



memo portland

to Chris Myers and Miranda Bateschell, City of Wilsonville
from Alex Dupey and Lauren Scott, MIG
re West Railroad Area Preliminary Preferred Concept: Implementation and Policy Considerations
date 4/01/2026

Introduction

This memorandum describes the conceptual development framework and implementation considerations for the emerging *Preliminary Preferred Concept* for the West Railroad area within the Basalt Creek Concept Plan. The intent is to establish a visionary direction to guide future technical work and City planning.

It is anticipated that this list will continue to be refined during and following discussions with the Planning Commission, City Council, and staff as the West Railroad Preferred Concept is defined and integrated into the Basalt Creek Concept Plan.

Implementation Considerations

The following sections identify potential opportunities and issues that could impact future development as envisioned for the West Railroad area.

A. Land Use Considerations for Implementation

The West Railroad area today is primarily occupied by contractor yards and outdoor storage uses that are profitable for existing property owners and require little reinvestment. This presents a challenge for advancing more intensive, higher-value development in the near term. At the same time, Wilsonville is recognized for its visionary and forward-thinking planning that delivers economic growth, high-quality jobs, and attractive development.

Given these dualities, the City's land use approach should strike a balance between aspiration and adaptability (two Guiding Principles): maintaining flexibility to accommodate a variety of employment uses today, while positioning the area for more sophisticated, high-quality employment in the long term.

1. Establish a Clear Long-Term Vision

- Define the area as a premier employment destination that leverages its natural setting and multimodal pathways, roadways, and trails to attract modern industrial, manufacturing, and innovation-oriented users.
- Integrate existing open space corridors, wetlands, and potential trail connections into the development identity—creating an employment district that feels both productive and environmentally connected.
- Emphasize design excellence and site organization over rigid land use restrictions to elevate development quality.

2. Recognize Current Market Realities

- Acknowledge that existing contractor and yard uses are economically viable and likely to remain for some time; focus policy efforts on incremental improvement rather than immediate transformation.
- Identify opportunity sites or willing owners where redevelopment could feasibly occur first, setting the stage for future transitions.
- Allow interim or evolving use patterns that enable property owners to remain active participants in the area's evolution.

3. Promote Flexibility through Zoning and Policy

- Apply the Planned Development Industrial (PDI) or Northwest Industrial (NWI) Zone to West Railroad to better reflect the area's unique mix of rail adjacency, environmental context, and long-term vision.
- Consider a performance or form-based code that defines desired outcomes—such as design quality, environmental integration, and circulation standards—without limiting allowable uses too narrowly.
- Maintain broad use allowances to avoid turning away potential investment, even if near-term uses differ from the City's long-range aspirations.

4. Encourage High-Quality Design and Place Identity

- Develop design standards or guidelines for landscaping, building form, and site layout that create a cohesive and marketable identity for the area.
- Use natural amenities and trail connections as a distinguishing feature — positioning West Railroad as an attractive and sustainable employment area within the region.
- Explore opportunities for public realm investments (e.g., gateway features or greenways) that signal the City's commitment to quality development.

B. Transportation Considerations for Implementation

Transportation access is a defining challenge for the West Railroad area. The site's limited connections, physical barriers, and infrastructure deficiencies create significant uncertainty around how future development can effectively move goods, workers, and services. Despite these constraints, it will be important to explore all potential access opportunities to ensure the area's long-term viability as an employment district.

The City has engaged a consultant firm (DKS Associates) to conduct a preliminary transportation analysis to further evaluate the concept plan. Key assumptions and findings from that analysis are presented below and incorporated into the transportation considerations that follow.

- » The analysis assumes development consistent with an industrial park setting, including a mix of smaller service businesses, larger manufacturers, and supporting commercial uses.
- » The analysis assumes implementation of key regional Transportation System Plan projects, including the Basalt Creek Parkway extension and improvements to the Grahams Ferry Road/Day Road intersection, but does not assume a future I-5 overcrossing.

- » The analysis identifies a north–south local industrial street connecting Tonquin Road to SW Grahams Ferry Road as the primary internal circulation route.
- » The analysis identifies a potential eastward connection across the railroad at Cahalin Road as a long-term improvement.
- » The analysis indicates that no major off-site transportation improvements are required beyond those already identified in City and County Transportation System Plans.

1. Address Access and Connectivity Constraints

- **Tonquin Road (North Access):** Local street access to Tonquin Road may be feasible based on preliminary coordination with Washington County, but will need to meet County access, safety, and operational standards upon redevelopment.
- **Cahalin Road (Potential East Access):** A potential extension of Cahalin Road across the railroad could offer a strong central connection into the area, but would require crossing the rail line, a significant coordination challenge with Portland and Western Railroad and ODOT Rail (owner of the railroad ROW). The City has been in contact with railroad representatives who are open to the idea of a public crossing in the area, preferably by upgrading the existing Cahalin Road crossing with additional protections, while noting that improvements at another crossing may be required as mitigation. While not assumed in the baseline analysis, this connection could reduce reliance on other access points and provide long-term system benefits. Conceptual planning should continue to evaluate its feasibility, including estimated costs (approximately \$500,000 in 2026 planning level costs) and permitting requirements.
- **Grahams Ferry Road Undercrossing (South Access):** The existing undercrossing is a critical freight linkage but currently undersized and in need of modernization. A site evaluation of this undercrossing was conducted in February 2025 and revealed that upgrading this facility could significantly improve freight mobility and overall connectivity at the southern end of the site but it is costly. For more detailed information, refer to the *Graham’s Ferry Road: Freight Traffic Accommodation Evaluation (2025)*.

