

# OLD BEND HISTORY “TIMBER TOWN LEGACIES AND CHALLENGES”

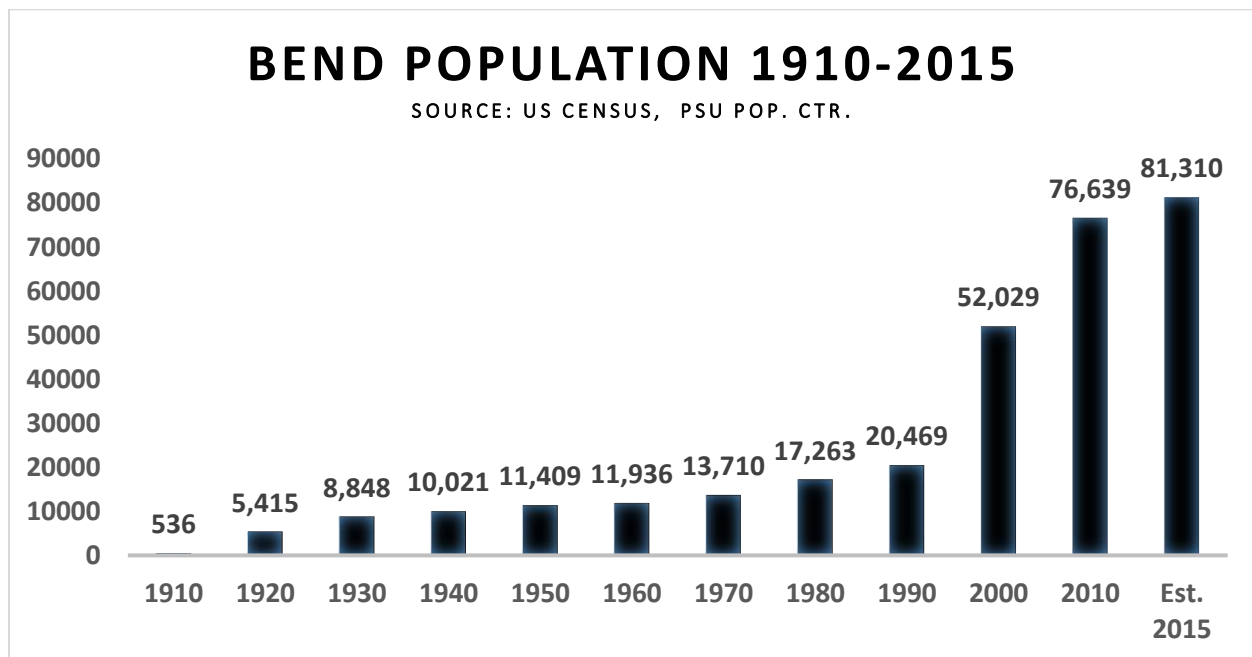
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## PART 1: EARLY SETTLEMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING (1813-1914)

### A. BEND IN THE RIVER

Bend today is the hub of Eastern Oregon. The Old Bend neighborhood occupies the historic, civic, economic, and residential heart of Bend, its original city center. Old Bend and its surrounding Central Bend Area grew up together as a colonial hub in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to become a close-knit mill community where workers and managers found family homes within an easy walk of Downtown and

Bend's two big lumber mills (Shevlin-Hixon and Brooks- Scanlon). Bend's recorded colonial history is relatively short, but its current residents are deeply engaged in its spectacular natural setting. Bend is the place where Central Oregon's mountains, forests, and desert all meet... at the big bends in the river.

The Deschutes River's long bends, meadows, and bluffs attracted Bend's town builders and two of the West's largest pine sawmills. Bend's Central Area is cradled between the river, Awbrey Butte, and Pilot Butte. The river, the two buttes, and flatlands create Bend's natural urban form. Here, the forested foothills of the East Cascades meet the edge of the high desert. Here, the bountiful upper river emerges out of the Cascade forests, meadows, and lakes. In Bend, the Deschutes River begins its steady descent (3,500 feet in 165 miles) through the Columbia Plateau, cutting one of Oregon's longest canyons.

Springs, lakes, and aquifers feed the upper Deschutes with steady runoff and groundwater, through layers of lava and ash. The historic river had a stable annual flow and highwater quality. Despite flow changes from 20<sup>th</sup> century reservoirs and irrigation, the upper Deschutes River is still one of Oregon's natural wonders and most reliable water sources. The river flows 252 miles from its source, Little Lava Lake, through a 10,500 square mile basin. (Deschutes River Conservancy, [Upper Deschutes River Background Paper](#), 2012). All of these natural facts were and are vital to Native Americans, to Euro-American settlers, and to today's Deschutes Basin residents.

## **B. NATIVE AMERICANS TO EURO-AMERICAN SETTLEMENT**

Recent discoveries east of Bend determine that this region's first inhabitants date back several millennia, nearly 16,000 years. These first residents lived southeast of Bend near large ice age lakes with abundant fish and wildlife and in the forests, meadows, and canyons of the Eastern Cascades.

The region now known as Central Oregon supported a vigorous plateau culture, based on a "seasonal round" of harvesting of fish, game, and plants. The "round" featured annual migrations of summers in the high meadows and winter camps in the sheltered canyons or near desert lakes. The Three Sisters, Newberry Crater, and Glass Butte each provided abundant sources of obsidian, valued for tools and hunting.

Since time immemorial, the Wana Łama (Warm Springs), Wasq'ú (Wasco) and Northern Paiute people have inhabited this area during various seasonal times. The Klamath Trail also ran north through this region to the great Celilo Falls trading grounds, which helped expand commerce between tribal nations. The Cayuse, Tenino, Molalla, Snake, and other native peoples also inhabited the Deschutes Basin.

Early Euro-American visits to the area were first recorded in the early 1800s. For most of Bend's first century (1813-1912), Euro-Americans seemed to follow Governor Tom McCall's famous advice: "Visit but don't stay." In 1813, members of the Pacific Fur Company, based in Astoria, passed through the area and inscribed a rock near the river (housed today at Deschutes Historical Museum). In the 1820s, trappers from the Hudson Bay Co., including Peter Skene Ogden, also worked in the Deschutes Basin. In the 1840s, the US Army followed the trappers, arriving in the Oregon country first to protect the Oregon Trail, second to map the country and assert territorial claims against England and Mexico, and third to relocate native peoples to reservations and protect miners and settlers along major.

