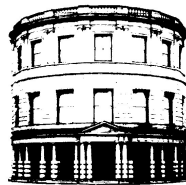


# Common Themes and Comments from Portland's Neighborhood Leaders

September 16, 2006



City of Portland  
Charter Review Commission



COMMUNITY  
CONNECT



Sponsored by the City of Portland  
Office of Mayor Potter

## Acknowledgments

On September 16, 2006, more than 80 of Portland's Neighborhood Association chairs, vice-chairs, and interested community members met to discuss Portland's future in these areas:

- A citywide vision,
- A model for community engagement model, and
- the City's Charter

This event could not have been possible without the volunteer contributions of the following individuals and organizations:

Charles Jordan, former City of Portland Commissioner and event emcee

Concordia University

Gary Withers, Executive Vice President

Greg Harris, Director of Marketing

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Sandra LeFrancois, Central Northeast Neighbors  
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**COMMON THEMES & COMMENTS  
FROM PORTLAND'S NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERS  
SEPTEMBER 16, 2006**

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- Under the current form of government, what has helped you, as a neighborhood activist, be successful?
- What are the obstacles that contributed to a lack of success?
- What changes to the form of government would help you be more successful?

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leaders of Portland's 95 neighborhood associations (NAs) gathered together on Saturday, September 16, 2006 at Concordia University to offer their input on three key initiatives of Mayor Tom Potter: visionPDX, Community Connect, and Charter Review.

This event was designed to provide an opportunity for neighborhood leaders to share their years of experience and leadership on these efforts which will help shape Portland's future. More than 80 neighborhood association chairs and vice-chairs (42% of possible participants) broke into focus groups and held discussions. Following are some of the key learnings, organized by initiative.

### visionPDX

- Participants expressed a desire for more of a voice in government, a desire to feel that government is responding to concerns of the public.
- Many specific issue areas were cited: development, infill, gentrification, education, traffic, parking, community spaces, and public safety. These issues represent areas that neighborhood leaders are deeply concerned about and are willing to devote personal time and energy to addressing.
- Neighborhood leaders felt their role should include various aspects of participation (organizing people, identifying community needs, becoming more educated) while they felt the City's role should largely be to support participation (interfacing with neighborhoods, seeking input, and responding to concerns).

### Community Connect

- The most frequently cited accomplishments of Portland's Neighborhood System included providing a structure for Portlanders to interface with City government, to resolve or advocate for issues, and to connect with others.
- The most frequently cited areas of improvement for the neighborhood system included improving communication/interaction between the major parties (e.g., clarifying roles, providing timely information) and supporting the system (e.g., technical assistance, grants).
- Some ways to improve the above areas included providing more resources for capacity building on the organizational and individual level; improving participation by building relationships and marketing NAs; and improving communication through resources for newsletters and a centralized website.
- For decision-makers to better utilize public input, neighborhood leaders echoed the need for better communications systems, and pointed to mechanisms for neighborhoods to be able to influence government (e.g., designated ways to advocate the neighborhood perspective) as well as better front-end public involvement and outreach.

### Charter Review

- All of the groups had at least one member who said that the current form of government provides good access for community members to elected officials and City staff. This is linked to the other main theme that the current system is responsive and accountable.
- Almost all of the groups had at least one member who said that the current system lacks a coordinated citywide focus and plan, and this hinders Council's ability to take a consistent approach to neighborhood issues.
- Almost all of the groups had at least one member who suggested giving Council members responsibility for geographic districts, separating the policy making from management responsibilities and creating neighborhood councils with decision-making authority.

### **How Neighborhood Leader Input Is/Will Be Used:**

The information summarized in this report represents valuable input from established leaders in Portland's neighborhood system. Each initiative is utilizing neighborhood leader input where it makes most sense for each project.

For the Charter Review Commission, members received neighborhood leader input before its September 28, 2006 meeting in preparation to the Commission developing a recommendation regarding representation and Portland's form of government. Input gathered by visionPDX and Community Connect will be shared with respective committee members as they develop recommendations. Both visionPDX and Community Connect members will consider input in developing recommendations (called 'alternate futures' for visionPDX and 'approaches' for Community Connect) in January 2007 and seek further public comment on what is proposed.

## PART I — VISIONPDX

### What is visionPDX?

visionPDX is a City-initiated, community-led project developed to create a new vision for Portland, both for its municipal government and for the community at large. In order to fulfill this goal, visionPDX seeks to engage a large number of Portlanders to learn about their hopes, dreams and aspirations for the city. This information will then be combined with input from other stakeholder organizations and with data on current key trends that are affecting Portland, in order to create a realistic road map for both the City and the community for the next 20 years.

visionPDX is guided by the Vision Committee, a group of 42 community volunteers who come from very diverse backgrounds. They contribute their experience and connections to the project, but do not officially represent their employers, neighborhoods, or communities. The project is currently staffed by six full-time employees, four from the Office of the Mayor and two from the Bureau of Planning. In addition to the Vision Committee members, visionPDX has benefited from the support of over 20 volunteers and eight interns who assist with office work, conduct research, facilitate meetings and represent the project at community engagement events.

**How did visionPDX receive input?** The first and biggest community engagement phase took place between April 1<sup>st</sup> and September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2006. During this six month period, visionPDX reached a large number of Portlanders to ask them four open-ended questions about their values and vision for the future of our city. The visionPDX questionnaire, included the following questions:

1. What do you value most about Portland and why?
2. What changes would you most like to see in Portland right now?
3. Imagine Portland 20 years in the future and all your hopes for the city have been realized. What is different? How is our city a better place?
4. As you imagine the Portland you have just described, what are the most important things we can do to get there?

Ten additional optional demographic questions were added. The purpose of these optional questions was to learn more about the persons who participated in the project, in order to assess the project's engagement reach. There were no questions that could compromise the anonymity and privacy of the participants.

**Outreach and engagement:** visionPDX relied on the work of its Vision Committee members, other volunteers, interns, staff, grantee organizations and other partners to gather community input using the visionPDX questionnaire, either individually or in group settings. The project's websites ([www.visionpdx.com](http://www.visionpdx.com) and [www.portlandonline.com/mayor/vision](http://www.portlandonline.com/mayor/vision)) were another important avenue to collect information directly from the community. Over 12,000 people responded to the questionnaire individually, and an estimated 3,000 more participated in visioning group and community discussions.

A small grants program was a core aspect of the project's outreach. Through a competitive grants program that received 143 grant applications, visionPDX distributed \$250,000 to 29 community organizations (grantees) interested in using innovative ways to engage their own constituencies in the visioning project. The underlying assumption was that community organizations have a better knowledge and stronger connections to their own constituencies, especially those that work with populations that traditionally do not participate in these kinds of planning processes (people of color, immigrants and refugees, low-income people, people with disabilities, to name a few). Overall, the 29 grantee organizations were able to engage an extremely diverse group of communities in the project using a variety of methods, from focus groups and canvassing to using theater, popular education, and multimedia technologies to get people to answer the visionPDX questionnaire.

**What happened with the input?** At present, the Survey Research Lab at Portland State University has coded and organized the responses given to the visionPDX questionnaire. Based on Portlanders' values, key community trends, and on input from diverse stakeholders, visionPDX volunteers and staff will develop a series of alternate futures for Portland. The input collected at the Neighborhood Leaders Discussion on September 16, 2006 will be one of the stakeholders' inputs considered to develop the alternative futures.

**visionPDX and the neighborhood system:** visionPDX made its visioning questionnaire available for neighborhood residents and leaders to respond to through multiple means:

- visionPDX conducted specific outreach to collect questionnaire responses from neighborhood association participants, such as during the National Night Out events on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006
- email invitations
- Three of the grantees mentioned above were associated with the neighborhood system.

