



**Voices from the Community**  
**visionPDX Community Input Summary**  
*(Abridged Version)*



*"There is no power for change greater than  
a community discovering what it cares about."*

*Margaret Wheatley*

Dear Portlanders,

September 10, 2007

Thanks to an incredibly successful engagement effort, over 13,000 diverse members of our community shared their hopes and dreams for Portland by completing the visionPDX survey. The next task was to listen carefully to the many voices that had spoken – to read and analyze the comments, concerns, and ideas so many Portlanders had shared through the surveys.

It was clear that this was indeed an immense task and that we would need a corps of dedicated volunteers to help. We formed the Data Analysis Work Group (DAWG), bringing together 35 individuals who worked in teams to read our community's comments. Through the winter holiday season, this group devoted countless hours to reading data, discussing it, synthesizing it and reporting back their findings on the data. They combed through Portlanders' responses, searching for common values, creative ideas and significant tensions. They dedicated themselves to the accurate representation of the data.

The finished report reflects the efforts of volunteers, visionPDX staff and—most importantly—our community. We intend it to be a reference document, organized by subject. Expect to find many recurring and overlapping themes, evidence that our community views issues in their complexity, rather than in isolation. Expect to feel inspired by the passion your fellow Portlanders hold for our city.

Thank you for your interest in the voices and aspirations of our community.

Sharon Bernstein  
Chair of the Data Analysis Work Group



# Executive Summary

This report summarizes the thoughts, dreams and suggestions of over 13,000 Portlanders from many walks of life who offered to fill out a questionnaire about our city and its future. The open-ended questions allowed respondents to write about topics of particular interest or concern, without limitations to the length of the answers.

The resulting data amounted to 21,000 pages of quotations. As can be expected, participants' opinions cover a wide spectrum and reflect the diversity of cultures, lifestyles and political persuasions present in the city today. Despite their many differences, certain core ideas rise to the top, resonating with the vast majority of respondents. Excellence in education, the preservation of livability in the face of growth, a solution to the problem of homelessness, a deep appreciation for nature in the city – these themes and others can be found woven throughout this report.

Common values appear as well, with three emerging as particularly dear to Portlanders: **Equity and Accessibility, Community Connectedness and Distinctiveness and Sustainability.**

**Four additional values were also strongly expressed in the data: Accountability and Leadership, Inclusion and Diversity, Innovation and Creativity, and Safety**

To learn more about the values, go to [www.visionpdx.com](http://www.visionpdx.com) and view the report *Portland 2030: a vision for the future.*

A final feature that defines the responses within the report is their depth. Portlanders understand issues in their full complexity and often link multiple ideas together when describing what they *value* and *imagine*. Their responses therefore defy easy categorization, resulting in a report that contains some unavoidable repetition of certain ideas and concepts. Together, their voices provide a rich, multi-textured portrait of Portland as it currently exists and as it is imagined to exist in the future.

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# Introduction to Community Visioning

Portland is known as one of the most livable cities in America. However, it is rapidly changing as more and more people move here to discover that livability for themselves. Between 1995 and 2005, the population increased by 8 % in the metropolitan area. Looking to the future, growth is predicted to only increase; current estimates anticipate a million new people in the region by 2030.

With this growth comes challenges as well as opportunities to reassess our needs, values and direction. What will Portland look like in 20 years? What kind of government will be necessary to respond to our changing needs? How will we negotiate the difficult balance between preserving the old and embracing the new?

In 2005, a newly-elected Mayor Tom Potter recognized that in order for our community to maintain its livability in the face of enormous changes ahead, we must come together to **define our values, imagine our future and prioritize our actions**. As we have done in the past with great success, we must once again create a process whereby we can intentionally shape our future.

Community visioning is a powerful tool to do just that. Visioning is a process that allows everyone to collectively participate in shaping the future of their community.

The act of visioning begins with a dialogue about what people love and hold dear about their community, which reveals a set of shared values. Next, communities identify the specific challenges they currently face. After identifying the immediate challenges, communities focus on their aspirations for the future. Finally, groups can talk about creative ideas and solutions to help overcome their current challenges as well as how to collectively achieve their shared vision for the future. Through these conversations, people discover what they have in common and they become vested in

the outcome. Together, community members envision new, innovative solutions and discover what role they can play in bringing them about.

visionPDX was designed to accomplish the following two purposes:

1. To bring a diverse group of community members together, including those who are not traditionally involved in local decision-making. The project aimed to bring together experienced public advocates as well as new community leaders to form collaborations for future action.
2. To collect and analyze input from the community, discover the values that the community holds in common and create a vision document that can be used for policy guidance going forward.

visionPDX builds on a long and successful tradition of visioning and planning in Portland. Through visionPDX, we once again have the opportunity to direct our future, to be agents of the changes we want to see.

