendix C identifies a brief set of best practices for engaging the community moving forward. We highly recommend that the City employs this toolkit as it proceeds with the implementation of Fourth Plain Forward’s economic development actions.

### STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

- Residents
- Business Owners & Developers
- Key Informants & Community Leaders
- Community Organizations
- Public Agencies & Institutions

### 3.3 • METHODS

We carried out the community engagement process in a three month time frame, between February and May of 2015. Although our outreach and engagement efforts were mostly focused on the initial project study area between Fairmount Avenue and Rossiter Lane, we also targeted engagement activities to residents and businesses from a wider geographic area—roughly from I-5 to NE 65th Avenue. We also gathered additional insights from a variety of academic, public, private, and nonprofit sources from the broader Portland-Vancouver metro area.

We used multiple engagement methods to tailor outreach to specific stakeholder groups and to maximize the breadth of community input. Considerations of local disparities, including access and preferences around technology, literacy, language ability, participation capacity, and cultural values guided our selection of particular methods. A brief summary of the outreach and engagement methods is outlined in the following sections.

#### SUMMARY OF METHODS

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Business Visits
- Community Mapping

#### Surveys

Two separate community surveys were developed in order to capture the specific needs and priorities of both residents and businesses along Fourth Plain. The surveys were available in both Spanish and English, as well as in both web and paper forms. The residential survey asked individuals to describe their economic challenges, entrepreneurial inclinations, and general experiences living in and around the corridor. Business surveys focused more on the challenges associated with sustaining and growing a business on the corridor, on rating various kinds of business assistance programs, and on Fourth Plain's potential as a more formal business district.

#### PERCENT OF TOTAL RESPONSES

**91% English**  
**9% Spanish**  
**84% Residential**  
**16% Business**



## 3.3 • METHODS

### Interviews

We also conducted over 50 interviews with various residents, businesses, organizations, and City staff. In addition to gaining deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges on the corridor, stakeholder interviews also provided an early way for us to assess the community's capacity for ongoing support and involvement in the project, helping us identify potential partners and community leaders that the City might consider working with.

We also spoke with a number of subject matter experts, who either have expertise in the fields of economic or real estate development, or whose organizations we used as case studies. These interviews helped us develop and refine strategies to address the project goals.

### Business Visits

Between March and May 2015, we paid regular weekly visits to the corridor in an effort to build and maintain relationships with neighborhood businesses. On most visits to the corridor, we patronized businesses, casually chatted with other patrons, and informally discussed the project with business owners and operators. Given the opportunity, we shared longer conversations with interested business owners. This was extremely valuable, given that many of the corridor's business owners were reluctant to participate in government-sponsored projects relating to their businesses. Also, these regular visits to the corridor were critical to successfully engaging Latino businesses, given their low representation in the survey results.

### Community Meetings

We were able to connect with four of Fourth Plain's neighborhood associations—Fourth Plain Village, Maplewood, Rose Village, and Central Park. We attended meetings in these neighborhoods to share project information, distribute residential surveys, and in some cases, to have longer group discussions with attendees. These meetings were particularly useful

for learning about neighborhood safety, property concerns, and community-building ideas. We also attended meetings for the Healthy Neighborhoods Coalition and the Safe Communities Task Force, two local community organizations working to address health and safety issues in Clark County. These organizations shared their ideas on enhancing safety, promoting placemaking, and improving the aesthetic conditions along the corridor.



Eddie and Lauren visiting Sud City Laundry

### 3.3 • METHODS

#### Tabling Events: Intercept Surveys & Community Mapping

We hosting two separate events in which we set up tables in high-activity locations along the corridor. The purpose of the tabling events was to inform residents about the project, solicit participation in surveys, and to engage the community in a mapping exercise. The mapping exercise allowed community members to share where they liked to spend time on the corridor and where they thought areas needed improvement, and provided much more nuanced insight into the corridor than we were able to garner through our observations alone.

#### Focus Group

On April 22, we organized a focus group activity at 4 Caminos Mexican Restaurant. The purpose was to obtain in-depth feedback regarding actions to support Fourth Plain's small businesses. The activity was also intended to serve as an opportunity to thank and celebrate the community for their participation in the project to that point. Our team spent time in the corridor personally delivering postcard invitations to the corridor's business owners and operators. Despite our best efforts, only one business owner showed up for the event. Still, it allowed us to gain in-depth knowledge about the owner's business challenges and ideas for the corridor that we would not have been afforded otherwise.



Table set-up for a community event at the Jim Parsley Community Center



Fourth Plain Village Neighborhood Association meeting

## 3.4 • KEY FINDINGS

The following sections describe what we heard from the community, with findings organized around particular themes that emerged through the engagement process.

As a precursor to the key findings presented in this chapter, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of our community engagement methods. Due to varying levels of participation across different methods and stakeholders, multiple sources of information needed to be triangulated in order to arrive at the set of key findings included in this section. Therefore, we are careful not to assume false precision about our interpretations of what we heard from the community. For a more detailed analysis of the limitations of our community engagement process, please refer to **Appendix B**.



March 13th tabling event at 4 Caminos Mexican Restaurant

### Multicultural Business District

- › Fourth Plain has a rich and culturally diverse neighborhood business history
- › Fourth Plain is recognized for its international food markets and ethnic restaurants
- › Fourth Plain's affordable services make it a distinct destination within the City of Vancouver

### Community Health & Physical Safety

- › Homelessness along the corridor is a concern for families and businesses owners alike
- › Families and business owners are concerned about illicit activities in the corridor's parks and residential areas
- › High traffic speeds and a lack of pedestrian and bike facilities make it unsafe to walk or bike through the corridor
- › The lack of adequate lighting makes the corridor feel unsafe after dusk

### Community Building & Placemaking

- › Spanish-speaking community members indicated that the top thing that Fourth Plain needs more of is places for children and families
- › Graffiti and vandalism are major concerns for businesses
- › Trash and litter adds to the visual distress of the corridor, and detracts from the quality of the streetscape

### Economic Opportunity

- › The need for business training and technical assistance was cited as the most significant barrier to increasing economic opportunity
- › Signage improvements and marketing assistance were frequently cited needs for Fourth Plain's minority owned and culturally specific businesses
- › Regulatory and financial constraints are significant areas of needed support for the corridor's businesses

## 3.4 • KEY FINDINGS

### Multicultural Business District

Although Fourth Plain is not designated as an official business district, the corridor’s businesses and residents told us that they recognized Fourth Plain as a distinct commercial area with a sense of multiculturalism and international identity. Community members were generally supportive of initiatives to organize and further establish the district, such as small business assistance programs, community events, and placemaking activities.

► *Fourth Plain has a rich and culturally diverse neighborhood business history*

Through business visits and informal interviews, we learned that many of Fourth Plain’s businesses have operated in the corridor for well over a decade, and some even longer. These longstanding businesses spoke to the corridor’s local context, including positive qualities they associate with the corridor. One of the most consistent positive qualities the community recognized was its concentration of small, locally owned businesses offering culturally specific products and services. In addition, we heard that the majority of small businesses along the corridor serve residents living in the neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor. This is consistent with our market research, which indicates that Fourth Plain is a primarily neighborhood-serving district. For many community members, these neighborhood businesses hold historical importance and nostalgic value. *Walt & Jacks Hair Affair*, for example, has been in operation since 1969 and continues to draw a loyal clientele that hold fond memories of visiting the salon in their youth.

► *Fourth Plain is recognized for its international food markets and ethnic restaurants*

Fourth Plain’s mix of international food markets and ethnic restaurants was the most cited reason for visits to the corridor. This was a consistent finding across various methods, including interviews, surveys, and community mapping exercises. About two-thirds of residential survey respondents cited the corridor’s restaurants, bars, and markets as the reason for visiting the corridor in the previous month. Given the concentration of minority owned



Fourth Plain is often referred to as an ‘international district’

and culturally specific businesses along Fourth Plain, we can assume that a good number of these trips were paid to international food markets and ethnic restaurants.

In addition to attracting current residents to the corridor, community members also told us that the corridor’s culturally specific restaurants were the reason they would revisit the corridor, even long after moving away. The *Silver Dragon*, which has been serving Chinese cuisine in the corridor since 1987, was cited as a classic Vancouver restaurant that still frequently attracts former residents to the area.

Fourth Plain is also home to a wide selection of international markets catering to a variety of cultural and ethnic populations. These include *Becerra’s Market* and *Mercado Latino*, which primarily cater to Latino populations, and *International Foods*, which caters to the Eastern European community. These international markets were observed as some of the most active and heavily visited businesses in the corridor. In addition to the tangible benefits that these markets bring to the corridor, including their broad selection of culturally specific foods, these markets also serve as social hubs for Fourth Plain’s residents. These are places where residents can come together to experience a shared sense of cultural and ethnic identity.

## 3.4 • KEY FINDINGS

- *Fourth Plain's affordable services make it a distinct destination within the City of Vancouver*

In addition to its international markets and ethnic restaurants, community members also told us that they recognized Fourth Plain for its concentration of affordable services. Salons, auto repair, financial services, and health care were cited in the survey as valuable services. These businesses are known not only for their affordability, but also for catering to specific cultures or ethnic groups. Evidence of this cultural specificity can be found in the specialized advertisements seen along the corridor, including auto customization services and hair salons advertised in Spanish. For these reasons, some community members believe that these affordable services make Fourth Plain a distinct destination within the City.



Elvia's Hair Salon is just one of seven salons/barbershops located in the study area

## Community Health & Physical Safety

Issues relating to the health, cohesion, and physical safety of the community were among the most consistent concerns we heard from community stakeholders. Whether real or perceived, negative perceptions around crime and homelessness emerged as some of the most central concerns for the residents and businesses on the corridor.

- *Homelessness along the corridor is a concern for families and businesses owners*

Members from the community consistently told us that homelessness is a significant issue along Fourth Plain. Some residents indicated that this is one reason they avoid bringing their children to the area. Business owners are keenly aware of these issues and some attributed their struggle to attract customers from the street to the presence of homeless individuals in the corridor. One business owner even suggested that homelessness was one of the major reasons why people generally regard Fourth Plain as a thoroughfare rather than a desirable destination. Business owners are also concerned about concentrations of individuals around some of Fourth Plain's public health and recovery centers, such as needle exchanges, halfway houses, and services for recovering alcoholics. It seems that an association is being made between Fourth Plain's homeless and recovery communities and crime on the corridor, even though these populations may not pose a threat to the larger community's safety.

## 3.4 • KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ *Families and business owners are concerned about illicit activities in the corridor's parks and residential areas*

Fourth Plain's residents, and particularly those with families, expressed concerns about drug and gang activity near the corridor's parks and residential areas. Some self-identified homeless individuals expressed similar concerns about pockets of drug activity in certain neighborhoods adjacent to Fourth Plain. A few of the children that participated in the community mapping exercises told us that they are well aware of drug activity in the area and avoid certain places as a consequence, particularly the corridor's parks and public spaces.

Multiple community members expressed a concern about gang activity along the corridor, particularly in Evergreen Park and in the Maplewood neighborhood. At the Safe Communities Task Force meeting, representatives from the Vancouver Police Department clarified that people may perceive more gang activity than actually exists, due to the stereotyping of people of color. Still, the real or perceived presence of gangs on the corridor contributes to the perception that Fourth Plain is an unsafe place.