The Neighborhood Leaders Meeting on September 16, 2006 was developed in concert with Community Connect and the Charter Review Commission. As each community-led initiative desired to obtain input from neighborhood leaders, the Neighborhood Leaders' event was an opportunity to engage leaders in three distinct yet similar conversations. visionPDX decided to ask two questions that were different from the visioning questionnaire. The rationale for asking different questions was to specifically obtain this important stakeholder group's perspective on their neighborhoods' priorities and what role they anticipate in the implementation of the future vision. The two questions asked were:

1. What do you and your neighbors want for your community/neighborhood?
2. What is your role as a neighborhood member/as your neighborhood association in achieving your priorities/vision? What should the City's role be in doing this?

In addition, visionPDX also asked if neighborhood associations had a written vision or plan that guided their work.

At the September 16 meeting, the neighborhood leaders answered the questions in a small group setting and their input was recorded by assigned scribes. The scribes also captured the leaders' comments and discussions outside the two questions because they will be of interest to themselves and to other groups who will read this report. Staff organized these ideas into two additional sections in this summary: (1) similarities and differences between neighborhoods; and (2) action ideas and unique ideas or comments that we have labeled "gems."

**How will the neighborhood leaders' input from 9/16 be used?** The ideas and input from the neighborhood leaders are summarized below and will help develop alternate futures for Portland. visionPDX is preparing a second community engagement phase called Vision Week, which will take place in early February 2007. There will be a series of events in which these alternate futures will be presented for the community to provide feedback. This new round of community input will then be considered by the Vision Committee, who will in turn build one alternate future to become the proposed new vision for Portland. The proposed new vision will be officially presented to the City Council for discussion and adoption. The presentation to Council has been scheduled for April 18, 2007.

**What is next for the vision?** Before the official presentation of the vision, the project is developing partnerships with elected officials, government entities, businesses, non-profit organizations, faith communities, and other groups in order to encourage their participation in the development of a community-wide action plan to implement the vision once it is adopted by City Council. The City of Portland will also utilize the vision as the basis for the development of a five-year strategic plan to guide and prioritize the work of all bureaus and other City of Portland agencies.

Both the City's strategic plan and the community-wide action plan will ensure that the new vision for Portland becomes a living document and not just a good idea that languishes on shelves. The ideas and hopes of the neighborhood leaders, summarized below, will be an important input in the creation of the new vision. Your participation in the future implementation of the new vision will ensure that the neighborhood leaders' input and ideas live on.



## Findings

QUESTION 1:	<b>What do you and your neighbors want for your community?</b>
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Leaders from 37 neighborhoods and 2 district coalitions shared information about their neighborhoods and communities. The group then discussed their neighborhood visions or priorities and identified whether they have existing plans. The following matrix summarizes the answers to these questions:

<b>Neighborhood</b>	<b>Vision / priorities</b>	<b>Written plan?</b>
<b>Arbor Lodge</b>	<i>No comments recorded in this section.</i>	No current written plan. Old plan needs to be updated.
<b>Argay</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Outer SE Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Update the 1995 Comprehensive Plan.	Yes
<b>Arnold Creek</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Improvements in capital construction, especially sidewalks.	Generalized comprehensive plan. Annual action plan.
<b>Beaumont-Wilshire</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Focus on Freemont Business District: new condominium housing; business; and pedestrian crossing safety.	No
<b>Buckman</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a community center. <input type="checkbox"/> Concern about the homeless people situation. <input type="checkbox"/> Concern about “rape [of the neighborhood] by developers.”	Yes
<b>Centennial</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety and crime. <input type="checkbox"/> Infill development.	
<b>Center</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Need to broaden involvement in the neighborhood association. <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach: need volunteers to distribute newsletter and conduct outreach to seniors and the Somali community. <input type="checkbox"/> Update the neighborhood	Yes

Neighborhood	Vision / priorities	Written plan?
	zoning, which dates from the 1930's. <input type="checkbox"/> Have music and arts at the meetings.	
<b>Concordia</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a bigger say in development. <input type="checkbox"/> Gentrification. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a cohesive vision regarding development in Alberta. <input type="checkbox"/> Have more collaboration with the university.	Yes, but the Concordia Plan has no teeth with the City.
<b>Creston-Kenilworth</b>	<i>No comments recorded in this section.</i>	Yes
<b>Cully</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Metro's goal for the number of residents per acre. People have "why did they do this?" issues. <input type="checkbox"/> Parks. <input type="checkbox"/> General uplift of streets. <input type="checkbox"/> People have issues with housing types. <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood has received lots of press because of low-cost housing. <input type="checkbox"/> Concern about non-involvement of Hispanic residents. <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood with a rural feel to it. <input type="checkbox"/> Lots of R-ID's. <input type="checkbox"/> Slow development of undeveloped areas. <input type="checkbox"/> Community centers.	Yes, adopted by the City.
<b>Downtown</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Downtown plan.	Yes
<b>Elliott</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> A lot change and activity in the neighborhood association. <input type="checkbox"/> Gentrification. <input type="checkbox"/> Concern about housing and transportation challenges that result from gentrification. <input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood located in an Urban Renewal District.	Yes

Neighborhood	Vision / priorities	Written plan?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Coordinating and easing the neighborhood association into all changes.	
<b>Grant Park</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Pretty affluent neighborhood.	<input type="checkbox"/> The community needs to direct the use of public and private money. <input type="checkbox"/> Get younger residents involved. <input type="checkbox"/> Make people feel they can make a difference. <input type="checkbox"/> Better communication about private development. <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to residents' concerns. <input type="checkbox"/> More residents' involvement that is not just issue-driven. <input type="checkbox"/> More coordination with Planning (Title 33). <input type="checkbox"/> Follow through on impact of City rules on neighborhoods. <input type="checkbox"/> Coordination between the Bureau of Development Services and Portland Department of Transportation. PDOT policies are not aligned with Title 33). <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility of citizen participation – nurtured by current system. You have access, but not to commissioners and mayors. It is virtually the same as it was 20 years ago.	No, although some residents think otherwise.
<b>Hayden Island/Bridgeton/East Columbia</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 2,500 people <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial hub.	<input type="checkbox"/> Concerns because zoning exceeds capacity of the area's infrastructure. <input type="checkbox"/> Vision: a pedestrian-friendly, world-class resort-type village. <input type="checkbox"/> Small neighborhood, yet a vibrant one.	One participant said Bridgeton was one of the first NAs in North Portland to have a plan. Another said they have a vision statement, but not an adopted plan

Neighborhood	Vision / priorities	Written plan?
<b>Hazelwood</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 18,000 people <input type="checkbox"/> Located in an Urban Renewal Area (Gateway) <input type="checkbox"/> Developing a commercial area	<input type="checkbox"/> Development impacts on Johnson Creek, especially loss of trees. <input type="checkbox"/> Crime <input type="checkbox"/> Tension between business development and existing residences. <input type="checkbox"/> Try to have the least impact on existing people.	Hazelwood Plan and Outer SE Plan
<b>Hillsdale</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 7,000 people <input type="checkbox"/> Three schools <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial area <input type="checkbox"/> Farmers' market	<input type="checkbox"/> Concerns about CCRs that override zoning <input type="checkbox"/> Safe arterials and signals (this is an issue throughout all of SW) <input type="checkbox"/> Plaza in the town center. Focus on Town Center. <input type="checkbox"/> Control of McMansions <input type="checkbox"/> Expanding use of volunteers <input type="checkbox"/> Developing the Farmers' market <input type="checkbox"/> Creating alliance of Hillsdale institutions for networking and information-sharing. <input type="checkbox"/> Community book sale as fundraiser	Yes. Hillsdale Town Center Plan
<b>Hillside/Arlington Heights</b> <input type="checkbox"/> All residential, 700 homes <input type="checkbox"/> Approx. 2,100 people	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain and build a sense of community-connections and interactions among neighbors. <input type="checkbox"/> Maintain livability-parks, access, community center, thoughtful development, <input type="checkbox"/> Safety.	No.
<b>Hosford-Abernathy</b> Neighborhood Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Green streets <input type="checkbox"/> Better relations between neighborhood and business associations <input type="checkbox"/> Support neighborhood schools <input type="checkbox"/> Increase stock of 100+ affordable housing <input type="checkbox"/> Access to the river	Neighborhood plan updated and on file with the City.
<b>Humboldt</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain livability (OLCC,	

