

## **The Culinary Corridor**

**A concept to save downtown's food carts . . .**

**. . . and part of Portland's soul . . .**

Brett Burmeister

Daniel Huerta

Randy Gragg



EVERY CRAVING  
IS A MOVING TARGET

**Brett Burmeister**  
FoodCartsPortland.com



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## Tight Tacos

August 23, 2017 By [dieselboi](#) 3 Comments



Tight Tacos

# CATERING

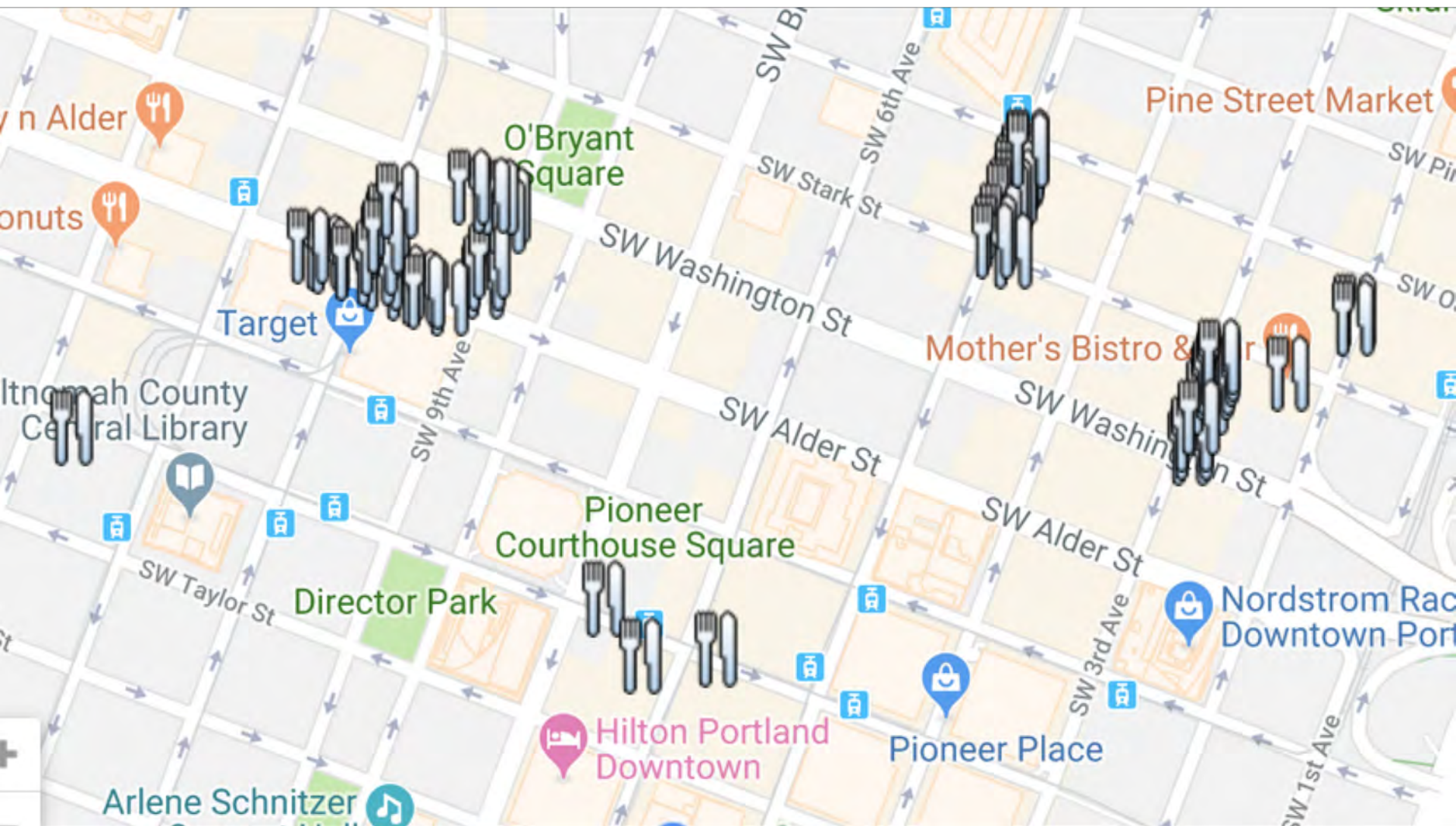
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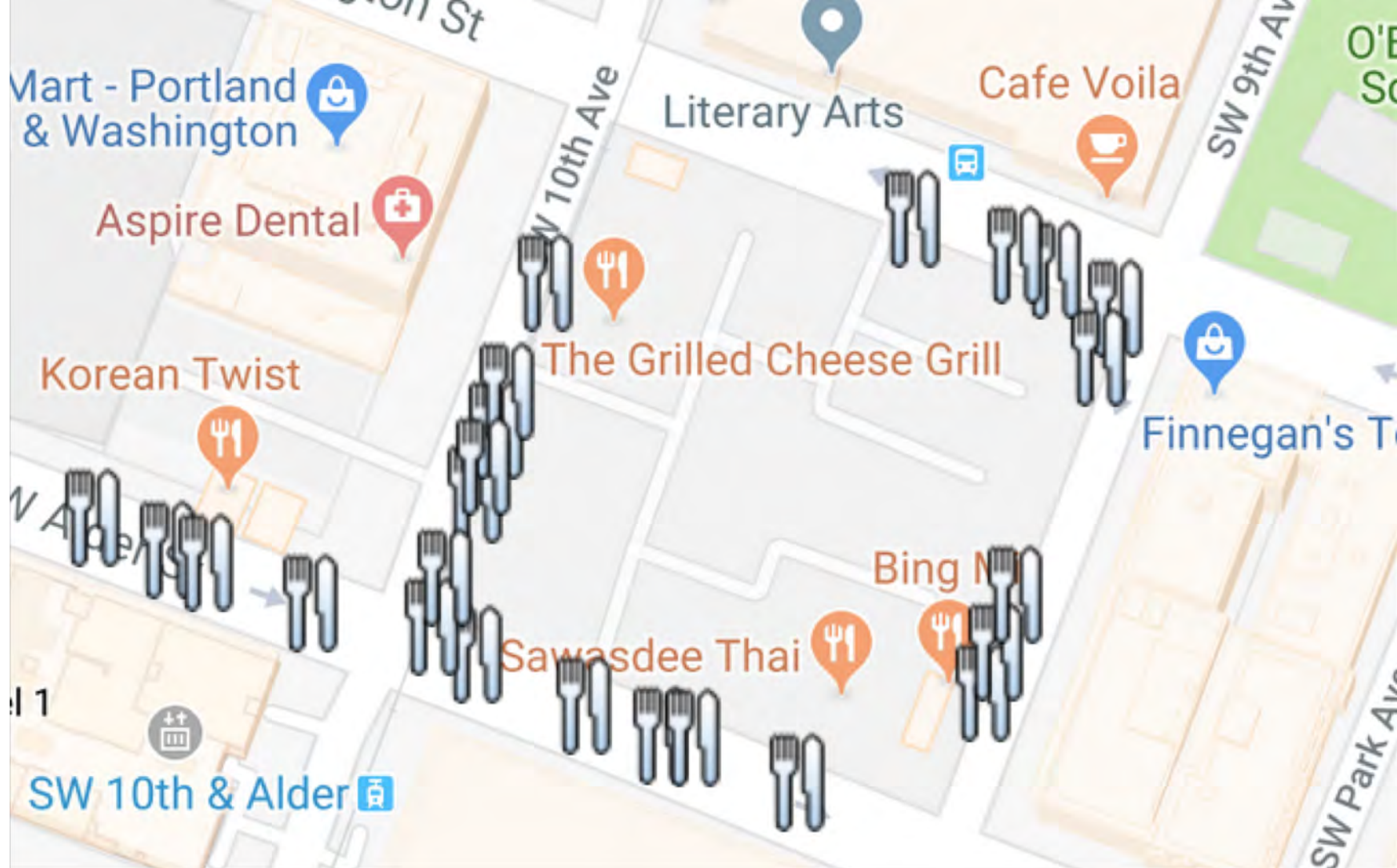