Captain John Fremont's 1843 mapping expedition from The Dalles to California came close to Bend. The expedition hauled its celebrated 545 pound "lost" mountain howitzer cannon all the way, led by legendary guides Kit Carson and Billy Chinook.

Thanks to the daunting barriers of the Cascade Mountains and the high desert, the 19<sup>th</sup> century westward movement largely bypassed the region now called Bend, Oregon. The wandering Clark party

of fall 1851 was the first emigrant group to visit Bend. Seeking a “short cut” from the Oregon Trail to the Willamette Valley, they rested several days at the site of Bend’s Pioneer Park, before taking a long detour northwest to cross the Cascades by the Barlow Trail. The Bend region missed the original flood of 19<sup>th</sup> century emigrants who swarmed into Western Oregon, but not for long.

### **C. TOWN ORIGINS AND EARLY INDUSTRIES**

In 1877, John Todd’s “Farewell Bend Ranch” branded Bend’s future. Todd’s homestead, purchased for \$60 and two horses, spanned the river along the big S-curve just south of present Colorado Avenue. Over the course of 150 years, the Farewell Bend Ranch became the site of Bend’s major mills and today the Old Mill District.

Todd made his mark on the Deschutes Basin by building the 1860 toll bridge at Sherar’s Falls near Tygh Valley. Seeking greener pastures for his cattle, he built a working ranch at Farewell Bend to use the lush riverside meadows and the abundant open range country nearby. In 1881, a stockman named John Sisemore bought Todd’s ranch for \$1400, and in 1886 established the area’s post office at the ranch, which he called “Farewell Bend.” Later, the postal authorities shortened the name to simply “Bend.”

In 1892, John Sisemore created a Sisemore Road heading northwest to Sisters across the Central Westside to connect with the Cascade Wagon Road (Lent, 2015). By 1904, Sisemore also built the first public bridge across the Deschutes River near current-day Columbia Avenue to stimulate ranch business. Later, he donated the span to the County (then Crook County), while serving as the county roadmaster.

From there, Bend, Central Oregon and the surrounding areas were ready to boom and Oregon’s last frontier days were ending.

#### **1880-1900**

- Large scale ranching entered the region in the 1880s.
- Two major mid-western lumber companies (**Shevlin-Hixon & Brooks-Scanlon**) acquired huge ponderosa pine timber claims in the upper Deschutes Basin from 1898 onward. Shevlin Hixon blocked up 200,000 acres between Bend and the Klamath Reservation by 1915.
- The 1894 Carey Act promoted irrigation of desert public lands (transferred to states) through state-chartered irrigation projects. From 1901 to 1906, Oregon designated seven new reclamation projects on 194,000 acres of land near Bend.
- Bend’s dry hinterlands attracted a surge of homesteaders and farmers after 1900 to claim homesteads on the high desert, or to acquire irrigated farms.

#### **1900-1916**

- 1905 - Minnesota developer Alexander Drake platted the Bend townsite (today’s Downtown) in 1902 and the City incorporated in 1905. Bend grew as a high desert service center.
- By 1910, the City’s 536 residents enjoyed new phone, water, and electric systems.
- 1911 - Soon, Bend challenged its older County seat, Prineville. In 1911 Bend became the railroad terminus of the Oregon Trunk Line from the Columbia, and then in 1916, the county seat of the new Deschutes County.
- New railroad from the Columbia reached Bend through the rugged lower Deschutes canyon, with a promise to change everything, bringing a new wave of emigrants and major industries to one of Oregon’s last frontiers.

In the early 1900s, the town of Bend, especially Bond Street, had a reputation as a rowdy frontier village. Bend's first doctor, Urling Coe, summed it up well in 1905:

*"Freighters, stockmen, buckaroos, sheepherders, timber cruisers, gamblers, and transients who had been attracted to the town by the boom, thronged the bars or played at gambling games, and the stores were doing a rushing business. The stores remained open in the evenings, and the saloons remained open all night and all day Sunday, and many of the laborers from the construction camps spent the weekends in town, drinking, gambling, carousing, and fighting."* (Urling Coe, Frontier Doctor, 1940, p. 3)

#### **D. EARLY CENTRAL TOWN DEVELOPMENT**

Before it developed as a neighborhood and Mill housing quarter, Old Bend was the home of several pioneer industries, which provided lumber, bricks, cut stone, and power for a growing town. Brick and stone became popular for downtown buildings after original tight-packed wooden buildings suffered a series of catastrophic fires.

- The **Bend Company** sawmill (1910-15), on the river near today's Columbia Park, provided lumber for building Bend's new neighborhoods and for the two mega-mills until it burned in 1915. (Deschutes Historical Society, Bend, Images of America, 2009, p. 41, 46)
- A stone quarry on the river south of the Bend Company mill supplied distinct pink lava tuff rock for numerous local buildings, including Reid School and the Oregon Trunk Depot (now Art Station). This quarry supplied pink rock while others nearby supplied black and brown rock. (Deschutes Historical Society, p 20)
- **Bend Brick and Lumber** (1909-1920s) located in rich clay deposits about three miles west of town along today's Shevlin Park Road supplied fireproof building materials for downtown Bend and surrounding towns. Its brick makers produced an astounding 40,000 bricks a day by 1916.
- **Bend Water Light and Power** built the Newport Ave Dam and powerhouse in 1910. This impoundment created the iconic Mirror Pond, which soon became a popular canoe spot for residents. (Deschutes Historical Society, p. 35)

#### **E. BOOM AND BUST MILL DEVELOPMENT**

In 1915, the frontier village became a timber boomtown when two giant Great Lakes timber firms announced plans to build the world's largest pine mills along the Deschutes River south of downtown. When the **Shevlin-Hixon Mill** opened west of the river in 1916, the Bend Bulletin proclaimed, "the dream, Bend, the sawmill and lumbering center of Central Oregon, is now an actuality" (Bulletin, March 22, 1916). Soon after, **Brooks-Scanlon** (also from Minnesota) opened its mill on the east bank of the river.

Transcontinental railroads reached northern Oregon in the 1880s through the Columbia Gorge, first the Union Pacific from Utah and then the Great Northern from Minnesota in 1905. As Great Lakes timber (1/3 of the national supply) depleted at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, major midwest operators looked for new horizons in the Pacific Northwest. The earliest Northwest mills were built along navigable rivers or harbors west of the Cascades, but the new railroads opened vast timberlands in the Northwest interior. (Gregory p. 17). The Deschutes Basin held an astounding 16 billion board feet of fine pine timber plus 10 billion more board feet more in the Ochocos (Brogan p. 246).