Neighborhood	Vision / priorities	Written plan?
	bars, schools). <input type="checkbox"/> Achieve clout (authentic authority).	
<b>Irvington</b>	<i>No comments recorded in this section.</i>	Yes. 18-year-old plan / part of other Neighborhood Associations.
<b>Linnton</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Revitalize the town core. <input type="checkbox"/> Overdevelopment. <input type="checkbox"/> City-supported parks.	Yes
<b>Madison South</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Land use: former landfill. <input type="checkbox"/> Want improvement, but not sure how. <input type="checkbox"/> More control over the development process. <input type="checkbox"/> Improve crime issues at the MAX station on 82 <sup>nd</sup> Avenue. <input type="checkbox"/> Less sex shops in the neighborhood.	
<b>Montavilla</b>	<i>No comments recorded in this section.</i>	Yes
<b>Mt. Scott</b>	<i>No comments recorded in this section.</i>	No. Informal plan (Foster streetscape)
<b>Mt. Tabor</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Infill. <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation, and transportation safety. <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental and park issues and gardens.	No, but survey, walk-by responses.
<b>Multnomah</b>	<i>No comments recorded in this section.</i>	No written plan, but do have action plans carried over year to year, tweaked as they go.
<b>Northwest District Association</b>	<i>No comments recorded in this section.</i>	
<b>Old Town — Chinatown</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Maintenance of new festival streets. <input type="checkbox"/> Relations with PDC and PDOT. <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping new business association and	Yes, adopted in 1997.

Neighborhood	Vision / priorities	Written plan?
	neighborhood association tight.	
<b>Piedmont</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Land use concerns: increasing density. High density without design, such as on MLK. <input type="checkbox"/> Need help with rezoning and overlay. <input type="checkbox"/> Park: organizing concerts; closing early to deal with gangs. <input type="checkbox"/> Build relationship with Ockley Green Middle School. <input type="checkbox"/> Outreach: phone calling to recruit more leaders.	No
<b>Rose City Park/Hollywood</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 100 <sup>th</sup> anniversary coming up	<input type="checkbox"/> We were more listened to 15 years ago.	No written plan. Have an action plan updated every year.
<b>Russell</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> More response from Commissioners. <input type="checkbox"/> Continue connections with schools. <input type="checkbox"/> Multicultural signage. <input type="checkbox"/> Assimilation of women's shelter.	
<b>Sabin</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Concerned with density issues. There is no buildable land. People are squeezing many residences in small lots. There are concerns about skinny houses. <input type="checkbox"/> Parks (want to enlarge Water Tower Park), schools, library. <input type="checkbox"/> Lots of new businesses. 3-zone areas okay. <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned with density, traffic, and housing costs. <input type="checkbox"/> Housing costs: how do we get money to fix up without having to sell out?	Yes.
<b>Sellwood-Moreland</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> City-Metro follow-through	Sellwood-

Neighborhood	Vision / priorities	Written plan?
<b>Improvement League (SMILE)</b> <input type="checkbox"/> 10,000 people <input type="checkbox"/> Two established business districts and one growing one <input type="checkbox"/> Group grew out of a community association	on light rail commitment. <input type="checkbox"/> Parks, and connecting the parts of the Springwater Corridor.	Moreland Plan, 1990
<b>South Portland Neighborhood Association (formerly known as Corbett-Terwilliger-Lair Hill – CLTH)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Contain growth. <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation challenges <input type="checkbox"/> People feel they are citizens of Portland, not of the neighborhoods <input type="checkbox"/> How safe is downtown? You would think that perceptions would be the same, but they aren't. Downtown belongs to every one.	Yes! Originally created in 1977 (one of the first plans in Portland). (2) New plan: adopted in the late 1990's. Southwest Community Plan. (3) One of the oldest (plans?), formed during the Mt. Hood Freeway. Prevented Costco and Good Sam.
<b>Southeast Uplift – District Coalition</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Infill – how to manage it. <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation safety / speed management. <input type="checkbox"/> Diversity and inclusion. <input type="checkbox"/> Asset mapping – bring people together through common interests; not necessarily through neighborhood association. <input type="checkbox"/> Skills building for community groups, i.e. build infrastructure for folks to continue talking without government participation.	
<b>Southwest Hills Residential League</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Portland has the feeling that it is accessible. You can wrap your arms around it. <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of inclusiveness. <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful discourse.	Have the beginnings of a plan; in process.

Neighborhood	Vision / priorities	Written plan?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> We have a central identity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Unlike other cities, we don't have a linkage to a councilor to help vote one way or the other on a neighborhood's issue</li> </ul>	
<b>Southwest Neighborhoods, Inc. – District Coalition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Build more sidewalks. Southwest Portland is deficient on this. This is a priority.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Expanding pedestrian trails.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Schools. The first step is to learn about area schools and their resources.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Safe routes to schools.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood action plans. Town Center Plan.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Creating farmers' markets.</li> </ul>	Yes
<b>St. Johns</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> New elections lead to goals that could lead to a plan in the future.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> City's lack of support for things that do not really build relationships.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Change in board members leads to reinventing the wheel.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Interested in looking at the successes of faith-based groups.</li> </ul>	No Neighborhood Association plan. Plans tied to businesses and St. John's. Lombard Plan.
<b>West Portland Park/Far SW</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accommodate higher density while maintaining quality of life.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalks.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> New immigrant groups are not integrated.</li> </ul>	Yes, and updated annually.



## **Similarities and differences among neighborhoods:**

**Similarities:** The similarities identified in the neighborhood leaders' group discussions fall in five categories:

**Land Use:** Participants expressed their neighborhoods are feeling development pressure. Many are frustrated with both the government and the private sector, and they would like to have more influence on the development process. They would like to have a better understanding of how the process works. Sometimes they participate in this process, but overall, it does not work for them.

Participants also expressed concerns about infill, increased density, and the quality of design. People are especially worried about the design of skinny houses, boxy apartments and condominiums. The construction of so-called McMansions is a concern among residents of Southwest Portland.

Another important commonality was the participants' concerns about gentrification, such as housing affordability, housing price in general, and the displacement of long-term residents in some neighborhoods.

**visionPDX / Charter Review / Community Connect:** Participants mentioned the need for a culture change in governance to combat feeling that neighborhood people just talk and the government does not respond. There was agreement that government ("downtown people") needs to honor the neighborhood structure.

Participants also mentioned that some people and organizations were aware of visionPDX, Charter Review and Community Connect, but they were wondering how these projects, especially the vision, will be implemented. They asked how the City would make this vision happen. Participants also mentioned that some of them have reviewed the charter plan. Some people and organizations are not aware of any of these projects yet.

**Civic Engagement:** Participants expressed concerns about their role in relation with the City's elected officials. They felt there is a lack of a role for the community. They would like to know whether their role is to provide input or to conduct engagement activities. There is definitely a disconnection with elected leaders. They are feeling like their voices do not count anymore.

All participants are interested in volunteer development activities. However, they feel there is a lack of resources which is in direct opposition to the high cost of citizen participation activities. For instance, they feel the need to connect with immigrant communities, but they need more funding to implement those and other similar projects. Due to the lower volunteer participation, they have to pick

and choose their “battles,” the issues they become involved with, because participants have limited time and energy.