**There are about 130 food carts in downtown Portland**





**There is not one McDonalds or Burger King.**



**There are 55 food carts at SW 10 and Alder.  
That's 55 small businesses.**



# The possibilities of Portland

Sugar, spice and the people are nice in the Rose City

Monika Vitek says she likes that she can chat with the customers at her Tibor Authentic Czech Eatery food cart. Valeria Reed, *Philadelphia Inquirer*

Below, the flavorful pho at Mai Pho. Kyle Wagner, *The Denver Post*



## "Pods" put the cart before the hordes

By Kyle Wagner *Denver Post Travel Editor*

PORTLAND, ORE.»

It can be agony to walk these streets hungry.

Around 9 a.m., the armadas of grilling beef, baking bread, simmering broth, sautéing onions, sizzling bacon and just-ground coffee thread through the usual city scents of car exhaust and scorching pavement.

By 10 a.m., residents and tourists alike start to make their way toward favorite food carts — mobile units of every size, shape and color, from converted Airstream trailers to banquet tables topped with tarps. They're clustered in "pods," some with formal names like

Good Food Here or Cartopia, in the corners of parking lots or along the edges of entire city blocks.

By 11 a.m., you'd better be in position at the more popular carts, or you could be in line for a while. Or worse — be forced to go somewhere else.

"By 1 o'clock, she'll sell out," says David Siegel, who along with his wife, Linda, has scored one of the coveted sidewalk tables at Nong's Khao Man Gai, one of Portland's most famous



Above left, the famous You Can Has Cheeseburger, which features grilled Angus beef between two grilled-cheese sandwiches made with butter-slathered Texas toast. Above, the pod at SW Fifth Avenue and Stark. Photos by Kyle Wagner, *The Denver Post*

Quirks in the works

## Flip a coin: Lots to do, see, enjoy

By Bill Reed  
*The Philadelphia Inquirer*

PORTLAND, ORE.» Bike lanes and streetcars, craft-beer breweries and coffee roasters, green spaces and green buildings — this trendsetting city enjoys its clean, healthy and easygoing lifestyle.

And then there's its quirky side — with a capital Q.

This is a city that was named by a coin toss, whose sea captains beefed up their crews by shanghaiing sailors, and that attracted tourists with a "monstrosity of art." Today, it boasts the world's smallest park — about the size of a manhole cover. And a Chinatown with no — zero — Chinese residents.

It all starts with Voodoo Doughnut.

"When you're talking quirky, you're talking Voodoo," says Herb Spice, the quirky guide of a Quirky Portland tour.

The cash-only, takeout-only doughnut shop opened seven years ago, "mostly for people with hangovers after the bars closed," Spice says.

"They'd get Pepto-Bismol doughnuts, Robinussin doughnuts, Nyquil doughnuts," till the FDA said medicine couldn't be used as an ingredient. The legacy lives, though, with the shop's Pepto-Bismol-pink boxes.

Spice opens a box of assorted "classic" doughnuts, including the "blood-filled voodoo doughnut" — a rectangular, chocolate-iced doughnut with arms, red-iced eyes and mouth, and a pretzel stick in its belly.

"Think of someone you don't like or who's done you wrong," Spice says, chuckling. "Then push down the pretzel, and if the voodoo doughnut bleeds (raspberry jelly), see how that person's doing in a few days."

The other signature doughnut is the bacon-maple bar, known as "Breakfast in Vermont." Since TV chef Anthony Bourdain gobbled one on his show "No Reservations" in 2007, the shop has stayed open 24/7, often with a line

QUIRKY » 5T



Voodoo Doughnut in Portland, Ore., features a hole lot of approaches to the classic treat. Portland Oregon Visitors Association