Under the 1878 Timber and Stone Act, individuals could claim 160-acre tracts of public land at \$2.50/acre. In Central Oregon, swarms of speculators and Great Lakes lumbermen rushed to hire “dummy” claimants who bought thousands of public acres. In 1893, President Cleveland tried to slow down this timber rush by creating the Cascade Range Forest Reserve west of the Deschutes on the west slopes of the Cascades. Then President Teddy Roosevelt withdrew the Deschutes public forestlands from claims in 1903 and created the Deschutes National Forest in 1908 (Gregory p 17).

By 1900, branch railroads to Central Oregon reached only 69 miles south of the Columbia. They ended at Shaniko, the sheep emporium of northern Oregon. That was soon to change. Rival railroad moguls E.H. Harriman of the Union Pacific and James J. Hill (aka “Empire Builder”) of the Great Northern/Oregon Trunk launched their last railroad war up the lower Deschutes Canyon to Bend. Hill, who had close relations with Minnesota timber interests, drove the golden spike in Bend on Railroad Day, October 5, 1911 (Gregory, p 18-19; Brogan, p 231-243).

In the decade before, the Oregon Trunk Line reached Bend, a cadre of Great Lakes timber firms consolidated huge tracts near Bend ( S.O Johnson, F.W. Gilchrist, J.J. Scanlon). In 1916, Shevlin-Hixon had the head start, as the largest regional timber holder with 216,000 acres from Bend to the Klamath Indian Reservation (Gregory, p 21).

### **Shevlin-Hixon’s Game of the Century**

Tom Shevlin of Yale (Class of 1906) kicked off the Game of the Century in the forests of Central Oregon and in Central Bend. Tom was the “flashy” captain of Yale’s undefeated 1905 football team, four-time All American, a French racing car enthusiast, and even coached Yale’s 1915 football team. Tom once scandalized the proper young women of Smith College by driving his auto "at a furious pace" up and down past the dormitories as women "waved responsively to the reckless autoing". The Washington Post commented in 1905 "Whether Capt. Tom Shevlin can be induced to come back to act as head coach is not sure. He has planned to go into the lumber business in the West, but strong pressure will be brought to bear to induce him to return to Yale as coach."

### **Two Minnesota Lumber Barons**

Tom the lumber heir spent six months after graduation “cruising” timber in Central Oregon. He became the head of Shevlin-Hixon in 1912 and returned to Bend in 1915 to oversee plans for the big mill. Tom died of pneumonia in December 1915 at age 32, three months before the Shevlin-Hixon mill opened. Tom never got to live in the elegant company managers home on NW Congress (McCann Home). In 1920 Shevlin-Hixon donated 652 acres of forested Tumalo Creek Canyon as Shevlin Park, Bend’s first park, in honor of Tom (Lent, 2015).

Meanwhile, on the east bank of the river, the Brooks-Scanlon mill (another Minnesota transplant) also opened in 1916. These two giant mills produced 10 billion board feet of lumber in the 34 years from 1916-1950 (Brogan, p 255). Each company employed 1,500 people (at peak) and in 1944 produced together 250 million board feet. They were Bend’s biggest employers over six decades, producing high-grade pine lumber for the entire nation (Old Mill Historic Sign #1).

### **Grand Hotels**

Bend's Pilot Butte Inn (1917-1973), a grand, rustic, railroad hotel at the east end of the Newport Bridge, followed the mills. The Inn may have been inspired by Great Northern's classic Glacier Park lodges, which were developed by James J. Hill's son Louis in the same era. Pilot Butte Inn served generations of Central Oregon travelers and businesses with high style.

### **A Mill Worker's Paradise**

Much of Shevlin-Hixon's workforce came from three sources: Former homesteaders who gave up on farming in the high desert, Lake States emigrants often of Scandinavian heritage who were skilled timber and mill workers, and Eastern European immigrant railroad workers. Many were attracted to Shevlin's rail logging camps (Gregory p32-38). Initial mill development in 1915 included the shared mill pond upstream of the current Colorado Bridge.

By 1928, Shevlin-Hixon's massive complex stretched for over a mile along the river, log pond and rail spurs. It included three logways feeding a triple sawmill from the pond, two huge drying kilns (500-700 feet long), two planing mills, two drying sheds, and a box factory. A half mile of open-air lumber stacks 20-30 feet high surrounded the west side of the mill. The mill site included a logging railroad roundtable, and internal rail lines that connected shipping docks, lumber stacks, and tall log decks (piles) that lined the log pond, as far south as today's Bill Healy Bridge (Sanborn Maps 1928). Besides the railroad trestle crossing, there was a private pedestrian/vehicle bridge at the north end of the two mills, where the current Colorado Bridge is today.

In its early years, Shevlin-Hixon depended on an expanding web of rails and logging camps, connected to the mill from as much as 78 miles south from Wanoga Butte to the Paulina Mountains to La Pine and Chemult. The camps were company towns on rails of 150-700 people, who moved with the logging. The camps provided portable cabins and amenities for workers and families, including dining halls, bathhouses, schools, stores, theaters, and recreation.

Shevlin-Hixon took a "paternalistic interest" in its camps and workers (Gregory, p 64-117). The company cooperated with Brooks-Scanlon to establish a 27-bed full-service Lumberman's Hospital in 1919 on the east river bluff (today 15 SW Colorado Avenue) just south of the railroad trestle. Employees paid \$1.25 a month for health services there. The hospital closed in 1955 (Lumbermen's Hospital, Waymarking.com; Bend Bulletin 10-11-1976).

At the mill, Shevlin-Hixon set high safety standards and generous benefits. Thomas McCann, first manager 1916-25, "established a very caring climate" for the welfare and safety of Shevlin employees (McCann house, National Register Nomination). The company also supported home ownership for workers to ensure a stable workforce by subsidizing building materials and home sites near the mill (including a model home tract on NW Delaware). Shevlin-Hixon sponsored a popular community band and an annual picnic in the forest, to which all Bend residents were welcome (McCann house, National Register Nomination). The Mill's last manager, Hardy Myers (1944-50) raised his son Hardy Myers Jr. to become Oregon's Speaker of the House and Attorney General (McCann house, National Register Nomination). Shevlin-Hixon's lasting impact on Bend was to provide secure and family-supportive employment for large numbers of residents from 1915-1950. Consequently, the mill kept a stable workforce without the labor unrest that was common in the industry in the same period (Gregory, p. 107).