**Education:** Participants also mentioned their concerns about education in general and local schools (both public and private) in particular. They would like to connect their organizations with schools groups, such as PTA’s. Another related concern is making sure that youth get to schools in a safe manner.

**Infrastructure and Transportation:** Concerns about infrastructure also figured prominently among the participants. Their concerns were centered on people’s expressed needs for having community spaces and increased public safety.

Participants also expressed concerns about transportation, specifically on issues such as traffic on arterial roads, street maintenance, safe pedestrian crossings (especially on school routes), parking problems in business districts, and, for Southwest Portland residents, the construction of sidewalks.

**Differences:** Participants agreed that their neighborhoods differ on a number of characteristics, which means that City policies and programs need to avoid the “one size fits all” approach:

- Neighborhoods differ in size, terrain, and existence of commercial areas.
- There are differences in age and ethnic make-up of the neighborhoods.
- There are income differences among neighborhoods, and also within neighborhoods.
- Some neighborhood associations have more resources than others.
- The internal capacity of the district neighborhood coalitions also differs.
- Many times people have a sense of neighborhood identity at the expense of their identity as Portlanders.

The amount of development activities also varies according to each neighborhood. To put it in one participant’s words: “It is all tied to economics.” Gentrification also impacts some neighborhoods much more than others. Some neighborhoods still retain more of a rural feel. And finally, there are specific issues such as high noise levels in North/Northeast Portland due to the airport, trains, and the racetrack.

QUESTION 2:	<b>What is your role as a neighborhood member/as a neighborhood association in achieving your priorities/vision? What should be the City's role in doing this?</b>
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**What is your role as a neighborhood member / as a neighborhood association in achieving your priorities / vision?** Participants provided a variety of answers to this question:

- Organize*: bring more people together to provide a representative voice.
- Provide a forum for people to bring up issues.
- Continue to maximize partnership resources.
- Balance residential needs and business needs.
- Figure out how to balance the interests of more and less affluent areas.
- Continue to identify priorities for their area.
- Conduct outreach.
- Continue getting together.
- Continue participating in land use issues.
- Participate in Planning Commission meetings.
- Become more educated about resources.

**What should the City's role be in doing this?**

- Improve communication with neighborhood associations. Respond to their concerns.
- Listen to neighborhood associations' priorities and provide support.
- See neighborhood associations as positive.
- Respect their role and place.
- Utilize the neighborhood system more. This is a largely untapped system.
- Allow neighbors more access to decision-makers and processes.
- Connect neighborhoods with bureaus.
- Have land use professionals / planners available to look out for the interests of the neighborhood associations.
- Balance needs to raise revenues with livability in neighborhoods.
- Provide clarity as to what "input" means and what government agencies seek.
- Involve neighborhood associations earlier in any processes that affect them.
- Improve the transparency of bureaus and agencies that have resources.
- Decentralization and reorganization of government.
- Have smaller governments in general.

## **Action ideas and gems:**

**1. Gem:** Don Baack shared a definition of community written by Rick Seifert, Robert Hamilton and himself, all members of the Hillsdale Neighborhood Association:

*A community is a place that has an identity, where people know and care about each other; a place that honors its history, looks to its future and lives fully in its present. A community actively supports local businesses and institutions, including schools, libraries, civic organizations and parks. They are the physical and civic heart of the community. They are within a safe and convenient walking distance for all. Community members derive satisfaction from community involvement and recreation.*

*“Communities are our homes”*

**2. Action idea:** Have local communities take control of the use of funds from System Development Charges (SDC). These funds could be used to fund local schools.

**3. Action idea:** Offer incentives for groups to work together.

**4. Action idea:** Create mini urban renewal areas, 5 to 10 blocks long, and finance them with Federal Bonds.

**5. Action idea:** Provide some dependable revenue to neighborhood associations, not just grants. This revenue couldn't go toward frivolous stuff. It could be allocated by each coalition. A potential neighborhood funding model could include some money on a per-neighborhood basis and some on a per-capita basis. There should be flexibility because some communities are more expensive to service (e.g. those with different languages). Have consistent funding to allow neighborhoods to communicate through websites and email.

**6. Action idea:** Have a centralized online database so people can find out what projects are going on in their neighborhoods. The City of Portland would create this database, and neighbors would check it and use it to communicate. This would include more than just city projects, ex. Oregon Department of Transportation projects. Neighborhood leaders don't need to receive a mailing about every project (this can be overwhelming). They would take responsibility for checking the online database for projects that interest the neighborhood. Neighborhood leaders need a place to post information for their neighbors. We could educate the library to assist people in using this resource, and have a kiosk for places where people don't have internet access.

**7. Action idea:** Have ONI work for a board of directors representing neighborhoods, not for a commissioner.

## **PART II — COMMUNITY CONNECT**

### **Community and Government Working Together**

#### **What is Community Connect (CC)?**

Community Connect is an effort to redefine the community's role in local government. This effort aims to empower all Portlanders to be involved in local decision-making and community building, and to strengthen each of Portland's communities. Supported by Mayor Potter, Community Connect is led by a 17-member workgroup of community volunteers, neighborhood leaders, and City employees.

**How did Community Connect receive input?** In determining how to redefine the community's role in local government, Community Connect conducted extensive outreach and research. In addition to conducting 63 one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders, the workgroup distributed surveys and provided for focus groups, which were completed by almost 1300 Portlanders. Those interviewed or completing surveys/focus groups represent the following perspectives:

- Underrepresented Groups
- The Neighborhood System
- The General Community
- The City of Portland
- Other Perspectives, including those of other government agencies engaging with Portlanders

Complementing the above research efforts is a review of existing research:

- Models/Best Practices of Other Engagement Systems (17 models from Naga City, Philippines to Seattle, Washington)
- Previous Reform Efforts to Improve Community Engagement in Portland
- The Current System

**What happened with the input?** Community Connect workgroup members began reviewing the research collected in the fall 2006 and will continue through the winter. Research will be used to understand Portlanders' strengths and needs, identify good ideas that can be applied in Portland, and to develop new innovative solutions. Findings in this report reflect one of 18 sources of information that will be considered by the Community Connect Workgroup as it deliberates on recommendations to strengthen Portland's community engagement system.

**What is next for Community Connect?** After reviewing the research, workgroup members will draft initial recommendations for public feedback. Draft recommendations will be taken to the general public as well as to various stakeholder groups for feedback. Workgroup members will discuss feedback from the community and adjust recommendations accordingly before forwarding recommendations to Council. If approved by Council, a more detailed implementation plan will be developed.

## **Summary of Findings**

Leaders of Portland's 95 neighborhood associations (NAs) gathered together on Saturday, September 16, 2006 to discuss their thoughts on how to improve community engagement in Portland. More than 80 neighborhood association chairs and vice-chairs broke into small groups and considered these 4 questions:

- What are the top three things that Portland's neighborhood system accomplishes?
- What three things would you like the neighborhood system to do better?
- What might some solutions be to the three areas of improvement identified above?
- What ideas do you have for government leaders to better utilize public input in decision-making?

While some participants expressed weariness around being asked for their opinion and not knowing if their input would be used, many participants acknowledged that the forum on September 16 was the first time in years that a citywide event was held for people from all neighborhood associations. Following is a summary of some of the more common responses. Further detail can be found on the following pages, which categorize focus group responses by question and identifies all ideas—including those that may have merit but weren't mentioned by the majority of participants.

Following is a summary of the responses that were given most frequently by neighborhood leaders. This section is simply an overview of what was said and leaves it to the reader to draw conclusions or make recommendations.

### **Q1: Top Three Accomplishments of Portland's Neighborhood System:**

- provides structure for Portlanders to interface with City government,
- allows issue resolution/advocacy, and
- offers a way for people to be connected.