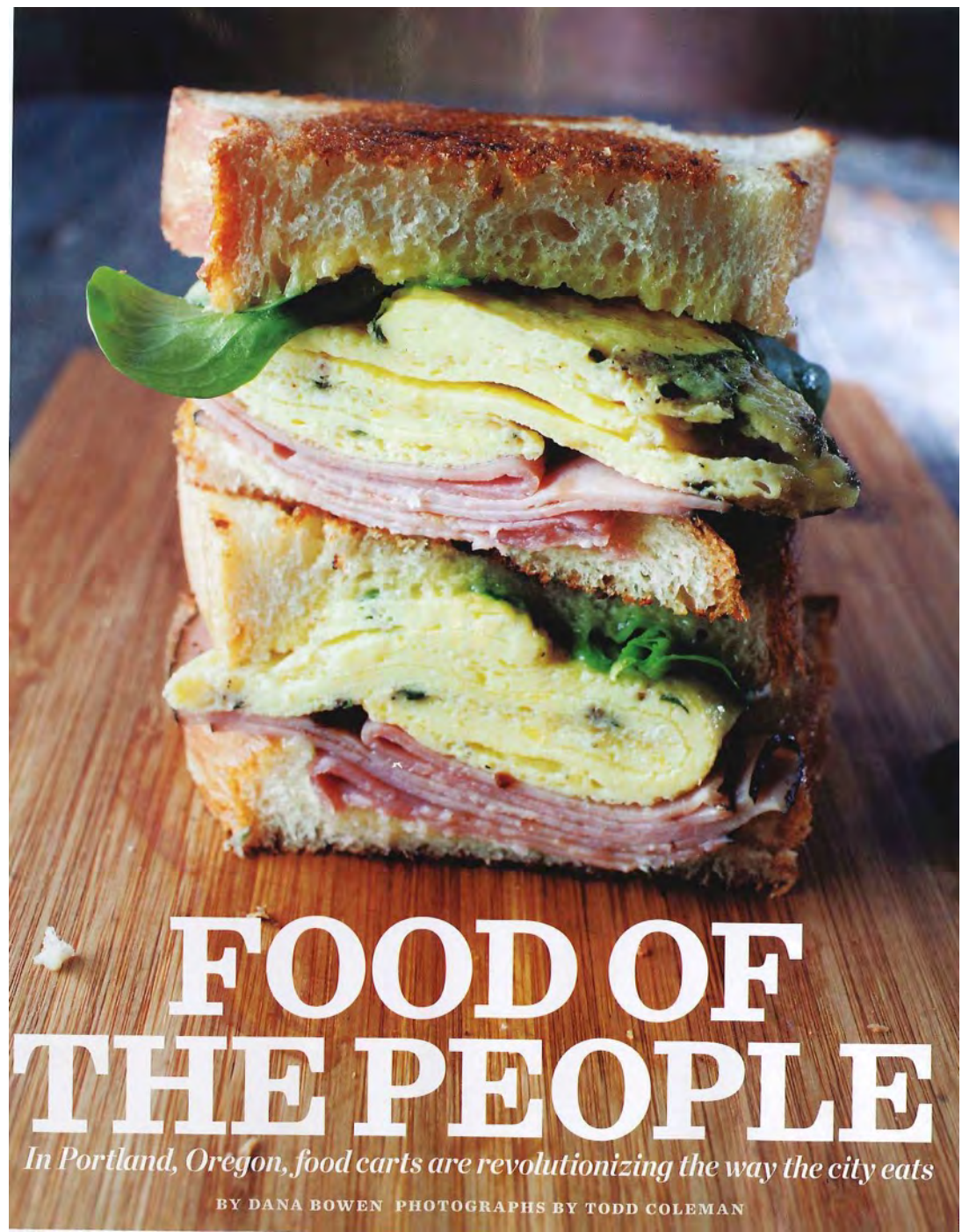
The diverse culinary offerings and grassroots authenticity have made food the number 1 reason tourists come here, according to Travel Portland

Denver Post





**Foodies flock here.**



# FOOD OF THE PEOPLE

*In Portland, Oregon, food carts are revolutionizing the way the city eats*

BY DANA BOWEN PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD COLEMAN



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Daniel Huerta, propietario, Churros Locos





**Saied Samaiel, a Syrian immigrant, started with one food cart.**

**He and his family now have a restaurant and 6 carts around the city.**



**Saied and his family now have a restaurant and 6 carts around the city.**





**Jaime Soltera, Jr. started selling tamales  
out of the trunk of his car, started a food cart . . .**





... and now has 2 mobile carts, 2 restaurants, and locations at PDX airport and the Moda Center.





**Nong Poonsukwattana began with one chicken-and-rice dish served in folded butcher paper sold from a food cart.**





**Nong now owns  
two restaurants  
and is world  
renowned**



Stall 10

USA

Churros Locos

10



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## FOOD CARTS!



**Randy Gragg**  
urban advocate





In the Great Recession, food carts were the only downtown retail sector that *grew*.





In fact, they grew dramatically by bringing Portland's burgeoning food scene to the street in the form of new businesses, affordable and creative cuisine, and *jobs*.



**Food carts also became an important urban regenerator, giving asphalt parking lots a lively, urban face.**

**And O'Bryant Square, aka “Paranoid Park” / “Needle Park” . . .**







... became a nice place to eat lunch.