- ▶ *High traffic speeds and a lack of pedestrian and bike facilities make it unsafe to walk or bike through the corridor*

Several residents spoke to the prevailing conditions of Fourth Plain's pedestrian and bicycle environment. The resounding message was that the corridor's streets are not amenable to pedestrians or bicyclists due to an autocentric roadway design. The combination of wide roads, narrow sidewalks, and the lack of basic pedestrian amenities makes walking along the corridor feel unsafe for families and individuals. Multiple community members told us that the high speeds at which drivers typically travel down Fourth Plain make the corridor a real threat to their physical safety. Several residents also told us that cars often fail to stop at crosswalks, and that they have witnessed pedestrian collisions at these crossings.

- ▶ *The lack of adequate pedestrian-scale lighting makes the corridor feel unsafe after dusk*

Consistent with first-hand observations, the corridor currently suffers from a lack of adequate lighting. The abundance of poorly-lit sidewalks, parking lots, and public spaces along Fourth Plain make the street feel unsafe for families and individuals passing through the corridor. Families were particularly concerned about the lack of lighting in the corridor's parks and refrained from using them as a consequence. The lack of lighting was believed to contribute to the concentration of drug and gang activities in the corridor's parks after dark. Inadequate sidewalk lighting also makes pedestrians less visible after dark, which poses a serious danger when coupled with the speeding vehicles along the corridor.



A family enjoying Evergreen Park on a Sunday afternoon

## 3.4 • KEY FINDINGS

### Community Building & Placemaking

- ▶ *Spanish-speaking community members indicated that Fourth Plain needs more places for children and families*

When asked to identify the top three things that Fourth Plain needed more of, the top choices for the Spanish-language survey were more places for children to play and community gardens. Third-place choices were tied between more places to shop and places for job training and/or educational opportunities. This is in contrast to English-speaking residents, who chose public art and landscaping, outdoor markets, and community gathering places as their top choices.

These survey findings were consistent with what we learned through informal interviews with residents, visits with Latino businesses, and community mapping exercises. When asked to identify problem areas within the corridor, several participants flagged the corridor's parks and open spaces. Although the corridor's green spaces are generally seen as community assets, a prevailing view among Latino community members was that the parks were not safe or inviting places for children and families. English-speaking participants placed a stronger emphasis on improving the corridor's distressed environment by implementing community-facing projects such as street trees, painted murals, and public gathering spaces.

- ▶ *Graffiti and vandalism are major concerns for businesses*

Among the issues related to crime, graffiti and vandalism were some of the concerns we heard most frequently. Both community members and businesses cited graffiti as a serious draw on the corridor's aesthetic quality. Some believed that graffiti throughout the corridor was actually attracting more crime to the area. Business owners also mentioned that they refrained from making physical improvements to their businesses out of fear that any improvements would be undermined by vandalism.

- ▶ *Trash and litter adds to the visual distress of the corridor, and detracts from the quality of the streetscape*

Residents in the area indicated that trash and litter along the corridor made Fourth Plain an undesirable location to visit with their families. Businesses suggested that litter on the sidewalks and roadways made passing drivers less apt to stop for the corridor's businesses.



Photo: Maplewood Neighborhood Assoc.

Graffiti found in one of the corridor's residential areas

## 3.4 • KEY FINDINGS

### Economic Opportunity

- ▶ *The need for business training and technical assistance was cited as the most significant barrier to increasing economic opportunity*

Two-thirds of residential survey respondents indicated that they had considered starting their own business at some point. Despite this high interest in local entrepreneurship, only slightly more than 10% of residential survey respondents said that they currently operated a small or home-based business. Basic training on how to start up and operate a successful business emerged as the greatest need among residents with entrepreneurial inclinations. In addition to assistance with small business development, residents also expressed concerns about access to living wage jobs, skills training, and traditional education programs.

- ▶ *Signage improvements and marketing assistance were frequently cited needs for Fourth Plain's minority owned and culturally specific businesses*

Several businesses indicated that their ability to attract local customers was limited by the quality of their exterior signage. These views were consistent with our observations, as many of the corridor's commercial displays are in need of refurbishment, redesign, or repair. Businesses also expressed a need for assistance with marketing and promotion. The corridor's restaurants are particularly affected by poor signage since they need to attract customers from a wider market area than some of the more neighborhood-serving businesses such as food markets and grocery stores. Due to language and technology barriers, some businesses also struggle with marketing their businesses using web and mobile-based technologies. These issues disproportionately disadvantage the corridor's minority owned businesses given language limitations, technical knowledge, and access to capital.

- ▶ *Regulatory and financial constraints are significant areas of needed support for the corridor's businesses*

Several businesses indicated that City fees, charges, and licenses were a significant barrier to growing their businesses. Many businesses refrained from making physical improvements to their properties out of fear of City requirements. Some business owners simply did not know which kinds of requirements would be triggered by a physical improvement. Business owners who were willing to invest also struggled due to a lack of access to capital and financing for physical improvements such as paint, new signage, decor, equipment upgrades, and basic repairs. As a consequence, some business owners devised their own means of accomplishing improvements, such as sharing labor and jointly purchasing paint with neighbor businesses. Actions to lessen regulatory and financial constraints could significantly lower barriers for business owners looking to improve their physical presence on the corridor.



Exterior signage along Becerra's Plaza



## 3.5 • ENGAGEMENT MOVING FORWARD

Sustained community engagement will be critical to the success of the City's implementation of the Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan. The City will need to invest time and develop creative ways to reach the community. Neighborhood associations are a valuable connection to some of Fourth Plain's residents, but for many others, participation is challenging due to unfamiliarity with City planning processes, or time constraints associated with working or raising a family.

Engaging Fourth Plain's business community is particularly challenging, given that most business owners are very busy managing their business. Owners expressed wariness of participating in government-sponsored activities, perhaps because they perceive prior engagement efforts to have resulted in few tangible benefits. In response to these concerns, the City should also focus on building and maintaining trust with the community going forward.

Lastly, continued evaluation of the community's needs will be necessary given the dynamic nature of the community and the forthcoming changes to the corridor. As The Vine BRT becomes established and the City continues to grow, staying close to the community's changing needs will be vital to targeting investment to the corridor in a way that benefits residents, businesses, and community organizations.

To help the City address all of these challenges, we have included a toolkit of best practices for community engagement in **Appendix C**. We highly recommend that the City use the toolkit as an active guide for engaging the community moving forward.



March 13th tabling event at 4 Caminos Mexican Restaurant

# RECOMMENDATIONS



# 4

4.1 Evaluation Methods

4.2 Introduction

4.3 Goal 1: Cultivate a vibrant and welcoming business district

4.4 Goal 2: Stabilize and grow small businesses

4.5 Goal 3: Create a growth pipeline for food entrepreneurs

4.6 Goal 4: Prioritize pedestrian safety and access

4.7 Goal 5: Foster inclusive, transit-oriented development

4.8 Summary of Recommended Actions

4.9 Moving Fourth Plain Forward

## 4.1 • EVALUATION METHODS

The proceeding set of recommended actions emerged from an in-depth planning process conducted by the Fourth Plain Student Team, in collaboration with City of Vancouver staff. The process involved evaluating the Subarea Plan's economic development goals and policies, analyzing Fourth Plain's current opportunities and challenges, considering the community's needs and priorities, and researching current best practices for planning and economic development in contexts similar to Fourth Plain.

A key component of this process was applying a set of evaluation criteria to our list of potential actions. This helped us refine and prioritize actions in order to arrive at a final set of recommendations. The five criteria that we used to evaluate actions are summarized below:

### Community Support

It is important that the strategies—or their intended outcomes—are supported by residents, business owners, and other stakeholders on the Fourth Plain corridor. We determined the level of support by asking the community what their main concerns and desires were for Fourth Plain, what their ideas were for improving conditions on the corridor, and what they thought about certain strategies and actions. Strategies targeted at those concerns that we heard repeatedly from the community—such as safety, corridor appearance, and economic opportunities—should be prioritized.

### Policy Support

Strategies that are directly supported by the City of Vancouver's policies, plans, and regulations should be prioritized. As our strategies are intended to implement the Subarea Plan, that plan provides the most important source of policy support. Other key sources of policy support include the Streetscape Plan, the Vancouver zoning code, and the Vancouver Comprehensive Plan.

### Implementability

Strategies should be feasible to implement, with the City as the primary actor or initiator. Assessment of implementability is based on a number of factors, including: (1) the amount of time required to implement; (2) the necessary amount of research or planning before implementation can commence; and (3) the resources required, including funding and staff time.

### Impact

The expected outcomes of any strategy should have sufficient impact to justify the commitment of resources. Strategies should be prioritized that have either breadth or depth of impact (i.e., affect a large number of people or have a large effect on fewer people). Strategies should also be prioritized that have either a larger short-term impact or a long-term impact (whether large or small). Other considerations include the strategies' evidence of effectiveness (based on research), whether they are mutually reinforcing, and to what extent they advance the primary goals of the project.

### Equity

Strategies should be prioritized that have highly equitable outcomes. Populations that have been historically disadvantaged—low-income households, communities of color, and recent immigrants—should be given special consideration, and any negative impacts on these populations should be avoided or mitigated.

All of the recommended actions presented on the proceeding pages meet these criteria to varying degrees. In general, those actions that rate highly for multiple criteria are given high-priority status.

## 4.2 • INTRODUCTION

The following recommendations present detailed actions that the City of Vancouver can take to address the five goals of Fourth Plain Forward:

1. Cultivate a vibrant and welcoming business district
2. Stabilize and grow small businesses
3. Create a growth pipeline for food entrepreneurs
4. Prioritize pedestrian safety and access
5. Foster inclusive transit-oriented development

Each goal has a number of strategies with specific actions to implement each strategy (Figure 4.1). The City of Vancouver is the intended lead or initiator of each action, and we identify potential partners who could be involved in implementation. We also define a time frame for each action: short-term actions could be implemented within the next two years and would not require significant new resources, such as new funding streams or additional staff; medium-term actions could be implemented within 2-5 years, and may require new resources, or may be contingent upon short-term actions; long-term actions are more than 5 years off, and generally require significant new resources in order to be feasible.

Priority actions are highlighted with this text: **PRIORITY**. These actions rated highly on all evaluation criteria, have potential to make a significant impact, or enable other actions to work more effectively.

Figure 4.1. Recommendations framework



GOAL I

# Cultivate a vibrant and welcoming business district



## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Fourth Plain Corridor Subarea Plan envisioned an association of business owners working together to promote Fourth Plain’s unique identity and culturally specific goods and services. An active and well-funded organization is the foundation of any successful business district. The signs of a welcoming and vibrant district—clean and safe streets, engaging events, a cohesive identity—cannot be realized without detailed management and coordination with a broad range of partners. This type of work is not achievable with only the spare time and resources of business owners and neighborhood leaders. This is especially true in a low-income district like Fourth Plain, where business owners are focused on immediate concerns of managing their businesses. The city must allocate resources to sustain the wide array of activities and functions that are the hallmark of a thriving business district. Great business districts are cultivated by continuous investment.