### **Q2: Three Things the System Could Do Better:**

- Communication/interaction between the major parties, including clarification of their roles
- Support: technical assistance/grants/resources
- Two areas cited on a less frequent level:
  - Neighborhood Participation: involvement peaks during hot issues and isn't sustained year-round.
  - Positions presented to Council most often reflect consensus of NA board, not the whole community.

**Q3: Solutions to above areas of improvement include:**

- more resources for capacity building on the organizational and individual level (e.g., technical assistance, skill-building);
- improved participation by building relationships, better marketing of NAs and neighborhood events; and
- better communication by more funding for newsletters and a centralized website.

**Q4: Ways for officials to better utilize public input include:**

- mechanisms for neighborhoods to be able to influence government,
- better public involvement: early-involvement, better outreach
- Ideas cited on a less frequent basis include: officials being aware of plans on the neighborhood level, and explaining their rationale behind decisions. Also, neighborhood leaders mentioned the need for a better communication system with the City in terms of both accessing information and communicating with City officials.

Methodology & Limitations

The data contained in this report represent the perspectives of more than 80 neighborhood association chairs and vice-chairs, or 42% of possible participants. Neighborhood leaders were randomly divided into focus groups of 6-9 people to encourage participants with a range of perspectives. There were a total of 10 focus groups, each facilitated by community leaders or staff familiar with the neighborhood system.

Responses in this report are presented as a summed total by question. That is, the responses of all the focus groups have been combined and categorized by common themes. For three of the four questions, data is presented in these three categories:

- Responses with a high level of agreement
- Responses with a medium level of agreement
- Responses with some or individual levels of agreement

NOTE: this approach to analysis places emphasis on commonly agreed upon ideas when responses receiving little or no agreement may have equal or more merit. Common themes making the 'high level of agreement' category generally represent the top-third of a ranked list of responses to a question. That is, if responses to a particular question resulted in 20 common themes with the top theme receiving 10 responses, themes that received 7-10 responses were placed in the 'high level of agreement' category.

Responses for question 3 (neighborhood system solutions) are also grouped by level of agreement but within eight categories created by Community Connect (CC) Workgroup. This was done in order for the workgroup to help identify solutions as it develops recommendations for a better engagement system.

Some of the limitations of the findings in this report include:

- Coding focuses on most common responses: By identifying common themes, the coding process favors responses with which most people are in agreement. While this can help identify commonly shared areas, it can also ignore responses with equal merit that received agreement among one or a handful of respondents. When decision-makers review this data, it would be helpful to look at all responses on the following pages.
- Potentially Biased Responses: as focus groups were facilitated by ONI staff or active community leaders, neighborhood leaders may or may not have offered their truest thoughts or feelings. This could be balanced by comparing these responses to the anonymously-completed questionnaires of neighborhood system participants (to be posted on the Community Connect website: [www.portlandonline.com/mayor/communityconnect](http://www.portlandonline.com/mayor/communityconnect)).



Data Overview QUESTION 1:	<b>What are the top three things that Portland's neighborhood system accomplishes?</b>
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Most Common Themes

The large majority of participants noted a basic function of the neighborhood system: to provide a framework for Portlanders to interface with City government. While this response may seem obvious, it reflects a value that neighborhood leaders place on the current system. Cited in equal proportions were these specific functions that the system facilitates by providing a forum: information sharing, education, problem-solving, and group feedback/advocacy.

Other accomplishments cited by neighborhood leaders include the social connections that the neighborhood system fosters, the option for self-determination/influence on City policy, and the sense of identity/community pride evoked by the neighborhood system.

<b>Common Responses-High Agreement</b>
Vehicle for a large and diverse population to interface with the city
Allows for sharing of information, education of issues, problem-solving, and group feedback/advocacy
<b>Common Responses-Medium Agreement</b>
Builds community connections—between individuals, organizations, and communities
Allows for an impact on land use, transportation issues
Builds/supports volunteer capacity
Builds sense of community/identity
<b>Some Agreement/Individual Ideas</b>
Crime Prevention/working with PPB
System, staff serve as community memory
Facilitates events, clean-ups, tree plantings
Miscellaneous
Fundraising mechanism
Outreach
Improves/maintains quality of life

Data Overview QUESTION 2:	<b>What three things would you like the neighborhood system to do better?</b>
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Most Common Themes

The most common responses to what neighborhood leaders wanted the neighborhood system to do better had to do with changes that could be made to the system, and to a slightly lesser extent, the need for more people to be plugged into the system. Among changes that could be made to the system:

- better communication between the major stakeholders of the neighborhood system, including better clarity around the roles of the Coalitions, NAs—specifically whether Coalitions were supposed to represent the needs of NAs
- more technical assistance, grants, and resources

Communication-related issues were echoed in other responses:

- the need to direct funding to assist with NA websites, newsletters
- City needs to inform the public on issues in a timely way, and progress/status of those issues
- NAs could benefit from a common website platform

Other Observations

Some responses that didn’t get a high level of agreement deserve recognition because they target long-standing issues:

- Two comments were made noting that the neighborhood associations are participatory but not representative. That is, the opinions/positions of NAs reflect the perspectives of those who show up or sit on the board, not necessarily the perspectives of the neighborhood.
- Three comments were made regarding the focus of neighborhood issues on “hot issues” – issues like a new building being proposed/developed. This would imply that more effort could be placed on proactive efforts to move toward desired outcomes/neighborhood plans.

<b>Q2: Common Responses-High Agreement</b>
Better communication and interaction between ONI, other City bureaus, coalitions, neighborhood associations, and business associations—including clarification of roles between the above
Better support of the system: more technical assistance, grants, and resources needed
More involvement, participation; better recruitment of board members
Miscellaneous comments

<b>Q2: Common Responses-Medium Agreement</b>
More funding, staffing: to maintain websites, assist with newsletters
Better relationships among groups, agencies, and businesses
Influence City Council more directly
Better communication to public on issues: timely land use notification, ability to check on project status
High turnover among NA members
More coordination between NA s and schools or churches
Better use of technology (website for NA s)
Better marketing of NA s :outreach to new people
<b>Q2: Some Agreement/Individual Ideas</b>
Too issue-based/not proactive
Broader and more diverse participation needed
Better support from ONI: more community support, NA advocate
System isn't representative, only participatory
Need for neighborhood level vision
Residents don't get along/hostile
Tension between City and needs/goals of neighborhood

Most common themes

Following were the most common themes around solutions to the areas of improvement neighborhood leaders identified in the previous question:

- City should provide resources: funding, tools, facilities, legal advice, multi-year funding commitments to NAs, materials for sweat equity, etc.
- Build relationships, especially face-to-face, to encourage participation
- System needs to be more responsive to NAs: parallel decision-making process, taxing authority by neighborhood
- Market NAs: street sign caps, publicizing of events, projects
- Build skills, capacity, leadership of groups through training, organizational development
- Strengthen Coalition capacity—more funding for newsletter support, direct funding to NAs
- Centralized website to find neighborhood projects; to share needs, resources; to post NA newsletters

This question resulted in the most number of responses from neighborhood leaders. The relatively large number of responses could be interpreted to mean that the solutions to creating a better system of engagement already exist and just need to be identified and implemented. Another interpretation could be that neighborhood leaders are action-oriented people who are eager to develop and/or implement solutions. The large number of responses is grouped below into eight general categories that Community Connect is using as a guide in researching best practices. Within each category, responses that received the most responses are listed from top to bottom.

The largest number of responses focused on building capacity—both on the individual level of community members as well as on the organizational level—and dedicating resources to do this. Some suggestions to build capacity on the individual level include: improving skills and holding trainings. Capacity-building suggestions on a group level include: implementing a sister neighborhood program, creating an online forum for neighborhood members, and providing organizational development assistance.

Other common responses include: improving participation and effectiveness by building relationships, often face-to-face; and increasing the systems' responsiveness to neighborhoods by putting mechanisms into place such as taxing authority by neighborhood and parallel decision-making processes on major policies.