**But the parking lots where food carts thrived are now poised for new development.**

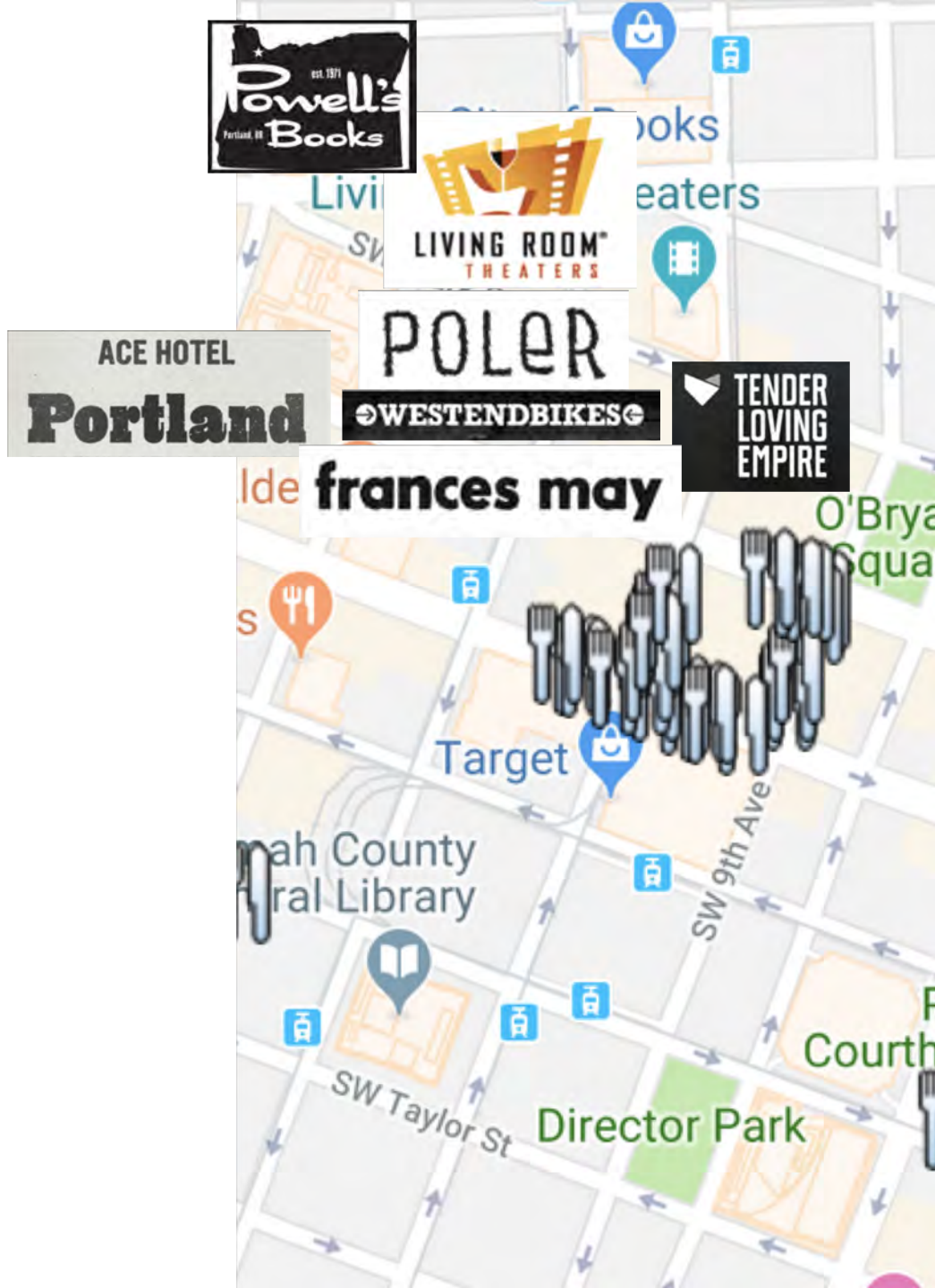
**A hotel/condo tower proposed for Block 216 will displace more than a third of downtown's food carts as soon as September. Some are already closing due to the uncertainty.**



# DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES



**Inevitably, downtown food carts will become an endangered species.**



The Alder Street Food Cart Pod is particularly important due to its proximity to the West End—downtown's most important cluster of local retailing.



**We can change this story.**

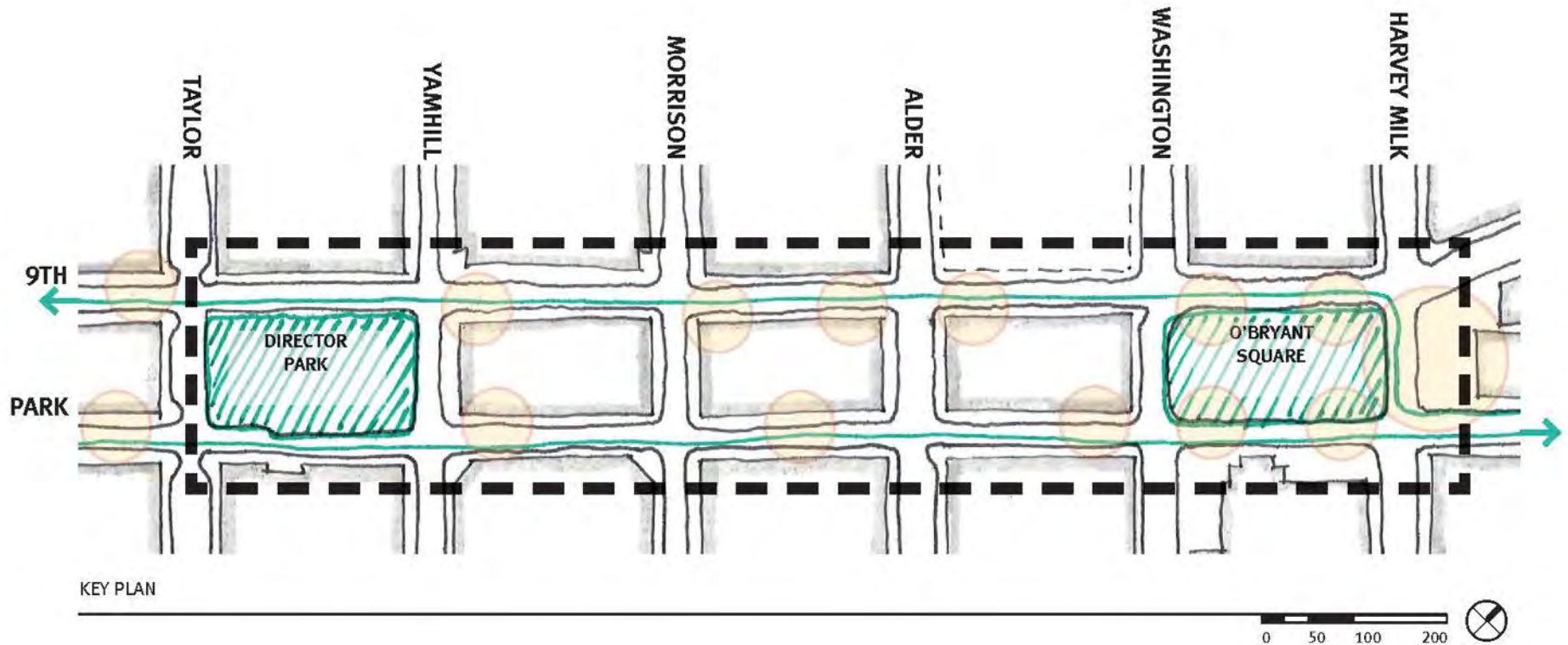
**With the kind of bold, simple, thrifty move  
Portland is renowned for, we can not only  
save Portland's downtown food carts, but  
*grow* them.**

# Introducing: The Culinary Corridor



CULINARY CORRIDOR  
VISUALIZATION





**We propose creating a corridor of food carts along the Midtown Park Blocks between Director Park and O’Bryant Square by simply repurposing a few parking spots.**



**The area is currently  
a retail dead zone.**







*Adaptive reuse of ground-floor streetscape (Park/Morrison looking north)*

#### Park Avenue Streetscape

The Street Character Study presents ideas for streetscape enhancements to SW Park Avenue - the street that literally connects the North and South Park Blocks - that create a unique urban environment downtown. The goal is to establish a café-and-retail-lined street that becomes a haven for pedestrians without necessarily compromising vehicle access, parking and loading opportunities.