The City and business owners will need to consider how to define the geography of the district. Fourth Plain passes through multiple distinct environments, each with a different character and usage pattern. The physical character of the corridor changes as it moves from east to west, as reflected in both the Streetscape Plan design areas and the Subarea Plan nodes. Yet the main element of a multicultural district—a collection of minority owned businesses that provide culturally specific goods and services—can be found throughout the length of the corridor. There is a cluster of culturally specific services and ethnic restaurants in our study area, and a strong cluster of minority owned businesses in the International Square shopping center near NE 62nd Avenue. The boundaries of a multicultural district may therefore be hard to define, as cultural relevance may take precedent over geographic proximity. However, concerted effort to improve the character of a district (or districts) on Fourth Plain will greatly benefit the existing businesses and residents who frequent the corridor. The strategies below were developed with our study area in mind, but could be applied throughout the corridor.

### STRATEGIES

1. Allocate resources to organize and program the business district
2. Partner with public institutions to shape development
3. Facilitate investment in existing commercial spaces

## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

### STRATEGY

#### Allocate resources to organize and program the business district

There have been organic efforts over the years to highlight the unique businesses that call Fourth Plain home. Business owners, community leaders, and engaged Fourth Plain workers have organized in the past to carry out many of the tasks needed to support a successful business district. Their efforts are encouraging and clearly demonstrate that there is a will from within to elevate Fourth Plain, but the capacity to sustain activity needs to be developed. The City of Vancouver can provide funding, expertise, and staff time to build on the momentum already underway.

Fortunately, building capacity in the corridor does not need to start from scratch. Organizations such as the Fourth Plain Merchants Association and Fourth Plain Renewal have been active in the past, and their efforts can be built upon going forward. These community leaders, volunteers, residents, and business owners are the foundational support for a thriving business district. The City can provide the needed organizational capacity in the form of a district manager to lead community efforts on the corridor. It can also provide dedicated funds for programming the business district. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding could be used to support the actions listed below, with the long-term goal of establishing a Business Improvement Area (BIA) to sustain district activities. Ideally, the actions under this strategy would be led by a district manager, although it is feasible that current staff time could be reallocated to lead certain actions.

#### 1.1 > PRIORITY Create and fund a district manager position

Multiple subject matter experts with extensive district organizing experience believe that the best thing a city can do is help organize local business owners, residents, and non-profits to lead the work on the ground. Many successful districts employ a district manager to build capacity, manage finances, program events, and develop revitalization strategies that reflect district needs. Fourth Plain needs a full-time district manager to support the development of a thriving business district. Given the amount of work that needs to be done, relying on volunteers and spare staff time to drive Fourth Plain forward will be insufficient. A dedicated district manager could lead the district programming actions below and build long-term relationships with business owners, community groups, and residents. The manager would be the ideal person to lead a community visioning process to create a brand for the district once it was more established.

*Considerations:* This position could be recruited from an existing community organization already working on the corridor, or the City could hire a new staff person to fill the role. The manager will ideally have existing ties to the community to jumpstart the relationship-building process. A steering committee of residents, business owners, and people who work or spend time on the corridor will need to be formed early on to advise the district manager on top priorities and concerns.

*Partners:* Community organizations (potentially)

*Time frame:* Short



## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

### CASE STUDY

#### The Jade District, 82nd Avenue in Portland

82nd Avenue in Portland is an auto-oriented corridor that shares similar characteristics with Fourth Plain. The corridor had a business association that was trying to change negative perceptions of the area, but it struggled to gain traction. When the neighborhood centered around 82nd and Division was selected to be part of the Portland Development Commission's Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative, one of the first actions was to hire a district manager. Todd Struble was selected from the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), which already had an active presence in the area. A series of community workshops resulted in a vision for the district, now known as the Jade District. The community envisioned a night market, which is now in its second year and will host two events in 2015. Todd believes a successful event is catalytic for district success, since people will associate the district with this event. Visible wins early on are key for building momentum in the community, as is a dedicated district manager to organize and program the district. In addition to the night market, Todd also helps organize ongoing cleanup events called Polish the Jade and is involved with the adaptive reuse of a furniture store that will house the Jade District Community Space.



Photo: Faith Cathcart



Photo: David Ashton

District Manager Todd Struble was instrumental in organizing the Jade District Night Market

### 1.2 ➤ Lead litter and graffiti removal efforts

Cleanliness and safety are the foundation for a successful business district. In the past, volunteer groups have cleaned up litter and removed graffiti along Fourth Plain. The event was called the Boulevard Brush Up, and it could become a regular, recurring event with organizational support. Successful volunteer cleanups often provide small incentives for volunteers to participate, such as free food. These events can help build a sense of community and signal investment in the area, which helps deter crime and improve the appearance of the business district.

*Partners:* Community organizations and business owners

*Time frame:* Short

### 1.3 ➤ Establish an ongoing public market

Public markets serve a dual role as an economic development tool and as a vibrant community space. Market stalls provide a low-cost platform for small and home-based businesses to sell their wares. Markets also create a regular gathering place for people to interact in their neighborhood district, and they can boost the number of visitors to nearby businesses on market days.

*Considerations:* Public markets come in all shapes and sizes, from farmers markets to swap meets to night markets. The diversity on Fourth Plain is an asset that could help create a distinctive market, depending on what the community would like to see in the area. Fortunately, the City of Vancouver already has a good relationship with the Vancouver Farmers Market, which could help establish a market of the right size and character that would not compete with other markets in the area.

*Partners:* Vancouver Farmers Market

*Time frame:* Medium

## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

### 1.1 ► **PRIORITY** Partner with the Vancouver Police Department to improve safety

Concerns about crime and safety were the most common and troubling issues we heard from the community, and crime data supports perceptions that Fourth Plain is less safe than other Vancouver neighborhoods.

Improving real and perceived safety is integral to the success of the business district. An organized business community for the police to work with is critically important and another reason to focus on funding a district manager who can serve this role. A variety of actions can be taken to improve safety, however. The most important first step is to partner with the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) to better understand their knowledge of the safety concerns in the area and existing efforts to address safety.

*Considerations:* A number of safety strategies should be considered in addition to existing strategies employed by the VPD. We do not know the relative effectiveness of these actions, so we recommend further analysis in partnership with VPD to determine the best approach.

- Create a district safety plan to prioritize actions and identify strategic alliances between stakeholders on the corridor
- Organize community policing groups, such as the VPD's Neighbors on Watch, to extend patrols to the corridor
- Administer a Business Watch program that engages business owners in patrol and monitoring
- Establish a crime hotline in both English and Spanish so community members and business owners can report issues without calling 911
- Provide financial support to business owners to purchase security cameras and lighting to deter vandalism and property crimes

*Partners:* Vancouver Police Department

*Time frame:* Short

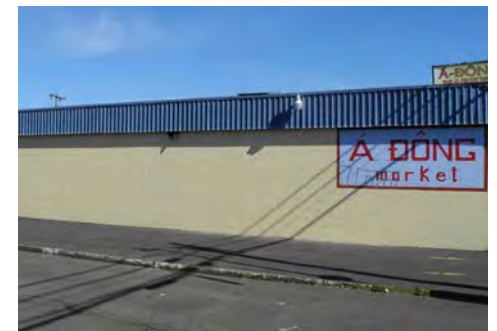
### 1.5 ► Facilitate community placemaking

Placemaking can include a number of activities—from depaving underutilized parking lots and adding public spaces to painting murals on blank building walls. These efforts increase the community's attachment to place and promote a distinct identity. We heard consistent support for community gardens and public art during our outreach efforts, which are already happening in the neighborhoods around Fourth Plain. Americans Building Community is leading efforts to bring murals and community gardens to Rose Village. Investments in place can also act as a crime deterrent, since well-maintained areas are less of a target for crime (murals often double as graffiti abatement).

*Considerations:* Vacant lots could be used for gardens or public spaces, which would improve the overall condition of the business district with community assets. The Clark County Mural Society is hosting a contest in the summer of 2015 to bring five new murals to downtown Vancouver; perhaps they could focus on Fourth Plain in 2016. Most activities would require property owner buy-in, so the City should explore ways to incentivize their participation.

*Partners:* Neighborhood associations, Americans Building Community, Clark County Mural Society, Depave, LULAC of SW Washington

*Time frame:* Short



Murals could turn many blank walls on Fourth Plain into a source of community pride and identity

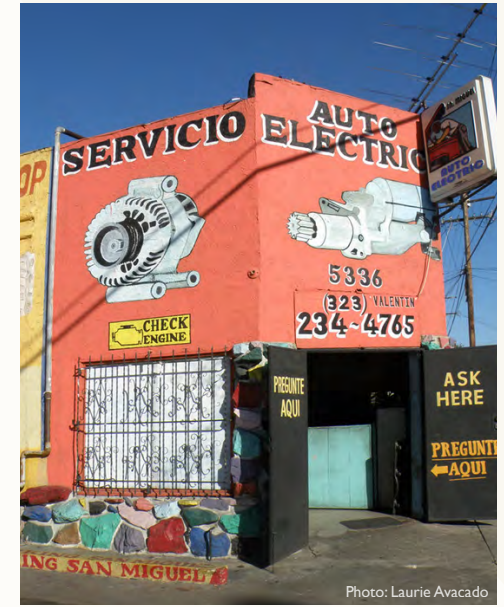
## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

### CASE STUDY

#### Pacific Boulevard, Huntington Park

Pacific Boulevard, a commercial corridor in Huntington Park outside of Los Angeles, is a mix of small businesses and Mexican chain stores that occupy revamped older buildings and new infill developments. “El Boulevard,” as the locals call it, attracts visitors from the larger metro area because of its vibrant street life. Stores frequently display their merchandise on the sidewalks and street vendors, often commissioned by the area’s shop owners, sell merchandise on the street. The area exemplifies what retail consultant Michelle Reeves refers to as “show, don’t tell.” A cacophony of shop signs easily blur together for drivers passing through, but activity on the street signals a destination.

The commercial strip had largely fallen into disrepair with a large number of vacancies when the city council initiated a multi-million dollar revitalization effort. The goal was to reposition Pacific Boulevard as a center for Latino economy and culture. The success of the business district was largely rooted in community ownership of the Latino identity, and in attracting complementary businesses and compatible new development. The City aggressively attracted developers who adopted the vision of a Latino commercial strip, and the appearance of the corridor was unified by murals, bright colors, signs, and flags that speak to the local identity.



## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

### 1.6 ➤ Host ongoing special events and festivals

The Fourth Plain International Festival was an annual event held at Warriors Field from 2010–2013 that attracted visitors from across the region. It showcased the diverse cultures on the corridor with food, music, and dancing. An event of this caliber takes significant effort to pull off, and it was an entirely community-led effort that relied solely on volunteers. A district manager could provide the organizational support needed to sustain ongoing special events. The International Festival is a successful event that could be built upon, and any number of other events could also be planned, depending on what the community would like to see on the corridor.