Other Observations

Neighborhood leaders recognized the need to involve underrepresented groups and noted the importance of having translated materials and translators available in order to do so. Tracking improvement in involvement would also be important so that progress could be measured according to outreach efforts.

One recurring theme cited by neighborhood leaders had to do with the need for support with producing and distributing newsletters. While the NAs in Southwest Neighborhood Inc. produce and mail a monthly newsletter to 10,000 homes, other NAs have difficulty finding the resources to print and distribute even four newsletters per year. A need and opportunity exists to facilitate communication between neighborhood associations and their membership.

<b>Q3: STRUCTURE/FUNDING (system funding, pop. Served, system organization)</b>
City should provide resources: funding, tools, facilities, legal advice, multi-year funding commitments to NAs, materials for sweat equity
Fund/give grants to neighborhood groups: e.g., for outreach to UG s
Fund neighborhood planning: use system development charges
More staff on a permanent basis: for struggling NAs, land-use/traffic consultants, grantwriting
More enforcement from ONI staff
Change remaining City-sponsored coalitions to non-profits: coalitions independent of City
Raise revenue: for communities through parking
Create a flexible funding model
Provide referral resources to NA s
More area planning with multiple NA s
Use cash influence to get value
Scale to reasonable sizes
<b>Q3: OUTREACH &amp; ENGAGEMENT (encouraging participation from all members, encouraging participation among new folks)</b>
Build relationships: face-to-face
Market NAs: street sign caps; publicize events, projects
Improve meetings: more enjoyable, fewer, more time for open door comment
Need for Ugs: youth, elders—partner w/principals to identify youth for NA boards
Improve outreach/surveying: see USAID list of best practices
Have translated material/provide people to translate

Develop board member packets/welcome packets, and spell out roles of NAs in them
Get more people involved—big email list
Promote outreach year-round, not just during hot issues
Outreach to those with time, \$ to participate
Other options to participate—like vote by mail
Use children to do outreach
Tax breaks to residents who volunteer
Involve arts and culture folks by organizing them
Outreach to inform people of structure
Give uninvolved groups a reason to get involved
Communities of Color and Ethnicity Opportunities to coalesce
Assess # of underrepresented groups
<b>Q3: FORMAL LINKS TO DECISION-MAKERS (conveying values to decision-makers, mechanisms to hold decision-makers accountable)</b>
More responsive system: more neighborhood power, ability to tax-develop mini URAs (designates area taxes to a bond), more decision-making power of NAs: parallel neighborhood council process
Require City officials/bureau staff to come to community meetings; restructure city job for after hours
More impact on budgets: bureau advisory committees, neighborhood needs process
Powerful leader who represents neighborhoods
Neighborhood plans need to have teeth
For all City funding to other agencies, require neighborhood approval
Pre-application hearing permits needed for OLCC permits
<b>Q3: CAPACITY-BUILDING/LEADERSHIP (empowering community members to identify issues, building leadership)</b>
Build skills, capacity, leadership of groups through training, organizational development
Create a NA think-tank to share good ideas, successes: email newsgroup, sister NA program
Conduct asset mapping of groups and capitalize
<b>Q3: STRATEGIC THINKING &amp; ANALYSIS SUPPORT (needs assessment, system support, evaluation)</b>
Strengthen Coalition capacity through more funding for newsletter support, direct funding to NAs

Spell out roles of NAs, ONI
Build resources/coalition capacity to support community groups, NAs
Customize tools, rules for different groups, neighborhoods, interests
Count benefit of volunteerism
Organize people by geography, interest, and identity
Full access to City GIS
Ombudsman at neighborhood level
ONI to help NAs through process
<b>Q3: NETWORKING &amp; PARTNERSHIP &amp; COALITION DEVELOPMENT (connecting groups, sharing resources)</b>
Build school partnerships: “welcome the principals night,” one neighborhood representative to each school booster club
Bring all 95 NAs together
Create opportunities to work together—this will promote community
Support efforts to organize regionally and across sectors when big issues arise
Better connection between neighborhood associations and business associations
Identify opportunities to support each other, partnerships
<b>Q3: COMMUNICATION (encourage participation?, dealing with conflict?)</b>
Centralized website to find neighborhood projects; to share needs, resources; to post NA newsletters
More communication to residents from City, ONI: share complaints on neighborhood system
More communication from NA chairs between NA s and Coalitions
Community forums are effective
Communicate directly with bureaus about immediate physical needs
<b>Q3: OTHER (integrity, knowledge/values of governance, etc.)</b>
Educate residents on how the City works, especially in the areas of land-use, transportation
Get community space from PPS
Miscellaneous
City needs to model behavior of community policing; promote philosophy of community and government being one
ONI reports to a board of directors, not a particular commissioner
Institutionalize engagement in Charter
Create a sense of place
Create consequences for violations of Good Neighbor Agreements
PDC Neighborhood Improvement Offices

Data Overview: QUESTION 4	<b>What ideas do you have for government leaders to better utilize public input in decision-making?</b>
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Most popular themes

The most common responses received stressed the need for mechanisms to be in place in order for government leaders to better utilize public input in decision-making. Examples of these include a form of government which places power in the hands of representatives based on a district or neighborhood boundary. Also mentioned was a petitioning mechanism to require government to review/act on what citizens believe to be important.

The second most common theme to utilize public input in decision-making focused on ways and methods of gathering public input. Some comments supporting this theme include: getting public opinion at the front-end of a process, using knowledgeable public involvement staff, using methods that meet people where they are, and being clear/communicating the role for the public: from receiving information to making the actual decision.

Other themes receiving a medium level of agreement centered around awareness on the part of elected officials and communication. Neighborhood leaders wanted City officials to be aware of current and historical efforts/plans. A need was also expressed for a better communication system: one that would clearly articulate the process for the public to communicate its needs to government, one that would facilitate access to information, and one that would make decision-making processes more transparent by creating mechanisms for decision-makers to explain their rationale behind decisions.

Other Observations

While most comments centered around ideas that could be initiated by City government in order for government to better utilize public input in decision-making, some responses pointed out the responsibility of the public in this area. For instance, some commented that the public needs to get involved while others said that the public (specifically, the NAs) need to be credible and come forward with well-designed plans in order for decision-makers to use their input.

<b>Q4: Common Responses-High Agreement</b>
Mechanisms needed for neighborhoods/public to influence government: district representation, City Hall liaison for each neighborhood, advocacy role for Coalitions
Improve ways of gathering public input: involve public early, better outreach, etc.
<b>Q4: Common Responses-Medium Agreement</b>
More transparent City decision-making processes: communication in writing, report backs to NAs



Awareness needed on the part of gov't officials on current, prior plans
Public needs to get involved
Improve ways public can access information: online documents, organization charts with contact info
Stable communication system: document communication pathway—from public to govt and within NAs
Uphold philosophy of government acting on behalf of the public: honor engagement
<b>Q4: Some Agreement/Individual Ideas</b>
Respond to public in a timely way: provide requested data/info
Hold government officials accountable
Elected officials need to be in public; meet with NAs
Train citizen watchdogs; print neighborhood newsletter with commissioner scorecard
Base hiring, performance review on public involvement ethic
Neighborhood reviews % of bureau budget
Accept that City regulations and neighborhoods will be in conflict sometimes/know when to stop dialogue
Build NA credibility; come forward with well-designed plans
Distribute resources & solutions equitably
Base performance measures of NAs on areas other than attendance
Determine current accountability, auditing mechanisms for participation (boards & commissions)
NAs work well with park center staff—less so with higher levels
Continue NAs
Force strategic planning in Charter

## **PART III – CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION**

### **What is the Charter Review Commission?**

The 20-member Charter Review Commission consists of citizen volunteers, appointed by the Portland City Council in November 2005. Mayor Tom Potter asked the Commission to focus on three areas: form of government, civil service and the City's relationship with the Portland Development Commission. Since this is the first comprehensive review of the Charter in more than 80 years, the Commission was also asked to consider whether to recommend a periodic review of the Charter every few years.