## **The End of Bend's Big Mill Era**

Railroad logging and the large-scale milling was so productive that both Brooks Scanlon and Shevlin Hixon were cutting more than they could grow by the 1930s. In the late 1940s, railroad logging was phasing out and both mills were converting to truck logging. Both companies agreed to merge in 1950 and close the Shevlin- Hixon Mill. This closure was a major shock to several generations of mill families and to Bend's economy.

Brooks-Scanlon maintained operations through 1980 when they sold their mill to Diamond Industries, which closed the mill in 1994 (Brogan; Gregory). The best artifacts of the mill era can be found close by: In the hundreds of modest worker homes in the River West and Old Bend neighborhoods, in the elegant McCann company manager's home on NW Congress, in REI's Brooks-Scanlon Mill B Powerhouse, and the concrete pads of old log decks along the river, north of the Bill Healy Bridge.

The mills and log pond blocked public access to the river south of Downtown for 80 years, but they supported a prosperous community. Today, the 250-acre Old Mill District, developed by William Smith Properties, welcomes the public to high quality shopping and services, to the Les Schwab Amphitheater, and to river parks and trails on both sides. This has given Bend a prosperous new public riverfront and a vibrant community landscape on what was once Farewell Bend Ranch.

## **F. CENTRAL BEND NEIGHBORHOODS ARE BORN**

Between 1910 and 1920, the city grew by a stupendous 910% from 536 to 5,414 residents. Part of Bend's first housing boom was fueled by regional dreams of railroad, lumber mill, and irrigation development. Most subdivisions featured small lots around 5,000 square feet, which began to fill with modest cottages and craftsman-style bungalows.

The proximity and economic security of the mills reinforced a stable community character for decades. Outside the central historic core, there was little residential expansion west of the river until the 1970s. Millworkers and their employers were town builders together. The community of millworker families, local businesses, and major industry were interdependent for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as long as the mills lasted. Bend's walkable core neighborhoods and downtown area created an early 20<sup>th</sup> century "urban village," which remains highly valued by residents, businesses, and visitors today. Enduring characteristics of Old Bend's "urban village" include:

- Small lots with mill worker cottages and larger bungalows, local parks, businesses, and services that all create a highly walkable, compact community scale
- A grid street system that bends with the river
- A balanced network of wide and skinny streets with service alleys for parking and utilities
- Neighborhood schools and churches within walking distance on both sides of the river

## **PART 2: A MODEL TIMBER TOWN NEIGHBORHOOD (1915-1994)**

### **A. DESCHUTE RIVER IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

Since early Euro-American settlement, the river has been the city's environmental and economic lifeblood. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the river provided good jobs at the mills, reliable irrigation for local farms, and hydropower. Like many other Oregon river towns (Portland, Salem, Oregon City, The Dalles), industry, utilities, railroads, and commerce dominated much of Bend's riverfront. Unlike most

towns of this era, Bend also created iconic riverfront parks and desirable neighborhoods close to downtown on both sides of the river.

Named the “Rivière des Chutes” (River of the Falls) by French fur traders, the Deschutes has also been known to Euro-Americans as the “Peculiar River” because its unique volcanic geology and groundwater-fed springs ensured a steady flow of water throughout the seasons (Upper Deschutes River p 22). At the turn of the 20th century, the Deschutes River and its tributaries “supported abundant aquatic life and indigenous fish populations.” Early settlers enjoyed the “excellent populations of redband trout and bull trout,” and fish fries or barbecues were popular activities enjoyed by local residents for many years.

Pioneer rancher Frances Day Stearns described the Deschutes in 1887 as “literally full of fish of all sizes. We could stand on the log and throw fish into the frying pan” (Upper Deschutes River p 23-24). As Bend’s population grew, the river transitioned from a magnificent natural body of water to a working river that provided water for agriculture and helped with mill operations.

In 1915, the two mills built a milldam immediately downstream from today’s Colorado Avenue Bridge “to control flow and raise the pool elevation to form a mill pond for log storage and sorting for one of the largest pine lumber mill operations in the U.S.” (Colorado Safe Passage document). After 1900, agriculture drastically altered the river’s flows, as major irrigation projects developed north of Bend. Three large reservoirs were built on the Upper Deschutes between 1922 and 1949. Crane Prairie Reservoir, Crescent Lake, and Wickiup Reservoir can store water during the winter so that it is available for irrigation during the summer (Upper Deschutes River p 23). Agriculture flourished with the ability to control the river’s flows, but these changes have taken a toll on the river’s ecosystem, riparian areas, and aesthetic qualities (Upper Deschutes River).

As mill operations slowed after 1950 and Bend transitioned from a timber town to a tourist town, the role of the river changed once again. The river began to grow in popularity as a site for recreation as residents and visitors alike embraced the many opportunities for outdoor recreation in the heart of the city.

## **B. BRIDGING BEND**

Bend’s 20<sup>th</sup> century bridges bonded its riverfront neighborhoods, the major mills, and downtown. The old Sisemore Bridge (1894) crossed south of downtown in the Farewell Bend Ranch (Old Mill District). In the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Tumalo Avenue wagon bridge also connected a growing town to early lumber, rock, and brick works and undeveloped hinterlands west of the river.

In 1915, the massive Oregon Trunk Railway trestle connected the Shevlin-Hixon and Brooks-Scanlon mills to a rail spur on Arizona Avenue and to the Oregon Trunk mainline. This timber-frame trestle spanned 880 feet from bluff to bluff and 35 feet above the river (at the south end of today’s Miller’s Landing Park), until it was removed in 1991. The spur also provided access for both mills to extensive timberlands and logging railroads on both sides of the river. A private mill-to-mill bridge crossed just upstream of millpond dam near today’s Colorado Avenue.

Five new public bridges in Central Bend (including Tumalo) soon provided easy access for mill workers, shoppers, students, river and park users, and to the Deschutes National Forest. By 1917, the Newport and Portland Avenue bridges tied the booming downtown and Central Westside neighborhoods. Two pedestrian bridges at Gilchrist and Nashville Avenues enhanced the river crossings even further. Two



later bridges, Colorado Ave (1983) and Reed Market/Bill Healy (2003), crossed southwest of Central Bend to connect growing industrial, recreational, and residential areas along Century Drive and Mt Washington Blvd.