*Partners:* Community organizations and business owners

*Time frame:* Short



Photo: Zachary Kaufman



Photo: Zachary Kaufman



Photo: Zachary Kaufman

Fourth Plain residents creating community art and enjoying the International Festival in 2011

### CASE STUDY

#### Plate of Nations, MLK Jr. Way South in Seattle

MLK Jr. Way South, a commercial corridor in the Rainier Valley neighborhood of Seattle, is home to a variety of ethnic eateries and minority owned businesses. A business owner wanted to highlight the restaurants on his corridor, so he organized the Plate of Nations event which is now in its fifth year. The Plate of Nations event was catalytic for organizing the MLK Business Association, according to member Susanna Tran. Excitement about the event spurred business owners to get involved and provided a reason for the association to form. This reflects the experience of many experts in the field who have tried organizing business groups. Providing a specific action or cause to rally around is the most effective way to engage business owners.

The Plate of Nations is a two week long event during which participating restaurants highlight their cuisine. Diners receive a passport card with a map of the corridor's participating restaurants. They receive a stamp from each location they visit and are then entered into a prize drawing depending on how many stamps they collect. Business owners report that they gained repeat customers who may not have tried their restaurant if not for the Plate of Nations event. The event receives marketing and promotion assistance from the Only in Seattle Initiative, a business district support initiative by the Office of Economic Development.



Photo: www.plateofnations.com

## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

### STRATEGY

#### Partner with public institutions to shape development

There are a number of anchor institutions on Fourth Plain that are vital to the corridor. The City of Vancouver should partner with these institutions where possible to encourage development that benefits the business district. We heard that more community gathering spaces are needed, so incorporating public spaces in new developments should be encouraged.

#### 1.7 > Partner with Vancouver Public Schools to develop Warriors Field in a way that benefits small businesses and the local community

We heard from the community that people want to spend time at Warriors Field, but some find it uninviting except during sports practice. The site should be developed and programmed, in collaboration with the school district, in a way that brings positive activity to the corridor.

*Considerations:* The site could be redeveloped to have an active street frontage and community-facing services, such as space for a public market or commercial kitchen business incubator. It could also be a space for community gardens, which the community enthusiastically supports. The site is large enough to still accommodate sports activities and special events such as the International Festival. This would activate an underutilized asset and provide a new community gathering space in the heart of the business district.

*Partners:* Vancouver Public Schools

*Time frame:* Medium

#### 1.8 > PRIORITY Partner with Clark College on future developments to ensure benefits for the business district and community

Clark College has plans to redevelop the property at the corner of Fourth Plain and Fort Vancouver Way. The project is still being planned, but may include a mixed-use development with offices or classrooms above ground-level retail. It may also include a public plaza that celebrates the school's growing number of international students. The administration has also considered opening a satellite campus location, which could potentially activate an underutilized space on Fourth Plain. The City of Vancouver should maintain a close working relationship with Clark College, as it has the potential to help positively shape the future of Fourth Plain.

*Partners:* Clark College

*Time frame:* Medium



The community considers Warrior's field an underutilized asset

## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

### STRATEGY

#### Invest in existing commercial spaces

The Fourth Plain corridor struggles with a commercial vacancy rate near 15%, significantly higher than the optimal rate of around 5%. The exteriors of commercial buildings need improvement; about 12% were rated in poor condition and 39% in fair condition. Community members often pointed to the poor condition of facades and vacant spaces as a deterrent to the success of the business district. Redevelopment of these vacant buildings is unlikely in the near term, however. The City should take action to facilitate investment in these existing commercial spaces to enhance the appeal of the district and fill vacant spaces with complementary new businesses.

#### 1.9 ➤ Target adaptive reuse and pre-lease assistance programs to vacant storefronts

The City's current adaptive reuse and pre-lease assistance programs can significantly benefit Fourth Plain property and business owners. The programs are relatively new and primarily used in the downtown area, however, so property owners and small businesses looking for space are likely unaware of the programs. The City should proactively contact property owners with vacant storefronts to understand their challenges and explain the advantages of the adaptive reuse program. The City should also monitor requests for pre-lease assistance for businesses that may be a good fit for a vacant space on Fourth Plain, including businesses that can complement existing clusters and attract customers from wide trade area.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber

*Time frame:* Medium

#### 1.10 ➤ PRIORITY Establish a business owner-centered storefront improvement program

Storefront improvement grants or loans are widely used as a tool for revitalizing business districts. Businesses can benefit greatly from enhancing the quality and appearance of their storefront, as potential customers use the quality of a storefront as a proxy for product or service quality. Many business owners on Fourth Plain do not own their property, however, so there is a risk that property owners could seek grants for a purpose that is not in the business owner's interest, including attracting a new tenant. Given the City's goal of retaining minority and low-income business ownership on Fourth Plain, all storefront improvement grant applications should be closely assessed to determine if the business owner will benefit from the grant.

*Considerations:* Minor storefront improvements like paint and new signage have a significant impact (see Figure 4.2 for examples). These lower-cost enhancements may offer high return on investment, can be applied to more businesses throughout a district, and lower the risk of displacing low-income business owners. The City should consider a two-tier program that fast-tracks these low cost, high impact improvements and more carefully assesses more costly projects to ensure they are in the interests of the business owner.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber

*Time frame:* Short



A vacant space that may benefit from a minor storefront improvement or adaptive reuse assistance

## 4.3 • GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT

Figure 4.2 Examples of storefront improvement projects

BEFORE



Photo: www.sandiego.gov

AFTER



Photo: www.sandiego.gov

San Diego, CA: Cabais Mexi-Deli; Tattoo Shop

BEFORE



Photo: www.sonomavalley4biz.com

AFTER



Photo: www.sonomavalley4biz.com

Sonoma, CA: El Molina Central

BEFORE



Photo: www.oregonmetro.gov

AFTER



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Milwaukie, OR : Cha Cha Cha

## GOAL 2

# Stabilize and grow small businesses





## 4.4 • GOAL 2: STABILIZE AND GROW SMALL BUSINESSES

Thriving small businesses are the cornerstone of a healthy neighborhood and business district. Small businesses circulate income back into the local economy, employ community members, provide access to culturally specific goods and services, improve safety by putting “eyes on the street,” and foster community leaders. Small businesses account for 96% of Vancouver’s employers (having 50 or fewer employees) and 70% are microenterprises (5 or fewer employees). Small businesses provide approximately 40% of jobs in Vancouver.<sup>1</sup> Many of the employees and owners of small businesses on Fourth Plain live in the surrounding neighborhoods, so stabilizing and growing these businesses has a multiplier effect of greater economic security and opportunity for the community as a whole.

### STRATEGIES

1. Implement small business technical assistance strategically
2. Extend small business support to home-based microenterprises
3. Help small businesses and microenterprises access capital and build assets

### STRATEGY

## Implement small business technical assistance strategically

Technical assistance is a comprehensive and strategic approach to supporting small businesses. Technical assistance providers help businesses to diagnose their most important challenges through one-on-one consulting before recommending a plan of action. The plan of action may include a revision to their business plan, new marketing strategies, or training, among other things. This consultation is particularly important to low-income or immigrant entrepreneurs that face cultural and language barriers to accessing support services, financial vulnerability and challenging market conditions.

### 2.1 ► PRIORITY Target technical assistance to priority businesses

*Businesses with challenging market conditions:* The retail market on Fourth Plain is hindered by relatively low incomes and competition with larger shopping centers. Businesses that sell discretionary goods and services need to attract customers from a wider market area than neighborhood-serving retailers. Discretionary businesses need assistance to develop marketing strategies to attract customers from a wider area, and need operational strategies to maintain profitability. Restaurants, home improvement stores and auto repair businesses on Fourth Plain likely face the most challenging market conditions.

*Culturally specific businesses.* Many businesses on Fourth Plain provide goods or services that are specific to a racial or ethnic community. This is not limited to food markets and restaurants; personal and professional service businesses also provide culturally specific services. These businesses provide social as well as economic benefits: they provide goods and services that may be difficult for certain racial or ethnic communities to find elsewhere, function as community gathering places, and preserve a sense of identity and

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2013

## 4.4 • GOAL 2: STABILIZE AND GROW SMALL BUSINESSES

stability in the face of neighborhood change. Prioritizing these businesses for technical assistance can help to retain these community assets, ensure that Fourth Plain continues to be a welcoming neighborhood for diverse populations, and attract visitors that want to experience cultural diversity.

*Considerations:* Technical assistance should be paired with access to capital, storefront improvement grants, or other support services. Technical assistance can ensure that other services are used most effectively. Loans can be based on investment needs identified in a comprehensive business plan, and storefront improvements can align with a larger marketing strategy.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber

*Time frame:* Short

### 2.2 > Establish an office or host office hours in the business district

Small business owners can be difficult to engage for technical assistance; most are very busy managing their business and many are not aware of the range of services that are available. They may not be convinced that the time and effort spent working with a technical assistance provider will pay off. Recent immigrants may also be generally hesitant to engage with government-sponsored support. Establishing a physical presence in the business district can be an effective way to help business owners become familiar with the program.

*Considerations:* This can be achieved by leasing a vacant storefront or simply by setting up a workspace inside another business and hosting open office hours for business owners to drop in for support. This physical presence is critical to establishing a personal connection with business owners so they are more likely to invest time seeking out support for their business.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber

*Time frame:* Short

### 2.3 > Foster a network of small business support

The small businesses on Fourth Plain have a diverse array of needs. One technical assistance provider will be unable to meet all of those needs. Effective technical assistance programs create a network of support services that involve many organizations. The City should facilitate connections between organizations to ensure that best practices are shared and opportunities for collaboration are maximized.

*Considerations:* The City can connect technical assistance providers with WSU-Vancouver's Business MAP Program to provide in-depth business analysis and consultation through student projects. Clark College's Economic and Community Development department can organize small business training sessions on topics of shared concern among Fourth Plain businesses.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber, WSU-Vancouver, Clark College, SCORE, Small Business Development Center, other small business support organizations

*Time frame:* Medium



Technical assistance providers could establish an office on the corridor in one of many vacant storefronts

## 4.4 • GOAL 2: STABILIZE AND GROW SMALL BUSINESSES

### STRATEGY

#### Extend small business support to home-based microenterprises

Our community engagement process and best practice research of other communities similar to Fourth Plain indicate that home-based businesses are a common employment choice and important source of income and opportunity. Common types of home-based businesses include cleaning, janitorial, landscaping, construction, maintenance, child care, personal services and food preparation. To help these businesses succeed, the City should invest resources in outreach, facilitate connections to institutional customers, and identify ways to provide specialized support to home-based child care providers.