**How did the Commission get input?** The volunteer Commission members have conducted twice monthly open meetings televised on local cable channels, participated in numerous outreach activities with community organizations, and interviewed dozens of individuals with experience and expertise in local government. The Commission also co-hosted a community forum in June 2006 with Portland State University and co-sponsored the Neighborhood Leaders Event in September 2006. The input provided at in these sessions was used to create and refine their recommendations.

### **What will happen with the input from the Neighborhood Leaders?**

Commission members are meeting with neighborhood, business and other community organizations in late 2006 and January 2007 to share their proposed recommendations and discuss the merits of placing this issue on the ballot for voters. The public input provided in all of these discussions is being used to create the report to City Council. The input was also used to create a recommendation for periodic Charter reviews and to identify additional areas that future Charter Review Commissions should address.

**What's next for Charter Review?** Commission members will present their recommendations to City Council in a public hearing scheduled for Jan. 18, 2007, and ask that they forward them to the voters. If referred, Commission members would transition to a separate group to advocate for the proposed changes. Extensive public debate, presentations and discussions would be held in spring 2007. If approved by voters, it is likely that Commission members, along with City staff and City Council representatives, would craft an implementation plan for changes.

## **Summary of Common Themes**

Charter Review Commission members facilitated eight focus groups, with about six to eight people per group, to gather responses to the following questions:

- Under the current form of government, what has helped you, as a neighborhood activist, be successful?
- What are the obstacles that contributed to a lack of success?
- What changes to the form of government would help you be more successful?

The summary below contains themes of the responses that were given most frequently. The following pages contain responses from all participants.

### **MOST FREQUENT RESPONSES**

#### **Question 1: What has helped?**

All of the groups had at least one member who said that the current form of government provides good access for community members to elected officials and City staff. This is linked to the other main theme that the current system is responsive and accountable.

#### **Themes:**

- There is good access to elected officials and staff, as well as bureau directors and bureau staff.
- The Mayor and commissioners are responsive – a single person can be held accountable.
- The current neighborhood system, including coalition staff, is effective.
- Commissioners are citywide representatives; this distributes power and allows them to select projects to advocate for.
- Current system is clean and not corrupt.
- Commissioners can introduce new ideas into their own bureaus.

#### **Question 2: What are the obstacles?**

Almost all of the groups had at least one member who said that the current system lacks a coordinated citywide focus and plan, and this hinders Council's ability to take a consistent approach to neighborhood issues.

#### **Themes:**

- Current system lacks citywide focus, coordination and strategic plan.
- Decisions are delayed during the transition time as bureaus move from one commissioner to another.
- "Silo effect" limits multi-agency collaboration and leads to missed opportunities and conflicting policies.
- Citywide elections may be a barrier to hearing and representing views of minorities, as well as individual neighborhoods.
- Elected officials can lack management and administrative skills. When that occurs, there are no checks and balances.

Question 3: What changes would help?

Almost all of the groups had at least one member who suggested giving Council members responsibility for geographic districts, separating the policy making from management responsibilities and creating neighborhood councils with decision-making authority.

**Themes:**

- Separate the legislative/policy making/leadership responsibility from the executive/management/administrative functions.
- Elect a larger number of commissioners by districts, or have the Mayor assign districts to commissioners. This system would stabilize bureau assignments and allow better connection between elected officials and neighborhoods.
- Create a neighborhood council system, and empower them to make decisions about projects and resources within their geographic area.
- Increase opportunities for neighborhood public involvement; improve communication, education and support for neighborhood system.
- Develop and adopt a citywide strategic plan.

## **Participant Responses by Question**

The following is a list of **all** the responses recorded from the facilitated discussions, grouped by question. Under each question, the responses are grouped under major themes.

QUESTION 1:	<b>What has helped?</b>
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### Good access

- Access to elected officials and bureau directors is good.
- Direct and indirect contact with Council members has improved.
- More Council members and bureau heads attend neighborhood meetings.
- Collective Bureau input has improved.
- Citizens have access to multiple council members elected at-large.
- Citizens have access to the official directly in charge of project or issue.
- Residents can directly access and influence the commissioner-in-charge.
- Commissioners with good staff are very effective.
- Some Commissioners are great at outreach to constituents.
- There is good access to City Commissioners and Mayor.
- There is good access to Bureau staff.

### Responsive, accountable

- Form is flexible enough to allow Mayor acting as a “strong mayor” to insure that government is more responsive.
- Commissioners and staff are responsive.
- Citizens and neighborhood activists are empowered to participate in decision making.
- Political pressure from commissioners can be brought to have bureaus respond.
- If you have a problem you can go directly to the commissioner-in-charge.

### Effective neighborhood system and coalition staff

- The neighborhood system itself – many cities wish they had one like ours.
- Neighborhood Coalition staff know how to refer constituents to appropriate staff in bureaus.
- The Neighborhood Coalition system works well.

### Distributes power; allows advocacy

- The Commission form is a political shock absorber.
- Power is shared and disbursed throughout Council.
- A single commissioner can sway Council colleagues or respond to citizen wishes.
- Commissioner act as an advocate for neighborhood issues is better since addition of Commissioner Adams to Council.

- One or more members of Council often champion the neighborhood cause.
- Commissioners are city-wide representatives.
- All commissioners are elected at-large.
- A single commissioner is held accountable to the public for bureau actions.

#### Clean, not corrupt

- The current form of government is a clean non-corrupt form.
- The current system is non-partisan.
- Corruption is minimal – partly because of shared power.
- There is no crisis or evidence that the current system is not working well.

#### Supports new ideas

- Commissioners with strong new ideas can test them out with their own bureau portfolio.
- The current system supports five strong leader types (5 mini-mayors).
- The system allows for creative approaches to problems solving.
- With a change in commissioners, new ideas come into the bureaus.

#### Individual items mentioned

##### Specific successful examples

- Neighborhood celebration parties (e.g. National Night Out) help raise profiles.
- The Neighborhood Grants Program is a useful tool.
- Housing and siting needs and impacts are clearer.
- Neighborhoods were able to get zone changes regarding transit issues.
- The Arleta Triangle project was successfully completed.
- The Bureau of Environmental Services.
- Transportation planning is good.

##### Factors contributing to a neighborhood leader's success

- Determination and persistence on the part of the association is a key factor.
- The continuity of association leadership is important.
- Understanding the system, knowing how to work with the City leads to success.
- Having legal knowledge or assistance is a key to success.
- Effective communication: clear, consistent message backed by facts is necessary for success.
- Private dollars can motivate the City to add public funds.

QUESTION 2:	<b>What are the obstacles?</b>
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Lack of citywide focus, plan

- Lack of a citywide strategic plan impacts neighborhood interests.
- The structure doesn't provide for a single focus citywide.
- Council and Bureau staff members sometimes deliver inconsistent messages.
- Current system lacks holistic strategic planning.
- Different bureaus and agencies have conflicting policies resulting in poor coordination.
- Current form provides insufficient oversight.
- Oversight is not well distributed.
- Management of growth and development is not handled well.
- The Linnton neighborhood plans demonstrated confusion by Council on issues and alternatives.

Transitions cause delays

- Inconsistent administration of bureaus based on Commissioner assignments.
- Each new commissioner-in charge has a steep learning curve.
- Residents are not always certain who owns an issue.
- A lack of knowledge exists.
- Communications don't always filter down from the top.
- Neighborhood crime prevention programs keep changing.
- There is a lot of indecision during transition to newly elected officials.