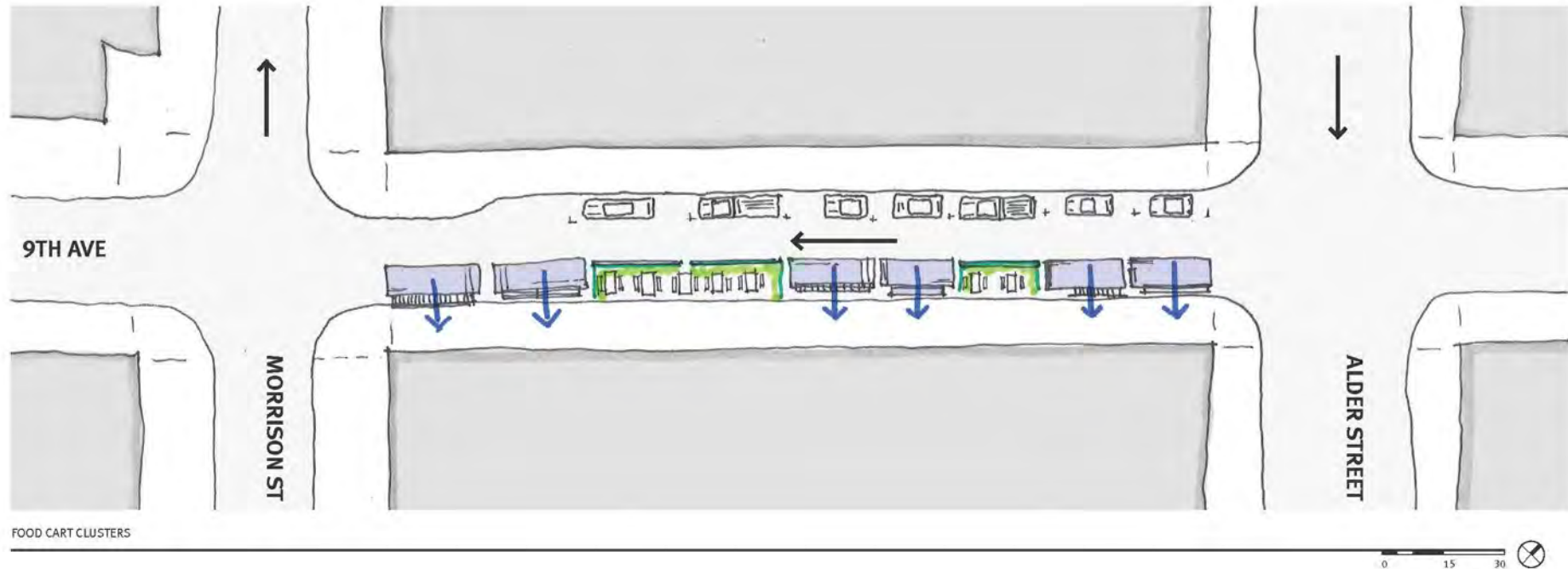
The hope is for the design of SW Park Avenue to be such that for special events, it can be closed to vehicle traffic to allow restaurants, cafes and other retail businesses to spill out into the street beyond the sidewalk. (See real world examples on the following page.)

**In the last 20 years, the city has done at least four studies of the Midtown Blocks—none resulting in the kind of place-making imagined.**



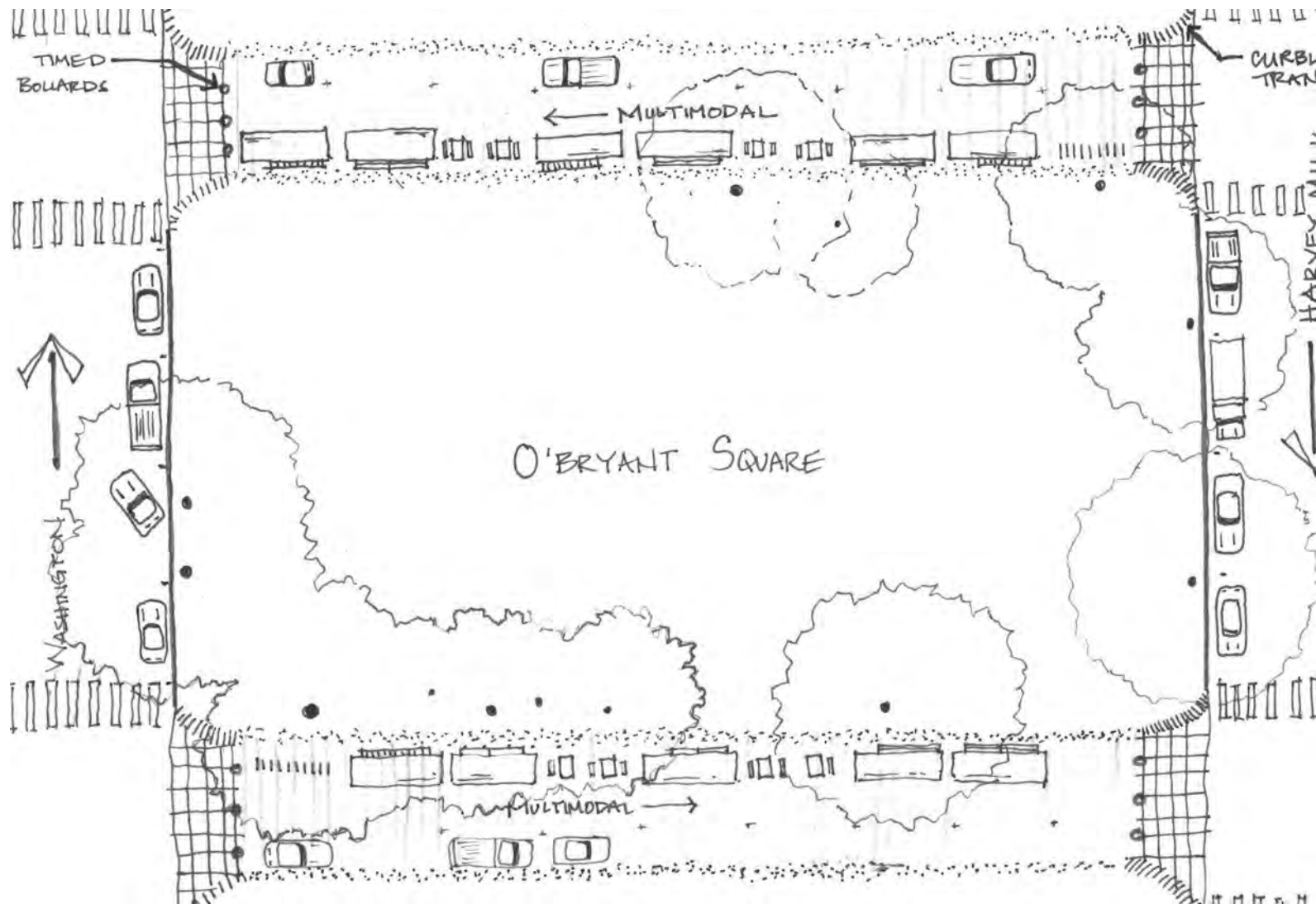
**The Culinary Corridor will spark a change toward the kind of festival street those studies imagined.**





