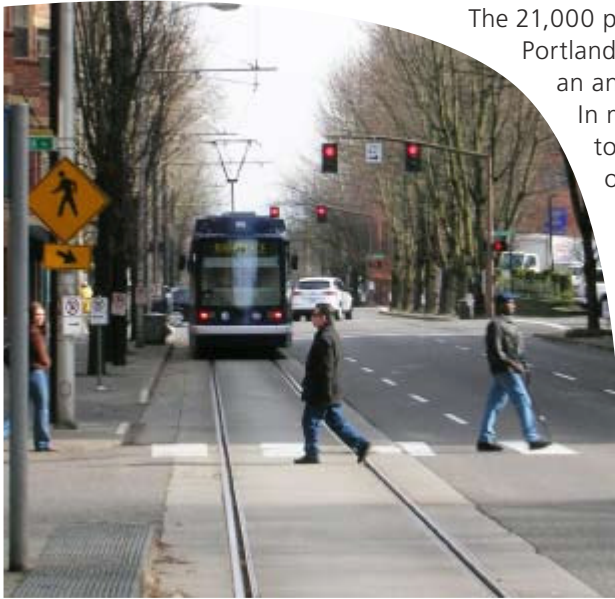


community challenges



The 21,000 pages of comments we gathered from Portlanders did not always give us a clear picture or an answer to how we should approach our future. In many cases, the public was divided on how to address problems. Sometimes, the majority of people agreed with one course of action, but a small but vocal minority had a different perspective. On other issues, Portlanders appeared to be more evenly split on particular solutions to problems. Some of the challenges below come from an understanding of the community's values as well as the trends that our community faces.

These challenges represent many of those tensions on issues that require more thought, more conversation and more information.



Photo by Thomas Le Ngo

? How will we ensure accessible and convenient transportation options for all while promoting sustainability?

Many Portland residents value the city's diverse transportation options not only because they are accessible and convenient, but also because they allow us to live with fewer environmental impacts. There is a strong commitment to promote public transit, bicycles and walking as more sustainable transportation choices. However, some also would prefer more investment in roads, highways and parking to move people and

freight into and out of our city. In the face of population growth and development, we face a challenge to meet all transportation needs sufficiently and sustainably.

? How will we balance diverse needs, interests and community values as we make choices regarding development?

Recent large-scale developments in the Pearl District and South Waterfront neighborhoods have caused some to wonder whether these publicly-subsidized projects are benefiting all Portland residents. Likewise, infill development, which has often been seen as being out of character with surrounding buildings, has raised concerns from neighbors. How should we balance diverse community needs and interests to plan for the kinds of communities we want?

? How will we encourage equitable community reinvestment while promoting economic opportunity?

Portlanders share a belief that corporations should be taxed equitably to support community services, but some feel that taxes on businesses, especially small businesses, are already too high. What is a business-friendly environment, and how will we provide it while protecting and enhancing our communities?

? How will we integrate sustainable practices into all businesses?

Portlanders want our businesses to embody environmental sustainability both for local benefit, as a model for the rest of the country and as one of Portland's traded sector businesses. Some of us feel that, to accomplish this, Portland's economy should have a primarily local orientation, while others believe that sustainability can be integrated into all businesses, even those that operate at the regional and global scales. The challenge will be to help businesses align their practices with the values that many Portlanders share while supporting their engagement with national and international markets. This is especially pertinent to the traded sector, which by definition brings income into our economy from outside the local environment.

? How will we pay for the educational system that our community needs and deserves while ensuring efficiency and accountability?

We understand that the success of our educational system is vitally important to our community and the future of its people. We value neighborhood schools and want our schools to be gathering places in our communities, and we see a strong connection between education and our economy. Many Portlanders, however, believe that the schools need more money to provide the level of service we want, whereas some believe that current funding levels should be adequate if only waste were reduced. How can we address our state school funding system as well as pursue efficiency and accountability so that our educational system excels and supports our children and communities?

? What is our responsibility to provide choice within our educational system?

Portlanders believe we need a highly inclusive approach that ensures ample opportunities for all children to a broad-based, rich educational experience. Some Portlanders favor providing more choice in the educational system, including gifted programs and charter and magnet schools. Some believe the focus for public dollars should be on ensuring that all students, especially the low-income, minority and English language learners are given equitable access to education in public schools.

? How will we address the pressures of growth while enhancing livability?

Projected growth and the resulting development in our region will require creative solutions for protecting the characteristics we value about Portland, including protection of our natural resources, local businesses, unique neighborhood character and small-town community feel.





? How will we provide public funding fairly so that all Portlanders have access to the basic environmental amenities?

Portlanders value our community’s parks, greenspaces, access to nature and our environmentalism. A primary challenge in the coming years will be to overcome current disparities to ensure that all residents have access to public resources such as greenspaces, walking and bike paths, public transportation, community gardens and locally grown, healthful food so that each of us, regardless of location, can choose to live with less environmental impact.

? How will we create efficiency in local government while honoring Portlanders’ desire for meaningful involvement in decision-making?

Portlanders highly value and are known for their ability to “make a difference” in their communities and in government. Encouraging inclusive and authentic civic engagement can require a significant investment of money and time, which some see as competing with government’s ability to carry out its basic functions.

? How will a diverse Portland overcome the discrimination faced daily by some members of our community?

Building bridges among communities is important to Portlanders. Portland feels welcoming to many individuals and groups, who celebrate its diversity and open-mindedness. Some Portlanders, however, experience covert or overt discrimination in the forms of classism, racism, ableism, and other “isms.” How do we move beyond eliminating social and physical discrimination, to embodying our values of diversity and inclusion?

? How will we ensure people’s basic needs are met?

Most people agree that we have an obligation to provide basic needs to those who cannot meet their own needs. While Portlanders recognize that many in the community don’t have adequate access to basic services (food, shelter, and health care) and that social service organizations are challenged to meet demand, opinions differ on the question of who pays and for what. Some prefer to look to government to provide services while others feel the business community, nonprofits, individuals, faith-based groups and others should play a larger role.