#### 2.4 ► **PRIORITY** Invest time and resources in community outreach to engage home-based businesses

Storefront businesses are much easier to engage due to their public location and relative comfort working with the public sector. Home-based businesses are more difficult to reach. Some of these businesses may be operating informally without the requisite legal licenses; this is common in immigrant communities because entrepreneurial activity is generally more informal internationally than in the United States. These barriers necessitate intentional and creative efforts to reach home-based businesses that may benefit greatly from support programs. The most effective strategy is to make connections through trusted community organizations like churches, schools or other non-profits.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber, VPS Family and Community Resource Centers, faith based institutions, neighborhood associations, community centers and other community organizations

*Time frame:* Short

#### 2.5 ► Connect home-based businesses with institutional customers

A common challenge for home-based businesses is developing a stable customer base. This may be a greater challenge for minority business owners whose social networks are less likely to include people or organizations with significant spending power. Yet, many home-based businesses provide services that are needed by large organizations, including cleaning and janitorial services, landscaping, maintenance, catering, repair and construction. In addition to employing the City's own purchasing power to support home-based businesses, the City can facilitate connections with potential institutional and corporate customers. The City partners with a range of both public and private sector organizations that are potential customers for home-based businesses; this network is a resource that should be employed to expand economic opportunity to Fourth Plain.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber, Clark College, VA Medical Center, other institutions

*Time frame:* Short

## 4.4 • GOAL 2: STABILIZE AND GROW SMALL BUSINESSES

### 2.6 ➤ Provide specialized support for home-based child care businesses

Home-based child care providers are common in immigrant communities. Child care is the second most common type of business that Fourth Plain residents had considered starting. Spurred by the need for affordable child care, the desire to preserve a native language spoken at home, or the existence of strong social ties, many families use home-based providers. Home-based child care providers can be viable businesses and also offer a flexible employment opportunity for parents that need to look after their own children. Home-based providers can reduce costs for other families and even allow parents to pursue employment or educational opportunities. Given the multiple benefits associated with home-based child care, the City should explore programs tailored to the needs of these businesses.



A home-based childcare business in the Fourth Plain Village neighborhood

*Considerations:* Small business technical assistance providers can support these businesses, but specialized support may be necessary to not only help these providers establish a viable business but to ensure a high-quality and educational environment for children.

*Partners:* Neighborhood House, Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber, Washington State Department of Early Learning, ESD 112 Child Care and Early Learning, Clark College Early Learning Center

*Time frame:* Medium

### CASE STUDY

#### Neighborhood House Child Care Improvement Program

Neighborhood House was Portland's first organization established to support immigrants and their families. The Child Care Improvement Project (CCIP) has been in place for eleven years, and is both a microenterprise development strategy and a method of providing affordable, quality child care. The program provides technical and financial support for home-based childcare businesses—also known as family child care. Notably, the two most prominent ethnic backgrounds of the providers are aligned with communities found on the Fourth Plain corridor: Latino and Russian. Neighborhood House assessed the performance of CCIP in 2012. Seventy-one percent of the providers assessed increased their overall quality score on a nationally recognized rating scale. A majority of the providers also strengthened their business over this time frame—62% of the assessed providers increased their income by over 25%.



Photo: Thomas Boyd

This home-based child care provider—a Brazilian immigrant—was able to purchase a language instruction curriculum through a small grant provided by Neighborhood House

## 4.4 • GOAL 2: STABILIZE AND GROW SMALL BUSINESSES

### STRATEGY

#### Help small businesses and microenterprises access capital and build assets

The size of the loans needed by retail, food or service businesses are usually below conventional lending standards. Additionally, small business owners and entrepreneurs may have less credit history, past credit issues, or lack the skills necessary to package a compelling loan application to a bank. To address this challenge, the City can connect businesses to non-profit microfinance lenders, peer-to-peer lending platforms, and matched savings accounts for building assets.

#### 2.7 ► **PRIORITY** Consider a partnership with a microfinance organization

Small businesses on Fourth Plain did not emphasize access to loans as a significant barrier to their success. However, our sampling of businesses was limited, and it did not include entrepreneurs planning to start a business. Access to credit is a widely observed challenge for very small businesses, especially in low-income communities. Non-profit microfinance organizations have emerged to fill this need and several currently operate in the Portland region. Some cities directly administer loans, but our research indicates this may be a less efficient method than partnering with a microfinance organization that have experience in this type of lending. The City can contribute to a loan loss reserve fund that enables microfinance organizations to leverage Small Business Administration microloan funding.

*Considerations:* Working through technical assistance providers, the City should assess the need for microloans and respond if demand is sufficient.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber, Microenterprise Services of Oregon, MercyCorp Northwest

*Time frame:* Medium

#### 2.8 ► Facilitate crowdfunded small business loans through Kiva Zip

Kiva Zip is a nonprofit peer-to-peer, crowdfunding loan platform specifically targeted to small businesses that want to use their business to make a positive impact in their community. Users select business owners they want to fund and contribute any amount towards the business owner's goal loan amount. All loans are interest-free. Borrowers are required to have friends and family contribute to their loan before a public posting. Borrowers are screened by Trustees, who are individuals and organizations that endorse the borrower's business plan and character. Many economic development organizations and several cities have become Trustees, working through their technical assistance programs to screen borrowers. There are no costs associated with becoming a Trustee beyond the time involved in screening borrowers, and Trustees have no fiduciary responsibility if the loan defaults. Kiva Zip can be a relatively simple and short-term method of helping small businesses to access capital.

*Considerations:* The City could become a Kiva Zip Trustee itself, or technical assistance providers could become Trustees in partnership with the City.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber, Kiva Zip

*Time frame:* Short

## 4.4 • GOAL 2: STABILIZE AND GROW SMALL BUSINESSES

### 2.9 ➤ Encourage small business owners to set up Individual Development Accounts through Share

Individual Development Accounts (IDA) are matched-savings accounts. Share's IDA program rewards low-income individuals for saving by providing a 2:1 match to the amount they save for up to two years. The savings must be used for a qualified asset, including starting or buying equipment for a small business, post-secondary education, or buying a home. The program is eligible for any individual earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level. Participants must also complete 12 hours of financial education to receive the grant. IDAs are widely recognized as an effective tool to help low-income individuals build assets; they can also help small business owners accumulate the collateral necessary to receive a loan, buy equipment to grow their business, or pay tuition for business education programs.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber, Share Vancouver

*Time frame:* Short



A new small business owner restoring an auto repair shop on Fourth Plain

GOAL 3

Create a growth pipeline for food entrepreneurs



## 4.5 • GOAL 3: CREATE A GROWTH PIPELINE FOR FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

The food sector offers significant entrepreneurial opportunities for low-income and immigrant communities. Nationally, immigrants account for 38% of the owners of food businesses but just 18% of all businesses. Restaurants, catering services, food trucks, bakeries and packaged foods are all common ventures. Food entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds can leverage cultural knowledge and skills to create a differentiated product—a much more difficult achievement in other sectors. The City should consider the food sector a critical industry for local economic development and a source of economic opportunity for Fourth Plain residents.

### STRATEGY

## Implement projects and partnerships to catalyze the growth of food businesses

The City can support food entrepreneurs through the general small business support strategies outlined above, but a series of projects and partnerships specifically designed to support food entrepreneurs are necessary to help them access key resources and connect to customers and markets.



Latina food entrepreneurs using La Cocina, a food business incubator in San Francisco

### 3.1 > PRIORITY Develop a commercial kitchen incubator

A commercial kitchen incubator is a business incubator specifically targeted to food businesses. All food businesses—including caterers, food trucks, and packaged food producers—are required to prepare food in a licensed commercial kitchen. Renting kitchen space can be prohibitively expensive for a startup food business. Kitchen incubators combine an affordable commercial kitchen with technical support staff to help food businesses master operations, refine business plans and connect with sales and distribution channels. Kitchen incubators have found particular success in low-income, immigrant and especially Latino communities. Kitchen incubators often form synergistic relationships with farmers markets that become a sales venue for clients. Given the popularity of the Vancouver Farmers Market, the existing food cluster on Fourth Plain, strong local demand for local food, and evidence for the success of food businesses in communities like Fourth Plain, a kitchen incubator is a strategic investment.

*Considerations:* The first step should be to perform a more in-depth analysis of the demand for the incubator in order to project the potential number of clients, and thus the size of the facility. One of the vacant commercial spaces on the corridor could be renovated to accommodate the facility, or it could be built new on one of the vacant lots. The City's technical assistance providers and the Vancouver Farmers Market will be key partners in development planning and potentially in operation of the incubator.

The City can also facilitate access to affordable kitchen space while the incubator is under development. There are a number of opportunities to partner with local organizations to facilitate access to a commercial kitchen, be it through faith-based institutions, Clark College, or K-12 schools.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber, Vancouver Farmers Market, Clark College, K-12 schools, New Life Friends Church, other faith-based institutions

*Time frame:* Medium



## 4.5 • GOAL 3: CREATE A GROWTH PIPELINE FOR FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

### CASE STUDY

#### Pasco Specialty Kitchen

Pasco Specialty Kitchen (PSK) is a kitchen incubator developed through a partnership between the City of Pasco and the Pasco Redevelopment Authority. PSK operates a fully licensed commercial kitchen facility that clients rent at an affordable rate of \$12-\$18 per hour. PSK has one support staff person who provides consulting services, including business planning, channel development, outreach to retailers, loan packaging and brand development.

The mission of PSK is to graduate small, local food businesses into full-service restaurants, catering companies or food producers. PSK has 42 clients that include farmer's market vendors, food truck operators, catering companies and aspiring bakeries and restaurants. About 40% of the business owners are people of color and 33% are women. Between 2012 and 2014, twelve businesses graduated from PSK into full-service restaurants or bakeries.

The capital construction cost of the facility was funded through a U.S. Economic Development Administration Public Works grant and the City of Pasco's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Client revenue accounts for roughly 50% of PSK's operating budget, and the remainder is funded by the CDBG program. Many of PSK's clients are low-income business owners that meet income eligibility for CDBG funding. Clients that do not meet CDBG income eligibility must create at least one job for a low to moderate income individual.



PSK organizes Food Truck Fridays near the facility



The facility includes all the professional equipment needed for a wide range of food businesses



PSK's location in downtown Pasco

## 4.5 • GOAL 3: CREATE A GROWTH PIPELINE FOR FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

### 3.2 ➤ Partner with institutions and agencies to expand opportunities for food entrepreneurs

#### *Clark College's culinary arts and food service program*

Clark College is currently overhauling its culinary program as well as its food service offerings for students. The new facility will include a renovated kitchen space and a number of small food kiosks that will provide a range of dining options. The food kiosks are envisioned as an outlet for locally-owned food businesses, and the College would like food offerings to reflect its diverse and increasingly international student body. These kiosks present a specific opportunity to provide low-income food entrepreneurs access to an affordable and high-traffic retail space. More broadly, the City and its technical assistance providers should partner closely with Clark College's culinary program to explore other ways they can support food sector development that benefits low-income and diverse communities.



Photo: Zachary Kaufman

Food trucks on the Clark College campus will soon be supplemented with permanent, indoor food kiosks

#### *Oregon State University Food Innovation Center*

The OSU Food Innovation Center (FIC) is a resource for food entrepreneurs that desire to package their food for resale at retailers across the Northwest and the U.S. The goal of the center—located in Northwest Portland—is to help food entrepreneurs turn home recipes into marketable products. Staff advise and train entrepreneurs on food formulation, processing, packaging and safety. The City should establish a close working relationship with the FIC so low-income food entrepreneurs from Fourth Plain and Vancouver can use the center's resources most effectively.

#### *Washington Department of Commerce's Restaurant Regulatory Streamlining*

The Washington Department of Commerce initiated an effort to partner with local governments to improve the regulatory experience for restaurant entrepreneurs in 2012. The project has resulted in a major overhaul of the regulatory process in Seattle, and minor streamlining in Spokane. The City recently began work to apply the key learnings from these cities to its regulatory process. This effort alone will support food entrepreneurs across the city, but the City should also ensure that the regulatory streamlining makes the process transparent and accessible to diverse communities on Fourth Plain.