### **C. PARKS FOLLOW THE RIVER**

Bend's earliest riverside parks form the core of today's Deschutes River Trail and greenway, and over time, inspired the City of Bend to develop a complete river greenway and trail system. By 2012, the Deschutes River Trail connected 15.1 miles of greenway.

#### **1851-1922 Pioneer Park (5.1 acres)**

Bend's first informal park, Pioneer Park (located east of today's Portland Avenue Bridge) hosted many early emigrant parties as a river crossing and rest stop for wagon trains. It became a city park in the 1920s, with a land donation from Mrs. Carl Erickson. Pioneer Park initially hosted Bend's Municipal Auto Camp and its first public swimming pool/tank (Bend PRD, 40 years; Lent, Deschutes Co Place Names).

#### **1910 Mirror Pond**

Bend's most iconic cultural landscape, Mirror Pond, has never been an official park. The Bend Water, Light, and Power Co. created the pond in 1910 along with the Newport Ave. power dam (now owned by Pacific Power). The pond has been a favorite of sightseers, paddlers, picnickers, strollers, and riverfront homes ever since. Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century irrigation changed upstream river flow from stable to variable, leading to more upstream erosion and downstream siltation of the pond. Mirror Pond's future depends on resolving questions about dam removal or rehab and about river or pond restoration.

#### **1920 Shevlin Park (603 acres)**

Shevlin-Hixon Company donated three and a half miles of forested Tumalo Creek canyon as a city park in honor of Tom Shevlin, their late President and Bend mill founder (Bend PRD, 40 years; Lent, Deschutes Co. Place Names). By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, this treasured park and canyon connected an extensive trail system and formed a permanent greenbelt for Bend's westward urban growth.

#### **1921 Drake Park (17.1 acres)**

Drake Park is named after original city developer Alexander Drake. In 1921, the Women's Civic League led a successful campaign to save the park site from proposed industrial or residential development, when the city bought the land. Drake Park became Bend's central park in the 1920s, covering the entire east shore of Mirror Pond with landscaped lawns, trails, viewpoints, gazebos, and swimming and boating access.

#### **1924 Harmon Park (3.7 acres)**

On the west shore of Deschutes River across from Drake Park is Harmon Park, donated by national playground benefactor William Harmon and Bend Kiwanis (Harmon Playgrounds are in 32 states). The Nashville Avenue footbridge connects Harmon and Drake Parks. From 1933 to 1965, Harmon and Drake Parks hosted Bend's popular Water Pageant, which featured giant floats, some lighted, a queen and princesses, and real swans.

#### **1945 Pageant Park (0.6 acres)**

The tiny .6-acre Pageant Park was the staging area for floats, just north of Harmon Park. Sadly, the Water Pageant became a victim of its own success in the 1960s when large crowds (up to 10,000 people) overwhelmed the parks and the city's capacity to manage visitors (Bend PRD, 40 years; Lent, Deschutes Co Place Names).

## **D: HOUSING AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT**

Shortly before residents voted to become a city in 1904, city founders laid out a grand vision for a thriving community. The plan for Bend was a sprawling downtown. The townsite plan included grand neighborhoods for the upper social strata and functional areas for the city's blue-collar workers.

The Delaware Avenue corridor came early. William Staats platted this area in 1902, as a part of the separate 1902 Deschutes townsite, but homes did not develop here for a decade. The Park Addition, platted in 1910 (next to future Drake Park), is interesting from the standpoint of being a diverse socio-economic cross-section of Bend. It starts in the high-end, upscale neighborhoods around Drake Park: the streets of Riverside, State, Kansas, and Congress, with homes of the upper mill management and business professionals. As subdivisions meander south towards the Deschutes River and cross over Tumalo Avenue, the social make-up changes. The mix becomes more blue-collar, working-class. Both the Deschutes and Park addition subdivisions were well established when the mills came into town in 1915.

In preparation for the many newcomers that would surely come with the arrival of the mills, the Mill addition was platted in 1915. Staats Addition, which is the extension of the Deschutes, in 1916 and so was Highland Addition next to Shevlin-Hixon on the west side of the river (today known as Central Westside Neighborhood). These subdivisions came to house a large number of millworkers, laborers, and office workers.

The neighborhoods surrounding Brooks-Scanlon and Shevlin-Hixon mills were traditional blue-collar neighborhoods. In typical northern European fashion, most workers lived in walking-distance from where the mills. Based on interviews with many mill worker children, very few workers had access to a car (Tor Hanson, Whiskey Flat History Project, 2007-present). Walking was a way of life.

Tom Stenkamp, who grew up on Gilchrist Avenue, remembers seeing the long trail of millworkers on their way to work in the morning. On snowy days, he could see the tracks in the snow from work boots forming a path that lead down towards the mills (Whiskey Flat History Project, Interview with Tom Stenkamp; grew up on Gilchrist Avenue, February 2, 2008). In these predominantly blue-collar neighborhoods, a large group of the workers came from Europe. They were either first generation immigrants or a second generation whose parents had immigrated to the United States and come to work in the mill industry in the Midwest. When Shevlin-Hixon and Brooks-Scanlon transferred their mills to Bend, the European immigrants tagged along for the work.

The mills were hiring people that were used to hard work, a lot of noise, and a lot of hot and cold weather. They were not the gentlest of people. They were ready for hard work and tough conditions. At the same time, they were very community-minded and cared deeply about their neighborhood and their town (Whiskey Flat History Project, Interview with Pat Kliewer; former local historic preservation planner, October 11, 2007). The mill owners soon became acutely aware that bachelors and free-agent

workers were not as reliable as family men. The “damn the torpedoes” attitude exhibited by single workers was not conducive to a reliable work force.

In order to stabilize the work force, both mills purchased tracts of land in the newly established blue-collar worker neighborhoods, including Delaware Avenue, and offered mill workers favorable loans to buy lots. They also supplied lumber from the mills at a low cost to encourage the workers to build homes. Both mills produced employee newsletters (*Shevlin-Hixon Equalizer* and *Brooks-Scanlon Pine Echoes*). The newsletters heralded homeownership throughout and prominently featured new homeowners (Shevlin-Hixon Equalizer; April 1920, page 10: List of Shevlin-Hixon employees (sic) owning their own homes). The mill workers sometimes fashioned their own homes in a style described as “Arts & Crafts” or “early craftsman style.” The two styles developed during the early part of the century and influenced early Bend development. There are examples of a few Sears catalogue kit homes in Bend, and N.P. Smith Hardware store also offered up home plans. But by in large, everything was stick-built according to the owner’s own imagination.