Silo effect creates problems

- Current structure results in building, enlarging and protecting fiefdoms.
- Current system lacks coordination with other governments.
- Commissioners often end up representing their bureau instead of citizens.
- The current system fosters "silos."
- The current system creates council members as "grand chiefs."
- Commissioners are only responsible for their bureaus; this creates a silo effect that limits multi-bureau approach.
- Silo effect limits communication and collaborative spirit and results in missed opportunities.
- Elected officials are uncomfortable enforcing change into their bureaus.

Barriers to representing minorities, individual neighborhoods

- Citywide election of Council may contribute to loss of minority voices.
- Minorities might be more inclined to run in district elections than at-large, offering better representation.
- With Commissioners all elected at-large, there is a lack of geographical knowledge and expertise on issues affecting neighborhoods.
- Neighborhood input on issues and policies is insufficient.

- The current system may not give enough time for Council members to be as good of a “representative” as could a district representative.
- Under different system with district representatives, government might be better able to respond to the “provincial” needs of a district.
- The playing field isn’t level with developers.
- We never get onto the priority list.
- Council members have pet projects...and we’re not one of them.
- Officers of Neighborhood Associations are often treated by Council members as “Joe Anybody” rather than as representatives.

#### Can lack management skills

- Commissioner/administrators can make “political” appointments to management.
- Commissioners do not necessarily have the management and substantive skills to be administrators of their bureaus.
- Some Commission staff members are not professionally trained and lack management skills.
- Good politicians are not necessarily good administrators.
- Legislative and administrative functions are mixed with current form of government which affects checks and balances.
- Lack of policy analysis by commissioners and their staff impacts neighborhood decisions.
- Not all commissioners are good at outreach – inconsistent practices.
- It is unclear how poor bureau management by a Commissioner is dealt with.
- Combining legislative and executive branches of government is problematic.
- Commissioners are managers vs. being policy makers.
- Commissioners may usurp professional manager’s role.
- Council and policy makers are not managers.

#### Individual items mentioned

##### Specific system challenges

- It is expensive to run for office under the current system – may discourage involvement.
- There is a deficit in information dissemination.
- There are competing political interests.
- Unincorporated areas pay lower taxes. (Is this balanced with fewer services?)
- Under the current system, outer Portland is not as well represented.
- In some situations, neighborhoods can’t use City equipment for presentations.
- Often Council members are absent when neighborhood concerns are on agenda.
- Meetings and hearings should not be held only during normal business hours.
- Development fees don’t come back to neighborhoods.
- Neighborhoods receive inadequate notice regarding decisions.
- Neighborhoods need greater technical assistance on land use issues.



### Specific neighborhood challenges

- Policing priorities don't necessarily match up to neighborhood needs.
- Traffic safety continues to be a problem in many neighborhoods.
- Development of infill lots did not match neighborhood wishes.
- The City doesn't enforce environmental codes and zones: no follow-up; neighbors are supposed to be environmental enforcers; nothing happens unless neighborhood files complaint.

QUESTION 3:	<b>What changes to the form of government would you suggest?</b>
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#### Separate policy from management

- Separate the legislative and administrative functions of the City.
- Consider structural change to separate leadership from management functions.
- Policy making should be separated from management.
- Public needs to be educated on various choices: Strong Mayor; Council as policy makers – not bureau administrators; Council/City Manager or CEO model; district and/or city-wide election of Council members; increase number of Council members.
- Further investigate a City Manager form of government.
- Separate out the legislative and executive functions.

#### District responsibilities

- Some elected representation by districts – but also some elected at-large.
- Adopt a “bi-cameral” system that has both at-large and district Council members to look at citywide budget and policy issues.
- Have Mayor assign “districts” to Commissioners, just like he assigns bureaus.
- Consider district elections for Council members.
- Consider having Mayor assign Council members to “represent” various districts and rotate assignment on regular basis.
- Assign Council members liaison responsibility to geographic districts.
- Adopt district representation - as many as 26 alder reps. who represent a small area and that also have responsibility for one bureau.
- Elect Council by district and add members to bring total to 7-9. Each member would be responsible for representing the district and its associations. Caution: this may actually reduce the power of neighborhood associations.
- Increase number of Council members.
- Number of members of council should be increased.
- The number of Council members needs to be increased to 7-9.

#### Neighborhood council system

- As part of policy development, have policy reviewed by a Neighborhood Association Assembly.
- Create an Assembly of Neighborhood Associations to participate in strategic planning.
- A position should be created for a “Neighborhood defender” to provide unfettered legal support.
- Land use decisions should require a sign-off by the Neighborhood Association.
- Neighborhood issues and officers should be selected or elected by ballot.

- A Citizens Initiative/Charter Commission should meet yearly and have Neighborhood Association representatives as members.
- Regional town halls should be created to distribute capital funds.
- Have Commissioners appoint Neighborhood Councils (with authority for infrastructure and development) with diverse representation on Council required.
- Create district/neighborhood councils with authority to approve local infrastructure priorities and budget for that district.
- Elect Neighborhood Councils which have authority to distribute a percentage of City budget for local infrastructure and community development projects in their districts (St. Paul model).
- Give equal weight to each neighborhood to reduce inequitable funding.
- Strengthen neighborhood associations in land use and liquor license cases.
- Give associations a formal role in approval processes and require that neighborhood association's decisions have weight in decision-making. Examples: Neighborhood Association hears land use application prior to City and adopts legally binding good neighborhood agreements; hearings officers include Good Neighbor Agreements in written conditions and require pre-application hearing on all applications;
- Council should adopt neighborhood plans with "teeth" for every neighborhood; zoning must conform to Neighborhood Plan and development must be guided by Neighborhood Plan.
- Create neighborhood councils with real decision-making authority.
- Convene congress of neighborhood leaders 1-4 times yearly with a real structure and a real budget.

#### Better public involvement

- Define in Charter a governance culture-with emphasis on partnership with the community.
- Role of neighborhoods needs to be included in City Charter.
- Define the role and governance expectations of the City's community engagement agency.
- Formally adopt citywide principles of public engagement.
- Create a position for a neighborhood specialist, advocate and resource development person.
- Increase opportunities for public involvement in decision making.
- Increase opportunities for policy discussion.
- Council should increase neighborhood involvement in policy development.
- Neighborhood voices need to be heard.
- Earlier notification and involvement opportunities for neighborhoods are needed.
- Community needs to have strong communications effort to develop budget and policy priorities and communicate them to Council.
- Provide for additional citizen involvement in the budget process.

### Citywide strategic plan

- Require Council to adopt a citywide strategic plan.
- Develop common vision/goals/strategic plan
- Develop closer working relationship between Commissioners to review and develop bureau budgets collaboratively.
- Mayor should be responsible for all bureaus during budget process.

### Individual items mentioned

#### Government coordination

- Increase use of intergovernmental agreements to help with coordination of activities and issues.
- Consider ways to consolidate government activities (like City/County consolidation).
- Greater multiple agency input (coordination) is needed.
- Consider City-County consolidation.

#### Bureau assignments

- Consideration should be given to making permanent bureau assignments to Commissioners (by Council position).
- Reassign bureaus on annual basis.
- Assignment and reassignment of bureaus is inefficient – look at options for permanent bureau assignments.
- Consider naming permanent bureau heads/section managers.

#### Council meetings

- Council should work hours when most residents are available (evenings/weekends) to increase participation, and to decrease influence of moneyed interests.
- Time certain hearings should be provided for residents wanting to give testimony.
- Local government should provide child-care to increase participation in meetings and hearings.

#### Other ideas

- Council members should be elected at large.
- Encourage ongoing idealism of staff.
- Hiring policies need to be reviewed.
- Council needs to consider more social issues.
- Local government needs to be more proactive, not reactive.
- Consistency and neighborhood education means better enforcement of rules.
- Greater communications efforts are needed to balance top-down information.
- Decentralize the government bureaucracy.
- A series of minor improvements to the current system may suffice.