# Our Process

In summer 2005, Mayor Potter created a community-wide recruitment process to invite Portlanders to join a volunteer committee that would direct and oversee Portland's visioning project. Over 120 people from across the city applied for this committee, which was ultimately comprised of 57 community members representing a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives.

After the Vision Committee was formed in November 2005, the group broke into six subcommittees (Analysis, Communication, Engagement, Grants, Research and Speakers Bureau). The Analysis Subcommittee was charged with creating the questions to be used throughout the outreach, monitoring the data collection process, and contracting with a survey research firm to code and organize the data.

The Analysis Subcommittee created a survey that contained the following four questions:

1. What do you value most about Portland and why?
2. What changes do you most want to see right now?
3. Imagine Portland in 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 just described, what are the most important things we can do to get there?

The vision questions were deliberately open-ended to allow respondents to comment on issues that matter most to them. We also asked several optional questions regarding respondents' demographics. The demographic questions were created by the Engagement Subcommittee with the purpose of ensuring that visionPDX would receive responses from a wide range of Portlanders.

The survey was used throughout the engagement process in a variety of ways (refer to the visionPDX Community Engagement Report for more information). It was also available online through two websites. In the end, visionPDX collected surveys from over 13,000 people and engaged a further 2000 individuals through small group discussions and other means.

visionPDX volunteers and community partners gathered the paper surveys and entered them into an online database. The surveys were then downloaded by staff and sent to the Portland State University Survey Research Lab for coding. Each response was coded into one of nine major issue areas (Economy, Education, Environment, Government, Public Health, Public Safety, Social Issues, Transportation, and Urban Livability). Each of these major areas had between five and fourteen subcategories, as is listed in the table of contents.

Qualitative analysis was used to evaluate the open-ended question responses and quantitative analysis methods were used to study the demographic information. The community data were analyzed by the Data Analysis Work Group to glean the most resounding and important information regarding common values and visions for the future. The vision was designed to be *aspirational* and *inspirational* and was based on the ideas that rose to the top in the data.

This Abridged Version of the Community Input Summary<sup>1</sup> contains much of the detail that could not be included in the final vision document. It represents the collective work of hundreds of volunteers and thousands of community members. The report serves as evidence that we listened as people shared their hopes and dreams for the city's future and offered their thoughts on a range of social and civic issues. It shows how deeply Portlanders care for our city and each other.

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<sup>1</sup> The unabridged Community Input Summary will be available in February 2008. It will include more detail on each of the subcategories as well as demographic information.

# How to Read This Report

The Community Input Summary is intended to be used as a reference guide. Its structure is based on a coding tree that Portland State University Survey Research Lab designed to organize community input. The coding tree consists of the following nine major issue areas:

- Economy
- Environment
- Transportation
- Social Issues
- Health
- Urban Livability
- Education
- Government
- Public Safety

Each of these broad areas contain a series of subcategories, which range in size and length based upon the number of comments coded in that topic. For example, within the category of Transportation subcategories appear such as Traffic, Parking and Alternative Transportation. The organizational structure serves to guide the reader to his or her particular area of interest.

Community members were responding to open-ended questions and were not asked to prioritize their concerns nor were they prompted for answers on specific topics. Therefore, we cannot generalize what all Portlanders think on each of these issues. However, we are confident that due to the large number of responses received, many of the community's most common opinions are represented in this document. To find out more about our data collection or processing, contact Bronwyn Buckle ([bbuckle@ci.portland.or.us](mailto:bbuckle@ci.portland.or.us)) (503) 823-6947.

## Key Reading tips:

- 1) In some sections, you will see references to another subcategory. That subcategory can be located by the table of content and is referenced because it contains more information on the topic.
- 2) The mentioning of “minority voices” or “small number of people” in the report refers to perspectives that do not represent the majority opinion found in the data. In this report, these terms do not mean the same as minority groups.
- 3) Throughout this report, survey respondents are alternately referred to as “Portlanders,” “people” and “community members.” It is important to note that in all cases, these terms refer only to those individuals who filled out the visionPDX survey and *not* to the community at large.
- 4) Quotes displayed are from the actual survey responses. At times headers note if the response was generated from one of the open ended questions about values, ideas for change, hopes for the future or other topics.