*Partners:* Clark College, Oregon State University, Washington Department of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber

*Time frame:* Short

## 4.5 • GOAL 3: CREATE A GROWTH PIPELINE FOR FOOD ENTREPRENEURS

### 3.3 ➤ Extend the food truck pilot program to Fourth Plain

The City established a pilot program to allow food trucks to operate on publicly-owned land in downtown Vancouver in November of 2014. The City can link Fourth Plain to this project in two ways. First, the City should seek low-income food entrepreneurs from the Fourth Plain neighborhoods to fill available space for food trucks on publicly-owned land downtown. Second, the City should allow food trucks to operate on publicly-owned land on Fourth Plain.

*Considerations:* Potential locations include Water Works Park, Warriors Field, Evergreen Park and areas adjacent to future Vine BRT stations. This would provide entrepreneurial opportunities to Fourth Plain residents, activate public spaces, and bolster Fourth Plain's reputation as a food destination.

*Partners:* Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber

*Time frame:* Short



A food truck operating on publicly owned land in downtown Vancouver

### 3.4 ➤ Sponsor vendor stalls at the Vancouver Farmers Market for low-income food entrepreneurs

The Downtown Vancouver Farmers Market is resoundingly popular and a valuable opportunity for food entrepreneurs to sell their goods. Due to high demand for vendor stalls and limited space, however, few vendor stalls become available and their costs may be prohibitive. The City should work with the Vancouver Farmers Market to reserve and sponsor vendor stalls for low-income food entrepreneurs identified through its technical assistance program.

*Partners:* Vancouver Farmers Market, Hispanic Chamber, Greater Vancouver Chamber

*Time frame:* Short



The Vancouver Farmers Market is Southwest Washington's #1 visitor attraction and hosts over 250 vendors.

GOAL 4

# Prioritize pedestrian safety and access



## 4.6 • GOAL 4: PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS

Fourth Plain already sees significant pedestrian activity and this is only likely to increase with the addition of The Vine BRT. Currently, the street is not very welcoming to pedestrians: they have to navigate numerous curb cuts, they are not buffered from the lanes of high-speed traffic, and crossings are relatively far apart. Perhaps even more important than comfort is pedestrian safety, which is also a significant challenge. Many people we spoke with expressed concern about crossing Fourth Plain, and many bicycle riders are hesitant to ride in the street. The actions below prioritize improving safety for people walking, biking, and taking transit. Transitioning Fourth Plain from an auto-oriented corridor to a multimodal one will be a long-term process, but it is already underway with the introduction of The Vine.

### STRATEGIES

1. Improve neighborhood connectivity to the corridor
2. Enhance pedestrian safety and comfort

### STRATEGY

## Improve neighborhood connectivity to the corridor

Like many post-war developments, the neighborhoods surrounding Fourth Plain are often characterized by curving streets and dead ends rather than a well-connected grid. This development pattern makes it difficult for people walking to the corridor, who have to travel out of their way to follow the existing street network. In order to maximize the BRT investment, it would be ideal to provide direct access to Fourth Plain from the surrounding neighborhoods wherever possible so that it is easier for residents to reach The Vine stations.

### 4.1 ► **PRIORITY** Ensure that the neighborhoods surrounding Fourth Plain are prioritized during the citywide sidewalk inventory

The neighborhood streets that connect to the corridor have inconsistent sidewalk networks, making pedestrian access difficult even when there is a direct path to the corridor. We heard from residents that it can be difficult to push a stroller from the neighborhoods to services on Fourth Plain because the sidewalks are in disrepair or nonexistent. These neighborhoods should be prioritized during the citywide sidewalk inventory taking place in 2015.

*Time frame:* Short

## 4.6 • GOAL 4: PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS

### 4.2 ➤ Create pedestrian paths that connect residential neighborhoods to Fourth Plain

Pedestrian access easements at a few key locations could greatly improve access to the corridor. These easements would need to be coupled with removing fences that separate Fourth Plain from residential areas and replacing them with screening that allows people to pass through. Refer to the map in Figure 4.2 for potential connections that would improve access in areas where direct connections to the corridor are lacking.

*Considerations:* Negotiating with property owners to obtain easements could take a considerable amount of time. Property owners may be concerned about liability, trespassing, and vandalism, necessitating a well-thought-out plan for how the path will be maintained and marked with signage.

*Partners:* Property owners

*Time frame:* Medium



Pedestrians may create their own connections to bypass a circuitous street network. These connections can be formalized to improve safety and make them accessible to people of all ages and abilities

### STRATEGY

## Enhance pedestrian safety and comfort

The actions below are primarily intended to improve pedestrian safety, but they could also help foster a better business district environment. When drivers slow to the posted speed limit they are more likely to notice the businesses on the street. Safe and frequent pedestrian crossings make it easier for people to walk to businesses on the other side of the street. The case for safety, access, and mobility is easy to make, but the economic vitality of local businesses should not be overlooked when evaluating streetscape improvements. When auto-oriented corridors are retrofitted for better multi-modal access, retail sales generally increase, vacancy rates decrease, and private investment typically follows.

### 4.3 ➤ PRIORITY Install pedestrian-scale lighting

The streetlights on Fourth Plain are oriented high above the roadway and do not provide adequate illumination for the sidewalk environment. A well-lit sidewalk would improve safety from a visibility and crime prevention standpoint while enhancing the look of the business district. One business owner suspected that Fourth Plain is not as dangerous as it seems at night, it is just very dark, which makes people uneasy. This perception could especially hurt businesses that depend on evening customers, such as restaurants. Pedestrian lighting would also ensure a safe and comfortable experience for Vine riders, and may even increase ridership.

*Considerations:* Pedestrian-scale lighting is typically oriented 12-15 feet over the sidewalk rather than the street. Fixtures can be added to existing utility poles in order to avoid placing another light pole on the sidewalk, which also saves time and money.

*Time frame:* Medium

## 4.6 • GOAL 4: PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS

### CASE STUDY

#### St. Nicholas Avenue, New York City

A section of the commercial corridor on St. Nicholas Avenue was recently retrofitted to add a new public plaza and pedestrian improvements. Most of the businesses near the project site are small, non-discretionary businesses that directly serve the surrounding community rather than a regional clientele, similar to Fourth Plain. The new plaza provides benches, tables and chairs, and aesthetic elements such as landscaping and painted concrete, which has encouraged residents to linger in the area. Pedestrian crossings were also shortened and safety islands were added to the street, leading to increased pedestrian volumes. Retail sales for the surrounding neighborhood businesses increased 48% after the improvements were made. This example and others like it demonstrate that the benefits of street enhancements apply just as much to low-income neighborhoods with small businesses as they do to well-off retail districts. Modest retail strips in residential areas are just as likely to benefit from street improvements and an enhanced public realm as downtown commercial districts.



A small plaza was created from existing road space, but space could be reappropriated from underutilized parking lots on Fourth Plain

### 4.4 ➤ Paint existing bike lanes green

The bike lanes between Grand Boulevard and Rossiter Lane are not easily identifiable as roadway space for cyclists. Painting them green—as is the best practice for bike lanes—would increase visibility and reinforce that the space is dedicated for bikes. The added color to the road also helps visually narrow the space dedicated to auto traffic, which could have a traffic calming effect.

*Time frame:* Short

### 4.5 ➤ Assess the performance of existing HAWK beacons

We heard from the community and witnessed ourselves that not all drivers stop when the high-intensity activated crosswalk (HAWK) signals are activated. Many people feel reassured to step into the street when they receive the signal to cross, yet they may have a false sense of security if oncoming traffic is not paying attention to these new signals. The HAWK beacons have been installed where the highest number of pedestrian collisions historically occurred on Fourth Plain, but additional steps may need to be taken to ensure their effectiveness.

*Considerations:* An educational campaign or crosswalk enforcement actions could help increase awareness of the HAWK beacons.

*Time frame:* Short



Community members feel that many cars do not notice the HAWK pedestrian signals

## 4.6 • GOAL 4: PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS

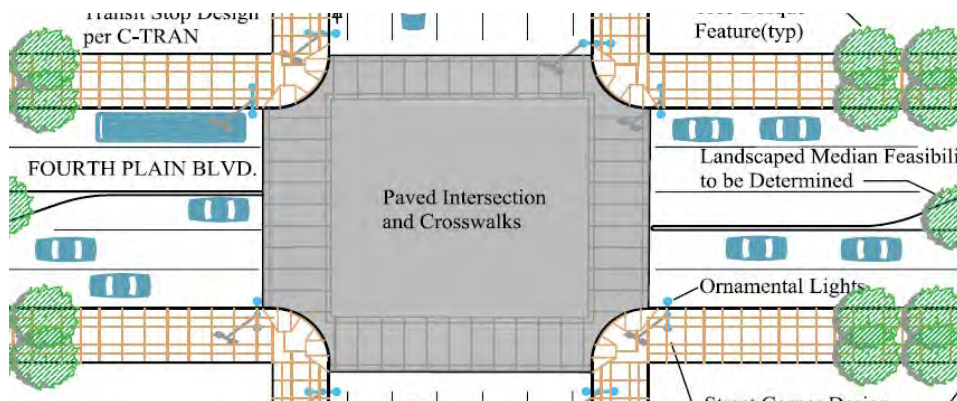
### 4.6 ► PRIORITY Paint intersection murals to calm traffic and create a gateway to the business district

A series of intersection murals can unify the business district while doubling as a traffic calming measure. The designs can help create a sense of place by reflecting community character and giving the area a distinct identity. The Fourth Plain Streetscape Plan recommends gateway treatments for the intersections of Fort Vancouver Way, Grand Boulevard, and Rossiter Lane, and we believe intersection murals would be an ideal way to implement this recommendation. They are high impact, require few resources, and involve the community.

*Considerations:* The Vancouver nonprofit Americans Building Community is already leading an intersection mural project in the Rose Village neighborhood. The city can leverage the expertise and energy of this community group. The community as a whole should be closely involved in creating the intersection art to ensure it appropriately represents the identity of the neighborhood.

*Partners:* Americans Building Community, City Repair Project

*Time frame:* Short



The 2008 Fourth Plain Streetscape Plan called for gateway treatments at key intersections to calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety

### 4.7 ► Develop a corridor-wide strategy to improve safety and multi-modal access

The student team identified a series of potential pedestrian improvements, but a more comprehensive analysis is needed to evaluate how these improvements affect the street network as a whole. The map in Figure 4.3 shows potential locations for adding crossing protections on side streets that intersect Fourth Plain, in addition to new crossings on Fourth Plain. Pedestrian crossings are fairly consistent between Rossiter Lane and Fort Vancouver Way, but there are gaps that exceed the recommended maximum of 600 feet for a walkable urban thoroughfare. New crossings at Laurel Place, Watson Avenue, and midblock between Fort Vancouver Way and Z Street would fill these gaps. On residential side streets, crossings parallel to Fourth Plain leave pedestrians exposed to turning vehicles, so these streets could also use enhanced protection. Ladder crossings and curb extensions that narrow the crossing distance would improve safety and calm traffic that is entering a residential area. Interim curb extensions could even be tested for minimal cost before a full infrastructure investment. In the long term, reallocating road space to improve multimodal access would help transform Fourth Plain into a more pedestrian-oriented business district.