2. Prioritize Regional and Freight Mobility

- Focus on ensuring efficient and safe connections to regional corridors such as I-5, Tonquin Road, and Basalt Creek Parkway.
- Recognize that freight traffic will define the area’s transportation needs, and future design solutions should prioritize large-vehicle maneuverability and industrial circulation.

3. Incorporate Multimodal and Complete Network Principles

- While freight access is the primary need, incorporate complete street principles where feasible, particularly along internal corridors, to support safe access for pedestrians, bicycles, and potential transit service in the future.
- Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity has not been fully evaluated; however, the transportation analysis found that the Ice Age Tonquin Trail can be accommodated through the site as currently envisioned in the preferred concept. Further coordination and evaluation of the exact alignment should occur as development occurs in the area.

4. Collaborate with Regional Partners and Consider Phased Implementation

- Work closely with Washington County, ODOT, and regional partners to ensure consistency with functional street classifications, spacing standards, and investment priorities to accommodate anticipated growth and future travel patterns.
- Consider a phased implementation approach for key transportation access points (SW Grahams Ferry Road, SW Tonquin Road, and potentially Cahalin Road) to be improved or added over time as development occurs and funding becomes available.
- Advance conceptual alignment studies and cost evaluations early to clarify feasibility before committing to major infrastructure investments.

C. Infrastructure Considerations for Implementation

The West Railroad area currently lacks basic infrastructure — including sanitary sewer, water, and stormwater systems — and extending these services will require significant public investment and regional coordination. Given these challenges, the City’s approach should focus on strategic, scalable infrastructure planning that supports near-term feasibility while laying the groundwork for future buildout.

1. Plan for Scalable Infrastructure Investments

- Develop a phased approach that prioritizes strategic connections and essential services first, allowing incremental expansion as development demand materializes.
- Focus initial efforts on alignment within key streets and corridors (e.g., Basalt Creek Parkway, SW Tonquin Road, or Cahalin Road) to establish service entry points for both water and sewer infrastructure.

2. Coordinate Regional Partnerships

- Pursue state and regional funding sources (e.g., Business Oregon, Metro) to offset infrastructure costs for employment lands.

3. Integrate Green and Resilient Systems

- Use green infrastructure and low-impact development practices to manage stormwater.
- Preserve open space along the Coffee Lake Creek and natural drainage corridors as part of the stormwater system and long-term habitat strategy.
- Design infrastructure with climate resilience and adaptability in mind, recognizing the area’s long buildout horizon.
- Consider including restoration or mitigation standards as a requirement of development, where feasible and appropriate, considering the significant tree and habitat loss already experienced in this area.

4. Maintain Long-Term Flexibility

- Avoid locking in costly infrastructure alignments before market direction becomes clearer; instead, establish conceptual utility corridors that identify key service entry points and trajectory of infrastructure, without committing to investments before the land is purchased by a developer.

- Ensure infrastructure design standards accommodate a range of development intensities, from lower-density industrial and logistics uses to potential future manufacturing or mixed employment.
- Continue to coordinate infrastructure planning with land use policy and economic development strategies, ensuring the City can respond to changing opportunities over time.

D. Economic Development Considerations for Implementation

The West Railroad area presents a significant opportunity but also notable development challenges, including fragmented ownership, limited access, and the need for major infrastructure investments.

Given these constraints, in order to achieve the type of high-quality development and return on investment envisioned, the City will need to take a leading role in shaping conditions for successful, market-ready employment growth.

The focus should be on creating a foundation of certainty, coordination, and readiness that can attract private investment over time. Strategies that should be considered include:

1. Facilitate Land Coordination and Aggregation

- Facilitate land assembly through public acquisition, land swaps, or partnerships with property owners to create larger, development-ready sites.
- Establish a redevelopment or land bank entity (e.g., urban renewal agency, development commission) to manage and prepare sites strategically.
- Use development agreements or master planning to coordinate multiple owners under a unified infrastructure and design framework.

2. Invest in Infrastructure Readiness

- Invest early in critical infrastructure (water, sewer, stormwater, road access) to clear a path for private developers.
- Pursue cost-sharing, reimbursement, or horizontal development agreements to spread infrastructure costs over multiple benefiting properties.
- Seek state and regional funding sources such as Business Oregon's Industrial Site Readiness Program or Metro's planning and development grants that help cities create master plans for industrially zoned land within the UGB.

3. Support Regulatory Efficiency

- Complete environmental impact and infrastructure studies in advance to remove additional steps developers have to take and to make site development more attractive.

4. Explore Incentives and Investment Tools

- Explore creative funding tools such as grants, earmarks, forgivable loans, tax increment financing (TIF), Local Improvement District, etc., to fund infrastructure and site preparation.
- Utilize the WIN (Wilsonville Investment Now) program or other tax incentive programs to attract high-value employers.
- Consider public-private partnerships for catalytic projects (e.g., shared logistics facilities, innovation centers).

5. Establish Branding and Market Positioning

- When the path to urbanization of this area becomes clear, establish a clear identity/brand for the area.
- Market the area regionally as a strategic employment hub with multimodal freight access and sustainable design potential.
- Coordinate branding and recruitment with regional economic development partners such as Greater Portland Inc. and local Chambers of Commerce.

Next Steps

The list of considerations will continue to be refined through and following discussions with the Planning Commission and City Council during their April and May meetings, as well as through ongoing coordination with City staff, as the West Railroad Preferred Concept is further developed and integrated into the Basalt Creek Concept Plan. Additional meetings with the Planning Commission and City Council regarding the larger update to the Basalt Creek Concept Plan will occur in early summer. In addition to the transportation analysis completed in early 2026, the City is conducting additional site infrastructure planning (i.e., water and sewer) to better understand potential opportunities and constraints. The findings from that work will also be incorporated into the evaluation and refinement of the preferred concept and Basalt Creek Concept Plan update.