# ECONOMY

**Portlanders imagine a healthy, sustainable economy that benefits everyone.**

***I would like to see a: “Change towards a sustainable future. Being one of the “greenest” cities doesn’t matter if we continue to grow and consume our resources faster than can be replaced... perhaps we need to change our economy to be in step with nature.”***

***In the future: “Portland should have a mission to bring together resources to achieve Portland’s vision of a diverse, sustainable community with healthy neighborhoods, a vibrant urban core, a strong regional economy and quality jobs for all...”***

People see the need to build a stable, thriving economy both in the near and long-term future. There is deep concern that residents and their children will not have employment opportunities in the future. Many respondents hold a common interest in preserving the character of Portland that encourages a small, local business sector. Some believe that expanding local industries to reduce dependence on imported goods and services would boost our local economy. A smaller number of people suggest Portland play a larger role in the global economy. Also, Portlanders want more equitable distribution of resources, especially greater economic and infrastructure-related investments in East Portland and North/NE neighborhoods.

Respondents want to see more of a green, sustainable economy focused on balancing the social, economic and environmental aspects of the city. There is a hope that major economic development institutions will consider social equity issues as well as environmental sustainability. Some people want the Portland Development Commission, a key economic development driver, to restructure its priorities so the primary client is the general public and Portland neighborhoods rather than developers. Some related ideas include more green buildings, connecting farmers to consumers and community-based ownership of natural resources.

An overwhelming number of people call for a new tax structure (refer to Government: State and Local Taxes), mainly that which relates to businesses. One recurring suggestion is to give tax breaks to small businesses and to eliminate exemptions for large companies. Others highlight the need to develop a world class university in Portland. Again and again, people talked about how a viable future should be planned for everyone in this city. This consideration overlaps with such basic needs as housing, employment and education.

# Poverty

**We should be able to ensure a basic quality of life for all Portlanders.**

Portlanders appreciate that the city's public transportation system gives people easier access to more employment options. They like the services available to people with low incomes, but they want to expand services to better meet the needs of the community. Many people want to ensure that when some benefit from real estate and neighborhood development, it is not at the expense of the disadvantaged. This would involve partnering with long-term residents and business owners so they have a role in, and benefit from, neighborhood revitalization.

Numerous Portlanders want to ensure access to stable, affordable housing and home ownership options in desirable neighborhoods for people with low-incomes and those transitioning out of homelessness. They also would like to guarantee all young people have funding options to pursue higher education and that health is affordable for individuals and families struggling with poverty. Whether making decisions about government policy or business operations, Portlanders want everyone to consider the complexity of overlapping issues, such as poverty, homelessness, housing, and employment

***"I would like to see less condo development and a halt to rising costs of living, especially housing. I feel that although I love living here, I may not be able to afford to in the future unless I'm a millionaire."***

***There should be: "Greater investment and commitment to...those experiencing poverty, mental health challenges, and substance abuse. By investing in these areas up front, we save money over time and enhance the ability of all Portlanders to achieve a higher quality of life."***

# Employment

**In the future, employment options are plentiful for people of all backgrounds and skill levels.**

***“If we create a culture of learning, it solves the many problems that result from poor education such as crime, drugs and unemployment.”***

***I would like to see: “...focus on creating a truly vibrant and self-sufficient local economy, and shift jobs from the international capitalist system to locally-owned and operated cooperative ventures.”***

***In the future: “...We wrap our arms around our young people and ensure that each young person is connected to work, lifelong learning and active citizenship by age 25...”***

Portlanders are incredibly concerned about the amount of joblessness and unemployment in Portland. Many people suggest more employment options that allow for a high quality of life such as working close to home, flexible schedules, and work that people find meaningful. There is a sense that most inner-city jobs that are accessible to the masses are low-pay, and that people are forced to go to the suburbs to find work. A smaller group appreciate the ease with which they are able to seek employment.

Several people specified that minority groups are in need of work opportunities that cater to a range of skills and backgrounds, including leadership positions in the local government. People believe the reduction of unemployment will help alleviate community concerns such as homelessness, gang activity, and crime. Portlanders also want to see more employment training programs and quality education for young people and adults. They understand that if students are not getting the transferable skills they need to succeed in the working world, then many other problems related to joblessness will follow.

On the other hand, there is growing concern that Portland attracts highly educated young people because of its cultural aspects, but does not seem to offer jobs that match their professional skills. People assert that there should be more business development as a way to increase employment, and a greater increase in partnerships between businesses and schools.