*Considerations:* Adding side street protections and new crosswalks could be done in the short term while a longer term strategy is being developed.

*Time frame:* Medium



## 4.6 • GOAL 4: PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS

### CASE STUDY

#### Las Olas Boulevard, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

In 2014, the City of Fort Lauderdale commissioned a local artist to create a series of three intersection murals on a major arterial street. The project was called Connecting the Blocks, and it was primarily envisioned as a Complete Streets strategy to calm traffic and make the area more welcoming to people walking and riding bikes. A top priority of Fort Lauderdale's strategic plan is to create a multimodal city that improves pedestrian, bicyclist, and motorist safety. The murals act as a traffic calming device because cars instinctively slow down when approaching such a noticeable change in the roadway. The series of three murals also connects the area by adding a distinctive feature spread across several blocks. Community members were recruited to help paint the intersections, and neighboring businesses helped sponsor the event by providing food and refreshments. A year later, the murals are not as bright as when they were first painted, but they are still intact and have not been worn away by traffic.



Community members participating in the intersection painting project



Drivers tend to slow down on approach because the paint signals the presence of pedestrians



The paintings may be designed by a professional but should involve the local community in the process

## 4.6 • GOAL 4: PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS

Figure 4.3 Potential pedestrian improvements



A photograph of a modern transit bus at a station platform. The bus is white with a green roof and features the 'VINE' logo and 'Vancouver City' text. A person is walking on the platform in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red box containing text.

## GOAL 5

Foster inclusive,  
transit-oriented  
development

## 4.7 • GOAL 5: FOSTER INCLUSIVE, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is a planning strategy of focusing higher density development within a walkable distance of high-quality transit in order to expand the opportunity for people to live near transit. Retail or employment near stations also makes transit more convenient by locating goods, services or jobs in highly accessible locations.

The Vine BRT line presents a significant opportunity to foster new development around transit stations. Yet, several barriers may prevent TOD from happening on Fourth Plain. Perceptions that the area is rundown and unsafe are deterrents to development. Rental rates are not high enough to support multi-story development, as it is more expensive to build. Property on the corridor is predominantly composed of small lots with diverse ownership. These factors make larger development projects less viable.

Current conditions suggest that a strict focus on mixed-use development—a common strategy for TOD—might be detrimental to long-term goals. Vancouver’s residential vacancy rates are very low—around 2%—while the commercial vacancy rate on Fourth Plain is 15%. It may be difficult to find commercial tenants, but new housing is in high demand and would support existing businesses. More residential development would also increase safety by adding more “eyes on the street.” Multifamily housing is less complex to develop and supports mixed-use development in the long-term.

### Inclusive TOD: The role of affordable housing

The scope of the *Fourth Plain Forward* project did not include addressing the Subarea Plan’s housing goals. We recognize that housing planning is a vital need for any community, and especially one faced with economic distress. The time frame of this project would not allow for the analysis and community engagement needed to address the community’s housing needs.

Yet, we found through the planning process that an adequate supply of affordable housing is important to the goals of *Fourth Plain Forward*. Both the preservation of existing affordable housing and the construction of new

affordable housing directly advances the goals of supporting a multicultural business district and maximizing the benefits of transit.

Neighborhood-serving retailers—most Fourth Plain businesses—are closely linked to the housing market. Their business model is dependent on the demographic makeup of their neighborhood, which is largely dependent on the cost and types of housing. The businesses that Fourth Plain residents visit most—ethnic restaurants and food markets—are dependent on the Latino, Asian and Eastern European communities that live in surrounding neighborhoods. Our retail market analysis revealed that there is a higher concentration of restaurants and food markets in this area than would be expected based solely on population and income. These businesses survive because there are many loyal customers living nearby. Thus, the presence of a multicultural business district is directly linked to the presence of housing that is affordable to people of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

The economic value of transit investment is also dependent on the cost and type of housing that transit serves. Lower income individuals ride transit at significantly higher rates than higher income individuals. BRT is more cost-efficient if it serves communities with higher densities and lower incomes. Preserving existing affordable housing and preventing displacement of low-income residents is equally important to new affordable housing. It was not in the scope of this project to develop anti-displacement strategies, but we recommend the city focus anti-displacement efforts on Fourth Plain.

### STRATEGIES

1. Enhance regulations for transit-oriented development
2. Incentivize inclusive transit-oriented development

## 4.7 • GOAL 5: FOSTER INCLUSIVE, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

### STRATEGY

## Enhance regulations for transit-oriented development

Vancouver has the basic regulatory framework to support some level of TOD. The Fourth Plain Corridor Overlay District shares many of the features of successful TOD zoning overlays in other cities: it prohibits most auto-oriented uses, requires buildings be oriented to the street with minimal setbacks, requires buildings provide visual interest at the ground floor, allows taller building heights, sets stricter parking limits than in the base zones, and provides incentives for exceeding urban design standards. Since very little development has occurred since the overlay's adoption, it is difficult to judge whether these standards are sufficient to foster the compact, walkable development that will support transit. Yet, research of other cities' zoning ordinances suggest that Vancouver can go further to encourage high quality TOD. The City has the option of updating the existing Fourth Plain Overlay to be more transit-supportive, or of undergoing a larger rezoning. Either approach should enhance the zoning on Fourth Plain in the ways described below.

### 5.1 ► Encourage shared parking

Shared parking between adjacent lots can enhance the pedestrian environment by reducing the number of driveways and can allow more intensive development of the land. The Fourth Plain Overlay does allow joint or shared parking, but only when adjacent properties do not share peak operating hours. Removing this requirement would make it possible for similar adjacent uses—such as restaurants—to share parking.

*Considerations:* The City could also provide incentives for entering into shared parking agreements with adjacent property owners.

*Time frame:* Short

### 5.2 ► Encourage the consolidation of driveways to reduce curb cuts

A safe and pleasant pedestrian environment is critical to successful TOD. Currently, sidewalks along Fourth Plain are interrupted by frequent driveway curb cuts, and many properties have two driveways for ingress and egress. The Fourth Plain Streetscape Plan calls for driveway closure and consolidation to enhance sidewalk connectivity.

*Considerations:* The zoning code could set a limit on the number of driveways per street frontage, so that new development must obtain access from adjacent lots or from side streets. The City could also provide incentives for property owners that eliminate driveways by connecting with adjacent parking lots.

*Time frame:* Medium



A high number of driveways makes walking on Fourth Plain less safe and uncomfortable

## 4.7 • GOAL 5: FOSTER INCLUSIVE, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

### 5.3 ► PRIORITY Relax right-of-way improvement standards for mid-size expansions

It is important to balance the desire for a high-quality streetscape on Fourth Plain with conditions that will encourage redevelopment. Vancouver’s code for street standards requires that property owners expanding their buildings more than 20% must construct half-width street improvement to the applicable City standards. This requirement is likely cost prohibitive to many property owners hoping to complete mid-size renovations and expansions. The City should consider relaxing this standard for properties along Fourth Plain in order to encourage mid-size property improvements.

*Considerations:* The requirement could be waived altogether, or the standards could be relaxed so that a smaller set of improvements are required.

*Time frame:* Short

### 5.4 ► Initiate a planning process to assess base zones

It may be necessary to conduct a larger rezoning to facilitate transit-supportive development on Fourth Plain, and to better support the business district. The analysis and community engagement required to determine the appropriate zoning changes is beyond the scope of this project. We recommend that the City undertake a study of the current capacity for development—particularly residential development—within walking distance of Fourth Plain under the existing zoning structure.

*Considerations:* Potential rezoning schemes could include: an overhaul of the existing Fourth Plain Overlay; a new high-density residential overlay; upzoning residential areas around transit stations; creating a new residential TOD zone; changing the base zoning to CX (City Center); and creating a Plan District for the corridor. Community engagement should be central to determining the appropriate zone changes.

*Time frame:* Medium

### CASE STUDY

#### Charlotte, North Carolina

Charlotte created new TOD zoning districts in areas within one-half mile of its Lynx light rail corridor. There are three TOD districts, each of which has slightly different standards based on their primary use:

- TOD-R is for residential areas with limited commercial uses;
- TOD-E is intended for employment (primarily office) areas; and
- TOD-M is intended for mixed-use areas.

Each district sets minimum density standards (higher density within one-quarter mile and slightly lower density within one-half mile of stations). Each TOD district also establishes parking maximums for each land use type, with restaurants requiring the most parking per square foot and residential the least. The districts allow properties to exceed parking maximums if they (1) share a driveway, (2) reach a shared parking agreement, or (3) allow adjacent parking lots to connect or be combined.

Aside from a strong regulatory framework, Charlotte uses a number of other interventions to encourage investment around transit. Strong station area planning and outreach to developers help build momentum for TOD. The city invested in high-quality sidewalks as well as light fixtures and street furniture to encourage development. The city also partnered with a bank and the Charlotte Area Transit System to establish an acquisition fund to purchase land near stations and ensure the development of mixed-income, mixed-use TOD. Charlotte has leveraged over \$800 million in private investment around its Lynx LRT since 2007.



## 4.7 • GOAL 5: FOSTER INCLUSIVE, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

### STRATEGY

## Incentivize inclusive transit-oriented development

Creating a TOD-supportive regulatory environment is not sufficient to attract development where underlying market conditions are challenging, as is the case on Fourth Plain. Areas where property values are low require greater public investments and incentives to foster appropriate development. Incentives can help close the value gap for projects that contribute to vibrant and walkable transit station areas, but that do not quite pencil out when all the costs of development are considered. Incentives encourage quality TOD by smoothing and expediting the development process, mitigating risk, reducing costs, and assisting with project financing.

The City of Vancouver should use incentives to not only foster private development on Fourth Plain, but also to encourage projects that exceed minimum development standards and benefit the community. Incentives that support affordable housing construction should be most highly prioritized given the critical role of affordable housing in sustaining the multicultural business district and maximizing the value of transit. Other community benefits that could be incentivized include affordable commercial space, public gathering spaces, and streetscape improvements. Incentives could also be used to encourage lot consolidation, shared parking, and mixed-use development.

### 5.5 ► Target the Multifamily Tax Exemption program to Fourth Plain and add transit-supportive requirements

Vancouver's Multifamily Tax Exemption is a useful tool for incentivizing higher-density housing. The program currently allows an 8-year tax exemption for market-rate multifamily housing, and a 12-year exemption for projects that include an affordability element—20% of their units must be affordable to families at 115% of area median family income (MFI). The program is targeted at both the Fourth Plain subarea and downtown Vancouver, but has thus far only been used in the downtown area, which has already seen significant multifamily development in recent years. The City should assess how the program could be better targeted to Fourth Plain, and how it could be adjusted to encourage transit-supportive development.

*Considerations:* Some potential changes include targeting the 8-year market-rate exemption to Fourth Plain only, so that it is no longer available downtown; changing the affordability standard to better reflect affordable housing needs (this could be done with a tiered approach); and changing the target geography to be within a short distance of transit stations (say, one-quarter or one-half mile). The program could also be better promoted via marketing.

*Time frame:* Short



The Multi-Family Tax Exemption program supported high-quality, affordable development in Downtown Vancouver

## 4.7 • GOAL 5: FOSTER INCLUSIVE, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

### 5.6 ► **PRIORITY** Market development opportunities on Fourth Plain

Marketing can be a powerful means of building awareness of TOD opportunities near transit stations. The City can actively promote development on Fourth Plain by advertising its development potential and by working to counter any negative or outdated misconceptions about the area. The City can also help market completed developments in order to sell units more quickly and reduce costs at the end of the project.