**This doesn't need to be made difficult.**

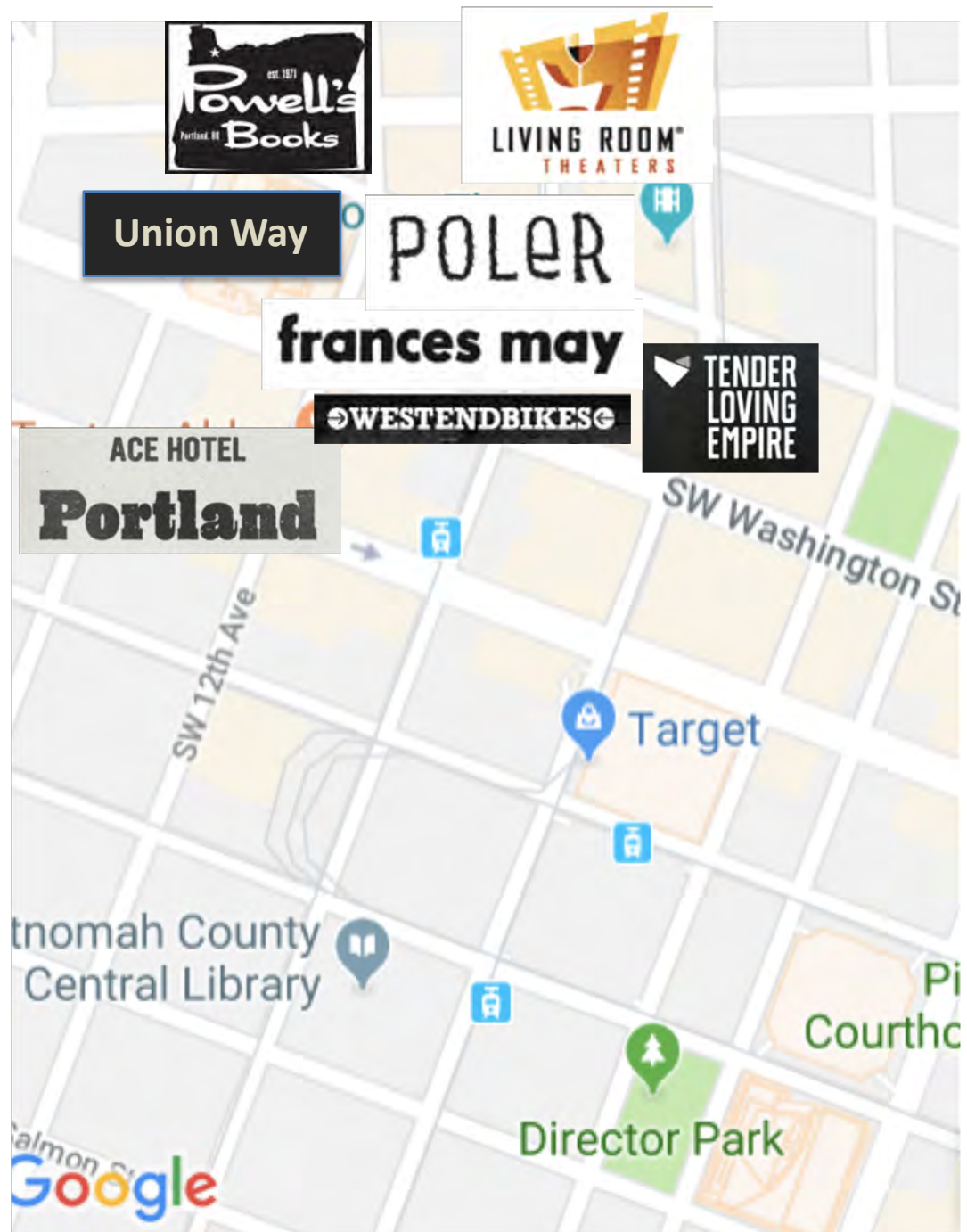
**We propose a fast-track task force and a feasibility study of Ninth from O'Bryant Square to the South Park Blocks with pilot program for a single block . . .**