# Jobs and Wages

## Portlanders desire rewarding, living wage jobs for all.

Many people voice an appreciation for their jobs, and their ability to find jobs in Portland. For instance, respondents expressed gratitude for job availability, although there are mixed opinions about general treatment and discrimination on the job. An even greater number of people discussed the difficulty of searching for and obtaining employment. People want greater diversity in job options throughout the city, and jobs that provide secure, livable, family wages for people of all ages and education levels. They want more support and an increase in the amount of businesses, especially locally, that will employ Portlanders long-term. Community members request more job training options for minorities and people transitioning from homelessness, and more opportunities to advance in the job market. Many people would like to see a bridge between schools and employers to ensure youth can learn specific skills that can be applied in the workforce.

Many people are concerned about the growing divide between wage levels and the cost of living in Portland. They want to see living wages that allow a greater quality of life for all individuals and families. People recognize that there needs to be more affordable housing to match minimum wages. Others would like wage increases to allow for homeownership. Portlanders want City government to offer incentives to businesses that provide employee health benefits and decent wages. People are also concerned about wage discrimination for minority groups such as immigrants and women and about certain underpaid jobs in sectors such as nonprofit work and education.

***I want to see: “More job opportunities...but it would be great if there were a way to encourage the type of job opportunities that many of us come here for—not the traditional measures usually taken to encourage economic growth, which are sometimes contrary to Portland’s character.”***

***“Too many people are job hunting who lose their time and faith in this city and have to leave elsewhere.”***

***In the future: “No one is underemployed. Those with degrees have decent jobs, rather than being stuck serving coffee.”***

# Shopping

**Portland's local stores and shops are highly valued by the city's residents.**

***"I value the local culture, because it's centered around a love for nature and community. I appreciate the rivers, parks, and trees. I also enjoy the urban lifestyle of riding transit, walking around local neighborhoods with their eclectic shops and restaurants. I like the pace of life and that it seems to value the simple pleasures, rather than the mainstream rat race."***

***I would like to see: "More local shopping and restaurants built into communities, like on 23<sup>rd</sup> or Hawthorne."***

Portlanders appreciate having stores and shops within walking distance of where they live. They want to preserve and enhance the small, distinct neighborhood shopping districts that include a variety of locally owned restaurants, coffee shops, brew pubs, farmers markets, and many other businesses. Local stores and shops create a sense of livability that appeals to people, as well as a comfort in knowing one does not have to travel far to find basic needs and amenities. Such feelings vary by neighborhood, however, and increased access is needed for shops, whether that means being more bike-friendly or increasing parking availability. Some people consider homelessness an issue that needs to be solved in order for downtown retail businesses to thrive.

There is a desire to have increased access to local, diverse shopping options in all neighborhoods that are more affordable, not just those closest to the central core of the city. Some people request later hours of operation for stores and businesses. Shopping is also inextricably linked with housing. Many Portlanders are quite skeptical of newer developments such as the Pearl district. New developments are perceived as less accessible both for shopping and living because of their upscale feel. A small number of people, especially youth, speak of the importance of the local malls and shopping as a way to build community. Most people tend to appreciate that Portland has few malls or big box stores in the central city and support preserving current conditions. Some would like to see more public and policy support for "green" shopping and businesses that commit to sustainable practices.

# Business

## **Portlanders support businesses large and small that reflect their values.**

Although people feel the city has an entrepreneurial environment that lends itself to new and innovative start-ups, there is great concern over the impact of current tax policies and licensing policies on small businesses. Many businesses are moving out of the city limits as a way to sustain themselves. People have noticed the effect it has taken on downtown and other nearby areas where many businesses have left, and want to see a much friendlier environment that helps sustain businesses. Several people suggested different ideas to reduce taxes for small businesses. They want more support given to minority businesses, especially in neighborhoods where there is an influx of new development.

Portlanders have differing opinions on whether to encourage large businesses to come to our city. Some people argue that in order to improve government relations with businesses and to increase employment opportunities for Portlanders, the City should provide tax incentives to attract new businesses to move here, and to help small local businesses open. Most people oppose the idea of large corporations and chain stores coming to Portland, and believe we should actively work to keep big box companies out of the city. Yet, other people suggested that existing larger businesses should sponsor our schools. They also believe that businesses should join with non-profits and government to end homelessness, which is sometimes seen as a barrier to businesses. In particular, people support big businesses hiring people transitioning out of homelessness. Portlanders would also like to see more commitment from companies, especially larger, to adopt cutting-edge, sustainable practices. They advocate providing to make this goal a reality.