Families also created do-it-yourself mill housing from recycled logging camp cabins. According to persistent local lore, home construction in the neighborhoods around the mills utilized so-called “lunch box specials” or “lunch box homes.” Rumors claim that mill employees smuggled out scrap wood from the mills in their oversized lunch boxes to build their homes. This is unlikely.

In a small town, everybody knew everybody. The area was a true blue-collar neighborhood (Whiskey Flat History Project, Interview with Denis Berrigan, long-time Bendite, February 10, 2008). Housewives constantly battled the red lava dust that blew into their homes from the unpaved neighborhood streets. The sawdust from the mills and black smoke from the mill chimneys made laundry day a challenge when the clean clothes on the clothesline were blackened by soot or sawdust (Tor Hanson, Whiskey Flat History Project, 2007-present). A typical Sunday morning in Bend in the early 1920s underscores the impact of the large Scandinavian population: Lutheran churches all over Bend held the early service in Swedish or Norwegian while they held later church services in English (Bend Bulletin; April 11, 1924: Services in the Scandinavian languages at the Lutheran Church).

Pride of ownership manifested itself in well-cared-for gardens. During the Prohibition, homeowners planted fruit trees in the neighborhoods to make hard cider. Moving into the Depression years, homeowners often had a plot for vegetables. Moreover, when World War II food rationing took effect, the vegetable gardens became “Victory Gardens.” Pride of the community also took more organized forms. Under the watchful eye of Fire Chief Tom Carlon, the early spring “Cleanup Week” was instituted in the early 1920s (Bend Bulletin; March 28, 1924, page 1: Bend cleanup to be started by committee). And “Fire Prevention Week” followed suit in late fall the following year (Bend Bulletin; October 12, 1925, page 4: Fire prevention week is finished).

## **E. NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS AND A WALKABLE COMMUNITY**

Central Bend is one of Bend’s most walkable communities, then and now. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Reid School, Kenwood, St Francis, Thompson (Amity Creek) and Kingston schools, and old Bend High were primary destinations in a closely connected, walkable community. Central Bend was a natural neighborhood, with its river, downtown connections, alleys, parks, and schools. It was a lively place for generations of “free range” kids to explore. As long as adults did not catch them, kids could find risky adventures near the river. These included fishing from the Shevlin-Hixon railroad trestle, walking across

the mill log pond, and floating the open-air irrigation flume at First Street Rapids. Most children walked to their neighborhood schools and parents walked to work, church, downtown and neighborhood services.

### **Reid School (1914-1976)**

Reid School on Wall St at Idaho welcomed 241 students (grades 1-12) in 1914 to Bend's first "modern" school. It boasted 10 classrooms, the latest fire protection, electric clocks, central heating, and indoor plumbing. The Bend Bulletin (9-16-1914) hailed the school as "a model of scientific school planning." It served the wave of new families that were settling the River West, Old Bend, Drake Park and nearby areas. This three-story school opened just before the massive Shevlin-Hixon and Brooks-Scanlon mills began construction nearby. It set a high standard for Bend education and architecture with its fancy rockwork and Richardsonian Romanesque style. Reid School like many Bend buildings of this era has decorative lava tuff facing, from quarries near current Columbia Park. Reid School honors Bend's first school Principal Ruth Reid (Overturf), whose family is also recognized in the Westside's Overturf Butte. Today Reid School houses the Deschutes Historical Museum (Wikipedia, Reid School; Deschutes Co. CDD, p 8-19).

### **Kenwood School 1919 (Highland Magnet School)**

Kenwood was Bend's first neighborhood school west of the river. It served booming Central Bend, which was then filling with millworker cottages and families. Bend's premier local architect Hugh Thompson designed this one-story brick Colonial Revival building with three elementary classrooms and a U-shaped courtyard. Thompson was a local talent and graduate of Bend schools and the University of Oregon.

### **Bend High School (1925-1956)**

Bend's 1925 High School, also designed by Hugh Thompson, is a commanding two-story brick and stone structure. It served the entire city and surrounding areas (Today Bend has four high schools). This classic Beaux Arts Revival building is an elegant anchor for Bend's compact early 20<sup>th</sup> century civic center. Within three blocks of the high school, you could find the library, Troy Field, Drake Park, the Bend Amateur Athletic Club, central post office/federal building, city offices, and the Reid, St Francis, and Thompson elementary schools. The building served as Bend's High School until 1956, then as a Junior High until 1979, then as Bend La Pine school district offices (Bend High, National Register Nomination).

### **St Francis School (1936-2000)**

St Francis School also served many generations of students from the Central Westside. The legendary Father Luke from County Cork, Ireland, established the St Francis Parish in Bend in 1910. He travelled hundreds of miles on horseback or foot to reach remote high desert parishioners, many of whom were immigrant shepherders. By 1936, Father Luke had built the groundwork for St Francis School, Central Oregon's first parochial school, grades 1-8 with 145 students. Thanks to effective teachers from the Sisters of Holy Names, the school more than doubled in size by the 1960s. It relocated to NE Bend in 2000, giving its name to the popular McMenemy's downtown resort (McMenamins.com, [A Lesson in St Francis History](#)).

### **Amity Creek Magnet School (originally Thompson) 1948**

Amity Creek Magnet School, originally Thompson, on Wall St at Georgia, also served Central Bend. In 2000, it became a magnet school for “child-centered” education, with 175 K-5 students today, selected by lottery from around the city.

## **F. GROWTH & SEWERS**

Bend’s faulty sewer system had been a public concern as early as 1912. Mayor George Palmer Putnam (1912-13), the crusading 24-year Bulletin editor, led efforts to improve sewers, ban fireworks, and to prevent disastrous downtown fires. Mayor Putnam “took the heat” when he fought a blaze that destroyed Linster’s Opera House on Wall St., while standing on the roof of an adjacent gasoline storage shed. Putnam had more success when voters supported a \$60,000 sewer system bond (James Crowell, *Frontier Publisher*, p 109-110).

Bend grew rapidly in the 1920s by 63% (from 5,415 to 8,848 residents in 1930) then modestly (5-15% per decade) between 1930 and 1970 (from 8,848 to 13,710 residents).