**... and at O'Bryant Square, if some part of the plaza can be reopened on an interim basis**

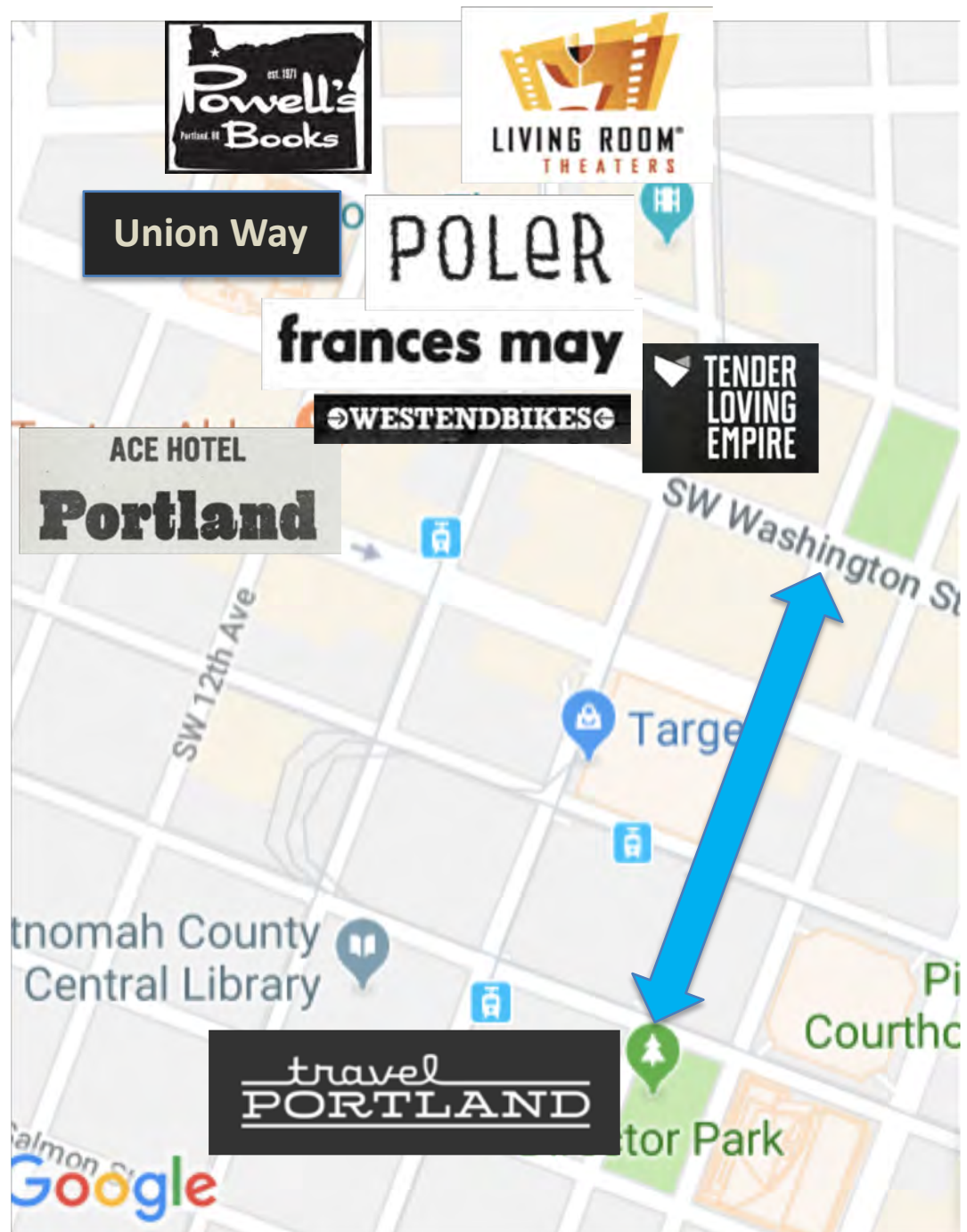


The Culinary Corridor  
could connect West  
End shopping district  
via the Midtown Park  
Blocks to . . .



... Travel Portland,  
soon to open its  
meet-and-greet  
center in Director  
Park.

Retail works best  
when destinations  
become connected  
through lively urban  
trails: the Pearl and  
Powell's to Travel  
Portland to the  
Cultural District.







**Pioneer Courthouse Square recently added a carefully curated group of food carts, enlivening the Square and providing a new profit line to the Square's operations.**

**The Culinary Corridor would need a similarly careful approach:**

- **Diversity of eating experience**
- **Lack of clutter**
- **Cleanliness**
- **Simple Design**