*Considerations:* Efforts could include preparing marketing pamphlets and other materials, directly contacting developers and real estate brokers, and assembling a developer packet with available properties, prototypical pro forma, summary of zoning and regulations, and available incentives.

*Time frame:* Short

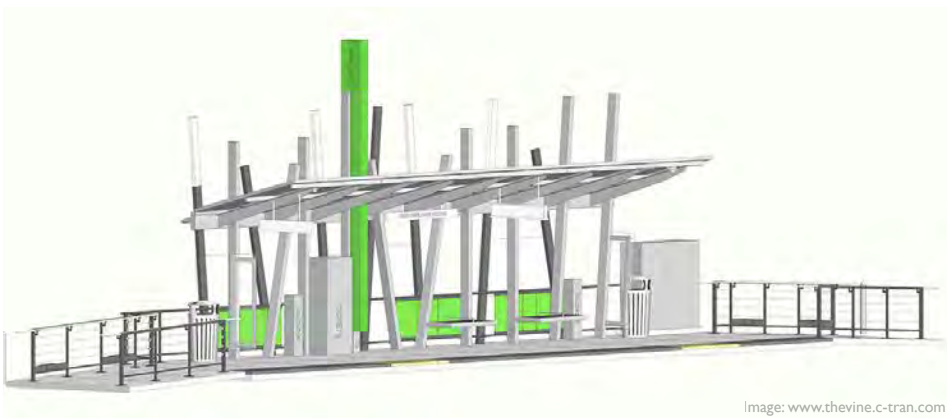
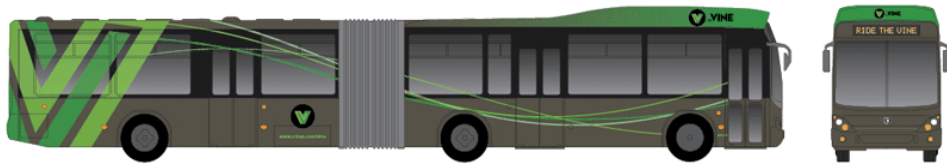


Image: [www.thevine.c-tran.com](http://www.thevine.c-tran.com)

C-TRAN's branding strategy for The Vine can extend into marketing development on Fourth Plain

### 5.7 ► Provide the option of Type I development review to expedite the application process

Expediting the application and review processes can significantly reduce costs for developers and increase their certainty in obtaining approval. Vancouver already has an efficient development review process and allows concurrent review of permit applications. The City could shorten the process for development on Fourth Plain by allowing applications normally requiring a Type II development review—such as major site plan reviews—to qualify for a Type I review. This would greatly shorten the review timeline by removing the public comment period, allowing developers significant savings on project costs. This incentive has already been used successfully in downtown Vancouver.

*Considerations:* The expedited review could be applied broadly on Fourth Plain, or only for those projects that provide significant public benefit.

*Time frame:* Short

### 5.8 ► Facilitate low-interest loans for projects with significant community benefit

Developers may be challenged to find sufficient funding for TOD on Fourth Plain, due to greater perceived risk from financial institutions. Projects that include community benefits like affordable housing are eligible for funding not available to standard developments. The City could assist such developers in securing project financing by connecting them with Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and banks with Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) credits.

*Partners:* CDFIs and Banks

*Time frame:* Medium



## 4.7 • GOAL 5: FOSTER INCLUSIVE, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

### 5.9 ► Provide development fee relief

The City of Vancouver already has a precedent of providing fee relief for new development. The Fourth Plain Overlay zone allows reduction of traffic impact fees (TIFs) for developments on Fourth Plain that meet certain standards, including reduced parking, provision of bicycle parking, and meeting streetscape design standards. The City has also used the waiver of system development charges (SDCs) to attract businesses for the purpose of economic development.

*Considerations:* The City could adjust the Fourth Plain Overlay by adding to the list of desirable development features that qualify for TIF reductions, such as affordable housing, shared parking and mixed-use development. The City could also waive full or partial SDCs for development that provides sufficient community benefit. Another option is waiving or reducing fees for development applications or permits. This would require collaboration with other City departments to gain approval, particularly Public Works.

*Time frame:* Medium

### 5.10 ► Establish a Public Development Authority for Fourth Plain

Vancouver's TOD efforts on Fourth Plain would likely be more effective if it established an independent Public Development Authority (PDA). A PDA would be less constrained in achieving redevelopment on Fourth Plain, and would be more efficient and flexible in administering services. It could also be more mission-driven to achieve goals such as creating more affordable housing.

*Considerations:* A PDA may be useful for administering the recommended incentives, including marketing and facilitating low-interest loans. It may also provide services such as pre-development technical and financial assistance for developers. Technical assistance could include help with market analysis, project planning, site assembly, identifying financing, etc.

A PDA could also play a more direct role in development on Fourth Plain by acquiring property near transit stations. This would help facilitate site assembly for larger TOD projects, for which the consolidation of multiple small lots is a major barrier. The City could issue tax-exempt bonds to finance land acquisition, and could either sell or lease assembled properties to developers. In order to form a new PDA, the City would need to pass an ordinance or resolution approving its charter, and create a board of directors, so this is a longer-term action.

*Time frame:* Long

#### CASE STUDY

##### Bellingham, Washington

Bellingham authorizes the waiver, reduction, or deferral of SDCs for key redevelopment projects that contribute to citywide economic development. The City has used SDC waivers to spur housing development in its downtown core. Bellingham planners have recently recommended expanding this program to reduce SDCs for development projects within targeted urban villages and for qualified affordable housing projects.



Photo: [www.bellinghamhousing.org](http://www.bellinghamhousing.org)

Affordable housing development in Bellingham, Washington

## 4.8 • SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Table 4.1. Summary of Recommended Actions

High priority actions are marked by a ➤

GOAL 1: CULTIVATE A VIBRANT AND WELCOMING BUSINESS DISTRICT		
STRATEGY	ACTION	TIME FRAME
Allocate resources to organize and program the business district	➤ I.1 Create and fund a district manager position	Short
	I.2 Lead litter and graffiti removal efforts	Short
	I.3 Establish an ongoing public market	Short
	➤ I.4 Partner with the Vancouver Police Department to improve safety	Medium
	I.5 Facilitate community placemaking	Short
	I.6 Host ongoing special events and festivals	Short
	I.7 Partner with Vancouver Public Schools to develop Warriors Field in a way that benefits the business district	Medium
	➤ I.8 Partner with Clark College on future developments to ensure benefits for the business district and community	Medium
Invest in existing commercial spaces	I.9 Target adaptive reuse and pre-lease assistance programs to vacant storefronts	Short
	➤ I.10 Establish a business owner-centered storefront improvement program	Short
GOAL 2: STABILIZE AND GROW SMALL BUSINESSES		
STRATEGY	ACTION	TIME FRAME
Implement small business technical assistance strategically	➤ 2.1 Target technical assistance to priority businesses	Short
	2.2 Establish an office or host office hours in the business district	Short
	2.3 Foster a network of small business support	Medium
Extend small business support to home-based microenterprises	➤ 2.4 Invest time and resources in community outreach to engage home-based businesses	Short
	2.5 Connect home-based businesses with institutional customers	Short
	2.6 Provide specialized support for home-based child care businesses	Medium
Help small businesses and microenterprises access capital and build assets	➤ 2.7 Consider a partnership with a microfinance organization	Medium
	2.8 Facilitate crowdfunded small business loans through Kiva Zip	Short
	2.9 Encourage small business owners to set up Individual Development Accounts through Share	Short

## 4.8 • SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

GOAL 3: CREATE A GROWTH PIPELINE FOR FOOD ENTREPRENEURS		
STRATEGY	ACTION	TIME FRAME
Implement projects and partnerships to catalyze the growth of food businesses	➤ 3.1 Develop a commercial kitchen incubator	Medium
	3.2 Partner with institutions and agencies to expand opportunities for food entrepreneurs	Short
	3.3 Extend the food truck pilot program to Fourth Plain	Short
	3.4 Sponsor vendor stalls at the Vancouver Farmers Market for low-income food entrepreneurs	Short
GOAL 4: PRIORITIZE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESS		
STRATEGY	ACTION	TIME FRAME
Improve neighborhood connectivity to the corridor	➤ 4.1 Ensure that the neighborhoods surrounding Fourth Plain are prioritized during the citywide sidewalk inventory	Short
	4.2 Create pedestrian paths that connect residential neighborhoods to Fourth Plain	Medium
Enhance pedestrian safety and comfort	➤ 4.3 Install pedestrian-scale lighting	Medium
	4.4 Paint existing bike lanes green	Short
	4.5 Assess the performance of existing HAWK beacons	Short
	➤ 4.6 Paint intersection murals to act as a gateway for the business district	Short
	4.7 Develop a corridor-wide strategy to improve safety and multi-modal access	Medium
GOAL 5: FOSTER INCLUSIVE, TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT		
STRATEGY	ACTION	TIME FRAME
Enhance regulations for transit-oriented development	5.1 Encourage the consolidation of driveways to reduce curb cuts	Medium
	5.2 Encourage shared parking	Short
	➤ 5.3 Relax right-of-way improvement standards for mid-size expansions	Short
	5.4 Initiate a planning process to assess base zones	Medium
Incentivize inclusive transit-oriented development	5.5 Target the Multi-family Tax Exemption program to Fourth Plain and add transit-supportive requirements	Short
	➤ 5.6 Market development opportunities on Fourth Plain	Short
	5.7 Provide the option of Type I development review to expedite the application process	Short
	5.8 Facilitate low-interest loans for projects with significant community benefit	Medium
	5.9 Provide development fee relief	Medium
	5.10 Establish a Public Development Authority for Fourth Plain	Long

## 4.9 • MOVING FOURTH PLAIN FORWARD

Fourth Plain has tremendous potential to become the thriving multicultural business district that the 2007 Subarea Plan envisioned. Taken together, the corridor's stock of community assets, diverse businesses, and multi-ethnic residents have the potential to create a distinct destination within the City of Vancouver. We can find evidence of this potential by looking at the corridor's history. The Fourth Plain International Festival, which was active between 2010 and 2013, emerged as a purely community-led effort to celebrate the corridor's diversity, food, and people. This is just one example of the existing community capacity that the City can tap into.

Moving forward with the implementation of Fourth Plain Forward, the City will need to call upon a diverse range of funding sources for ongoing district management, including critical grant funding sources for high-impact projects. With the allocation of time, strategic investment, and ongoing efforts to engage Fourth Plain's residents, business owners, and community organizations, we believe the goals of the Subarea Plan are more than attainable. We imagine Fourth Plain as an attractive and inviting place where families want to bring their children -- a truly multimodal corridor where pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders feel safe and comfortable. We imagine a diverse multicultural district that welcomes those who want to start a new business, and a place where one can experience some of Vancouver's long-established businesses. Moving Fourth Plain forward means creating a distinct, special place in Vancouver where residents and visitors alike want to stop and spend time.





4<sup>TH</sup> *FORWARD*  
PLAIN