With growing awareness of Central Oregon’s attractions in the 1970s, Bend’s population leaped by 26% (up to 17,236 in 1980), raising old concerns about city’s faulty sewer system, coupled with growing environmental awareness. A small municipal wastewater treatment plant, located on the east side of town, only served a fraction of the city. Most residences disposed of their household wastewater into drill hole bored down into the lava bedrock. The concern was that raw sewage would eventually contaminate the clean aquifer below ground (Interview with Jack Wanichek, by Dave Howe).

In the early 1970s, the new federal Environmental Protection Agency became involved and mandated a comprehensive sewer system for all of Bend. Work began in 1978. The City dynamited most city streets to install sewer pipe and connected all the houses in the city to the system by 1981. Bend was essentially not going to grow in any direction unless the City upgraded the sewer system to Federal standards. With the completion of the system, growth spread in all directions in the 1980’s and 1990s (Interview with Jack Wanichek).

With this renewed growth came more people in the areas west of town, where there was still an abundance of wildland. As Bend’s appeal grew, the Westside foothills became a popular place to live. By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the City limits extended several miles further west, north, and south from the original Central mill neighborhoods.

## **G. WESTSIDE FIRES**

Living near the forest affords residents and visitors many opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities but also presents certain risks. Where people go, fires follow. As development in the wildland urban interface (WUI) increases, so has Bend’s proximity to wildfires. It is not surprising, then, that Bend’s West hills have been proximate to some of the area’s most disastrous wildfires.

### **Awbrey Butte Fires (1970s)**

Awbrey Butte, just north of Central Bend, has had its share of fires over the years. The Bend Fire Department responded to a good size fire that started near NW Newport and 14<sup>th</sup> in the early 1970s. The fire climbed the hill for about two blocks before it was stopped. There was a multi-acre fire on the Butte in 1968, and another smaller one in the early 1970s.

### **Overturf Butte Fire (1976)**

In the summer of 1976, Overturf Butte, also just west the Central core, caught fire and burned several dozen acres. Both the US Forest Service and the Bend Fire Department responded to fight the fire. It was clear from listening to both parties that neither agency thought much of the other at the time. This fire was a wakeup call to the fire response agencies that wildfire was a clear and imminent risk to the City's west side (Dave Howe, Battalion Chief, Bend Fire, Et. Seq.).

### **Awbrey Hall Fire (1990)**

The most devastating fire in Oregon in 50 years erupted in the ponderosa forests six miles southwest of Bend in August of 1990. The Awbrey Hall fire quickly grew to 3,000 acres overnight. The fire came within a mile of Central Oregon Community College to the North and the Inn of the Seventh Mountain to the South. It burned at least 28 homes and caused nearly 3,000 people to evacuate. This fire brought the community to the realization that wildfire was an annual community risk, and it brought all the local fire response agencies together to build an enduring model of interagency cooperation (<http://www.bendfirehistory.org>).

## **H. BUSINESS & SERVICES DEVELOPMENT**

As Central Westside neighborhoods developed in the teens and twenties, most residents shopped at downtown and neighborhood businesses

When the Shevlin-Hixon mill closed in 1950, it left a huge vacant tract between Century Drive and the river. Named by pioneer Judge H.C. Ellis, Century Drive (100-mile loop), was the main route from Bend to the Deschutes National Forest, the Cascade Lakes, and a new Mt Bachelor ski area (created in 1958). In town, the Century Drive, including Galveston and 14th, became the primary recreation route from Bend/US 97 to the National Forest.

In the 1980s, Brooks Resources began to redevelop the old Shevlin-Hixon mill site as the Shevlin Center business and industrial park, between 14<sup>th</sup> and the river south of Albany. In 1982, Colorado Avenue crossed the river on a new bridge (the current one) and connected to Century Drive. Shevlin Center today hosts professional office buildings, medical services, manufacturing, regional entertainment, river parks, and trails.

## **PART 3: 21ST CENTURY CHANGES CHALLENGES AND RENEWAL (1995-2015)**

### **A. INDUSTRY TO PLAYGROUND**

In 2014 travel writer William Sullivan walked through the Old Mill District and observed: "The Deschutes River has always been the heart of Bend. Sawmills, dams, and irrigation diversions have damaged that treasure for most of a century. In the Old Mill District, the city has begun to return to its native river."

As the activities change, that make the heart of Bend beat, so does how the river is used and how it is protected. The Deschutes River has been Bend's "front yard" for over a century and today it is the centerpiece of a livable community. The 250-acre Old Mill District by William Smith Properties highlights the river's beauty as one of Bend's main attractions. Bend Parks & Recreation provides

continuous river access and people flock to the river and its banks to bike, run, walk, float, kayak, paddleboard, right in the heart of Bend. An emerging challenge is to manage river users so that growing popularity does not overwhelm this unique resource, as did the former Bend Water Pageant. Restoring the river's flows for wildlife as well as recreation is a growing interest.

### **B. BOOM TO BUST & BACK TO BOOM**

Bend has seen significant development since 1995. Downtown and the Old Mill District, with the Old Bend Neighborhood in between, comprise a livelier, larger city center. West of the central core is Northwest Crossing, a new mixed-use community of almost 500 acres. Since 1999 Northwest Crossing has created a nationally acclaimed "traditional neighborhood development" that includes a complementary mix of homes, schools, parks, shops, and services that creates a new model for Bend neighborhoods.

With population growth, services and infrastructure are still catching up. In the 1990s, with internal growth and large annexations (nearly equal contributors) Bend's population skyrocketed by 154%, from 20,469 in 1990 to 52,029 in 2000 (Bend General Plan, Chap 4, p3, 2005). The 1990s were Bend's biggest growth decade since the mill. In the 2010s Bend is one of the top growing metro areas once again, growing to 99,178 population by 2020.

### **C. HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD RENEWAL**

Today, the neighborhoods around the former mill sites are still buzzing with activities, but it's a different rhythm. The mills are long gone, and morning rush hour is a drive on the Parkway, not on foot along dusty roads to work at the mills. The Old Bend neighborhood has changed too. Back then, "Everybody knew everybody," says Dennis Berrigan, longtime Bendite. And unlike today, the neighborhood did not have the best reputation. Berrigan recalls, "If people considered an area as being a slum in Bend, the flats was it. The area was a true blue-collar neighborhood and even though it produced schoolteachers, a Fulbright scholar, newspaper editors, and other well-educated people, it was still thought of as Bend's poor neighborhood" (Whiskey Flat History Project, Interview with Denis Berrigan, February 10, 2008).