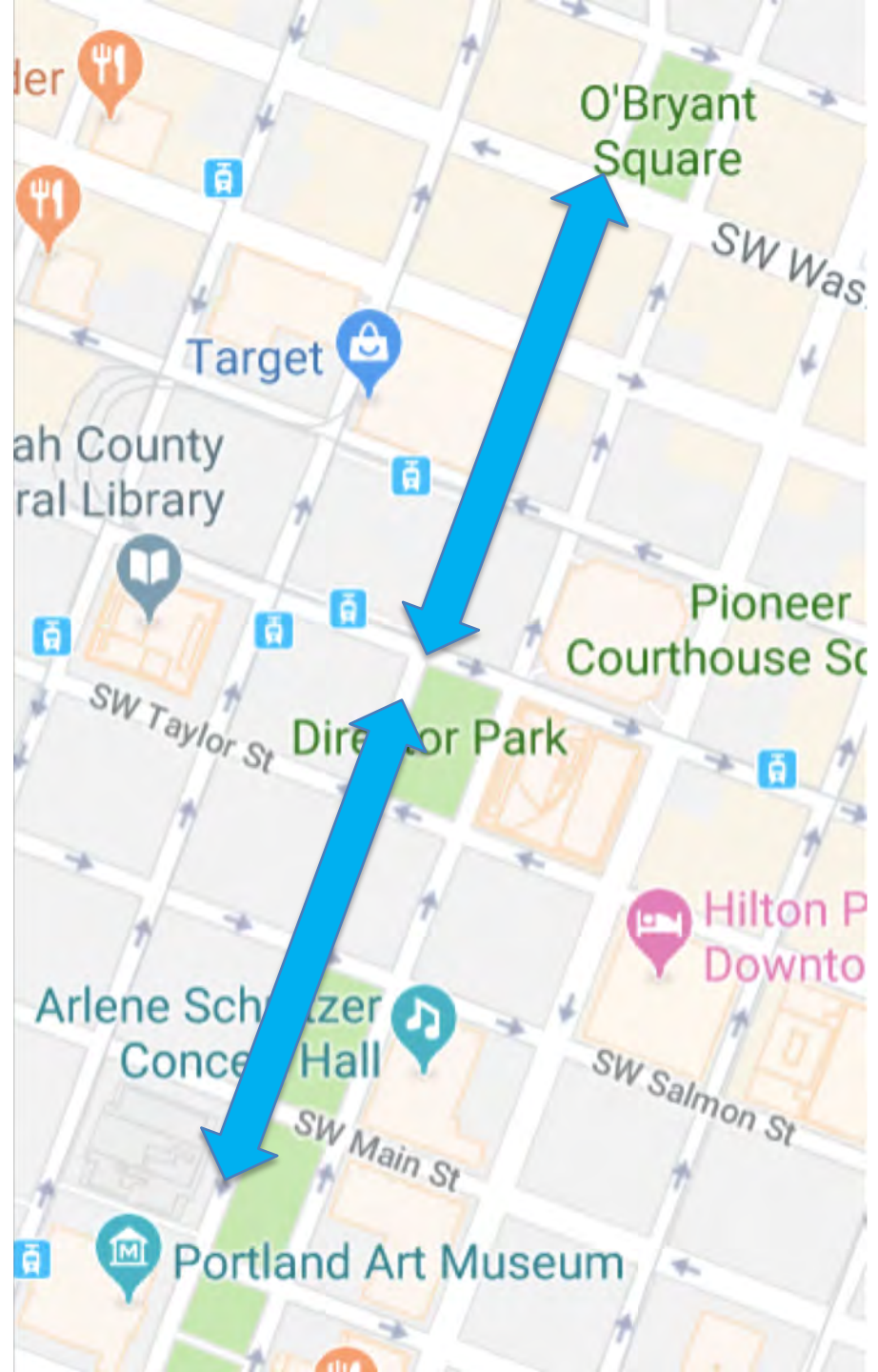


**But it also needs to be real . . . authentic . . . grassroots . . .**

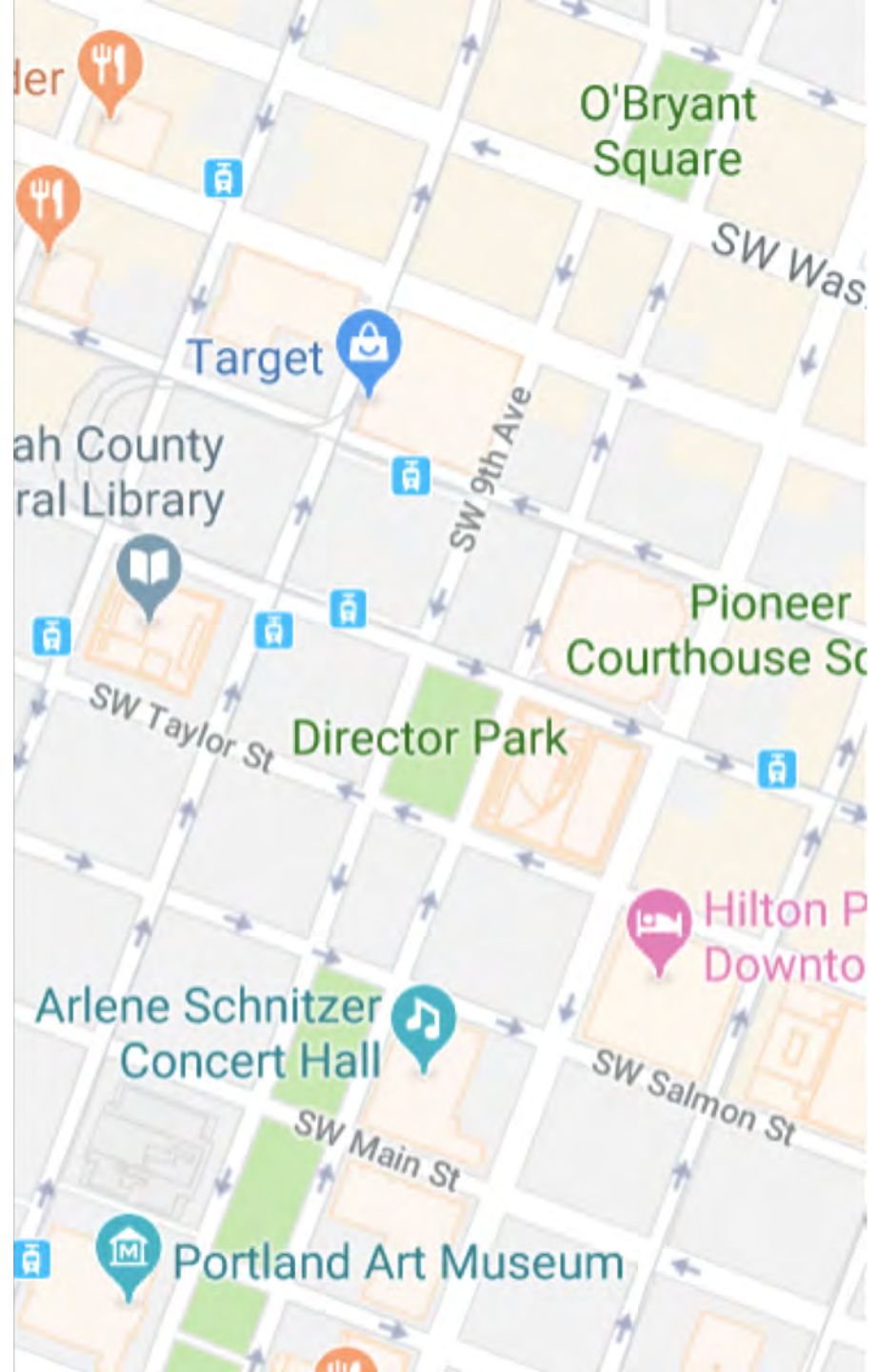
- **Intermingle brand names with new start-ups focusing on ethnic and culinary diversity**
- **Work with Mercy Corps Northwest, Prosper Portland, MISO, APANO, Hacienda and others to create a micro-finance program to kickstart new entrepreneurs**



**If it works, the  
Culinary Corridor  
can expand.  
If it doesn't . . .**



... it can go away.





**Research is needed:**

- **City and county codes**
- **Electricity**
- **Water and waste**
- **Seating**
- **Who is the curator/landlord?**

**The private sector will step up in partnership  
with the city . . .**

**. . . particularly if a fast-track study for interim plan  
for O'Bryant Square is included.**



**Time is NOW to act.**

**Otherwise, the national and international  
headlines will be . . .**

# **High-rising Downtown Portland Loses Its Street Food Soul**



**As a growing city with limited real estate options available for restaurateurs, the food cart pods provide another level of accessible incubation for aspiring owners and operators. The proposed feasibility study . . . will aid the city in its development goals, without compromising the food cart experience for locals or visitors.**

**This plan will strategically enhance the food cart experience as a complement to large-scale development projects.**

**—Jeff Miller, Travel Portland**

# **The Culinary Corridor: Keeping Portland . . . Portland.**

**Concept planning moral supporters:**

**Travel Portland**

**Downtown Development Group**

**Melvin Mark**

**Portland Business Alliance**

**FoodCartsPortland.com**

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