The deflated values of the old mill homes set up the mill neighborhoods for great changes in the late 1990s. The rumor around town was that Bend's Westside was "the" place to scoop up great investment properties. If there's any indication that things changed on Bend's Westside, home prices are a clear sign. The Roses bought their home on Riverfront in 1963 for \$7,500. It sold for \$725,000 in 2005. The Great Recession was one of many low points in the history of the former mill neighborhoods. As the recession turned for the better, the area started picking itself up again.

The rhythm of Bend's oldest blue-collar neighborhoods is slowly changing again. With an abundance of small neighborhood shops and brewpubs, the Central Bend area is once more considered "the" place to be. Older dilapidated homes are being restored and brand-new homes are going up too. In recent years, Old Bend and River West became popular places to convert single-family homes to short-term or vacation rentals.

In 2015, The City Council responded to community concerns by setting short-term rental density limits, which put much of River West off limits to more conversions. As of late 2015, around 600 homes citywide were short-term rentals, with the City's highest concentrations in the River West and Old Bend neighborhoods (nearly 2/3 the city total).

From an affordable mill worker neighborhood, Bend's older core is becoming a trendy urban professional neighborhood, due in part to the explosive rise in home prices since 1995. Old mill housing areas are seeing some compatible infill and some that does not fit in. The quaint neighborhoods are slowly changing to places with larger homes that may have less cultural distinction compared to the simple original homes. Redevelopment pressures may be creating more incentives to tear down Bend's modest early 20th century mill housing, than to restore it. This is happening in similar neighborhoods in other Northwest cities.

#### **D. HISTORIC PRESERVATION OPPORTUNITIES**

Some historic elements of Old Bend appear to have statewide or national significance beyond their importance to Bend: Millworker Housing in River West and Mirror Pond/River Parks. A number of tools are available to recognize and conserve the historic character of these areas. In each case, the first step to a historic (or conservation or design) district would be a detailed inventory of the historic area and an assessment of its significance to Bend, to Oregon, and to the Northwest. In a district, new development would meet guidelines (not necessarily stringent CC&Rs) to ensure that it fits in with an historic area's character and form.

##### **Millworker Housing Community**

Deschutes County has recognized some of this historic mill housing in a multi-property National Register nomination for Craftsman Bungalows in Deschutes County in 2000. One of Bend's mill housing neighborhoods is recognized in the Old Town (Old Bend) historic district.

##### **Mirror Pond Cultural Landscape and Associated River Parks**

The Mirror Pond cultural landscape is a distinctive early greenway among Northwest cities. The Bend Park District, adjacent neighborhoods, and Landmarks Commission could explore options in the National Register guidelines for "Cultural Landscapes." Cultural Landscapes include historic parks and open spaces, as well as gardens, industrial settings and planned communities. National Register Guidelines encourage rehabilitation and restoration of important cultural landscapes. Placing historic Bend parks and open spaces in the National Register could assure that modern improvements to these active spaces respect their original qualities.

#### **E. EDUCATION CHANGES**

##### **Highland-Kenwood and Westside Village-Kingston Magnet Schools**

In the 20th century, Kenwood and Kingston Schools each served as neighborhood elementary schools and community anchors. In the past two decades, they have become "magnet schools" with excellent specialized programs that serve citywide students. Kenwood and Kingston now serve areas well beyond original neighborhood boundaries. Including the growth of adjacent neighborhoods, the Central Westside has heavier commuting traffic than in the past, when most residents and students lived close to work and schools. While magnet schools are popular, some Oregon school districts are reinstating neighborhood schools, to serve a more compact, local student body and community, and to reduce transportation costs.

##### **Oregon State University Cascades**

OSU-Cascades expansion is a major development for Bend and Central Oregon which could create an education, cultural and economic hub for Eastern Oregon. In 2015, OSU launched a comprehensive Long Range Development Plan for the 130-acre campus. In surrounding residential areas, there are



concerns about student housing, neighborhood livability, parking and traffic management, and transit service. Many university towns use “town-gown” forums or “university districts” to address the common interests, opportunities, and concerns of the city, university, and surrounding neighborhoods.

## **F. BUSINESS & TRANSPORTATION CHANGES**

Bend’s timber town makeover is remarkable, sparked by the creative redevelopment of the Brooks-Scanlon and Shevlin-Hixon mill sites. Other former Oregon timber towns have been less fortunate and foresighted in dealing with daunting economic challenges and community distress. The family-wage timber jobs that stabilized Central Bend for most of the 20th century have given way to a more diverse, but less certain Bend economy.

In 2001, the Bend Parkway and the Les Schwab amphitheater opened, and Old Mill district (East of the River) was under full redevelopment. Colorado Avenue became a new regional route from the Parkway (US 97) to the National Forest, which bypassed Downtown, 14th, and Galveston. Regional recreation traffic shifted to the Colorado/Century Drive bypass, away from Galveston and 14th. The major Westside business streets (14th/Galveston, Newport) have evolved in the 21st century to become a lively business district for new and older Westside neighborhoods.

In 2006, Bend saw its first fixed route transit service since the 1950s. In 2015, Cascades East Transit ramped up citywide services by 30% and made route improvements in the Central area to serve growing neighborhoods and to better connect Central Oregon Community College and OSU Cascades to downtown and the Bend region. Expanding transit is critical to the success of OSU-Cascades, which will depend on effective use of transit (bikes and walking) to make its new campus work.

As mill redevelopment progressed on both sides of the river, Central Bend’s mix of local businesses and services changed. Most local businesses in the 20th century served a neighborhood clientele and were low-key local gathering places, run by local owners. Many still operate under this model because the Central Westside (Galveston, 14th, Newport) is still the commercial center for old and newer neighborhoods west of the river.

In the 21st century, some newer Central Bend businesses became regional entertainment/drinking venues, instead of catering to local walk-in customers and household needs. In the dense urban fabric of the older Central Bend, some new regional attractions are located right next to existing homes. The area’s compact geography, while convenient, also leads to more conflicts about business expansion, noise, parking, hours of activity, and customer management.

It is no surprise that Old Bend rates at the top of Bend neighborhoods in “walkability.” Bend’s walkable original urban village can be a living model for 21<sup>st</sup> century Bend, as we attempt again to create neighborhoods that are “complete communities.” Old Bend has a great opportunity to conserve and enhance the area’s historic walkable scale and the character of Bend’s original urban village for another century.