***“...In a climate of funding cuts/retreat from the federal government, it’s imperative to fund local ways/solutions to pay for services, i.e. overhaul of the current tax system or increase corporate taxes, decrease small business taxes.”***

***“I want to see a higher success rate for some businesses through more effective and accessible training—my dream would be to have 85 percent of small businesses succeed rather than fail.”***

# Cost of Living

**Changes must be made to ensure that Portlanders are able to stay, and thrive, in the city.**

***“What I did value was living in a beautiful city that had opportunity for all, was affordable to live in and offered a great place to raise my son. Unfortunately, I am not able to value those things any longer as they are rapidly disappearing.”***

***“Develop mix cost housing areas so that a greater percentage of the population can become home owners.”***

One of the single largest obstacles for people trying to move to, live in or remain in Portland is insufficient affordable housing. Many business owners have also been forced to move from Portland for reasons related to affordability. People express extreme frustration over the rapid increase in condominium development. They would prefer to see more support for affordable housing and mixed income housing from the City government and from the Portland Development Commission. Many people attribute the fact that their homes and businesses are being “priced out” of the market to racism, classism and gentrification in revitalized neighborhoods.

Although some people consider Portland to be the most affordable on the West Coast, there is still great unrest about the increase in the cost of living given that existing wages are not increasing. Many also mention the need for more low-cost, age appropriate recreational activities for young people, and more affordable cultural/arts opportunities for families and adults. A smaller number of people called for lower gas prices.

# Housing

**Portlanders desire an abundance of attractive, affordable housing in the future.**

Affordable housing is incredibly important to Portlanders. Many people are concerned by the rising costs of property currently affecting renters and potential home owners. Although some feel this city is relatively affordable, there is still a strong voice that opposes new upscale development projects in areas such as the Pearl District, North/Northeast Portland and South Waterfront that seem to cater to people with high incomes while forcing many long-term residents with lower incomes out of their neighborhoods.

Portlanders want to see an increase in homeownership opportunities for everyone and suggest more development of mixed-income neighborhood housing. Many also value assistance for first time homebuyers. They firmly believe that affordable housing and homeownership should be made accessible to Portland's many diverse groups, some of which include ethnic minorities, seniors, artists, people with disabilities, people experiencing homelessness, people in recovery, veterans, the formerly incarcerated, families with children and others.

Also, some community members want to see more environmentally sustainable housing. A common suggestion was to help everyone reach sustainability goals by building environmentally sound housing. Also, people request that more care be taken to place housing near trees, community gardens and other amenities, such as public transportation, that make it easy for people to adopt more sustainable lifestyles.

***"We need more affordable housing! Some kind of rent control. Too many are homeless and many others are one missed paycheck (or condo conversion) away from the same fate. Owning a home is now out of reach for ordinary working people. Our housing supply should be managed to provide for people's basic needs."***

***"I mourn the loss of affordable housing, as I believe one of Portland's signatures is that young families can afford homes."***



# Economic Opportunities

**A growing, thriving economy is needed to provide Portlanders with employment and housing opportunities.**

***“I would like to see less condo development and a halt to rising costs of living, especially housing. I feel that although I love living here, I may not be able to afford to in the future unless I’m a millionaire.”***

***In 20 years: “The city has truly become an example of a sustainable way of life, proving it is feasible and at the same time keeping ties to the global economy and being economically strong.”***

Many hold firm to the belief that Portland and our City government can do much more to ensure that community members are able to contribute to and benefit from a thriving economy. They want to see strategic, progressive efforts to create more economic opportunities by leveraging public resources to support small, locally owned businesses. Many people also mention the need to celebrate elements unique to Portland that attract tourists as a way to encourage economic growth.

People also want to see targeted efforts to increase job opportunities, and to ensure that minority and underrepresented groups, such as young people, people with disabilities, and African Americans, have equal access to employment. Portlanders desire to see more opportunities for all residents, particularly people struggling with poverty and homelessness, to advance in their careers.



# EDUCATION

**Portlanders want quality public education for the city’s children, young adults, and lifelong learners.**

*“I would like to see education be a top priority. You can’t build a good economy without a strong workforce.”*

***I would like to see: “more young families with children, including middle and upper income families, migrating into, rather than out of, the city, and also putting their children in our public schools.”***

***“We need to devote much more attention to our public schools. They really need help and a community that cares, working to strengthen them.”***

Portlanders believe community success is tied to the success of public schools. They view the link as significant and want to see more quality education, higher levels of community involvement in schools, and greater support and protection of neighborhood schools. Portlanders value a strong public school system as a resource that benefits the entire community, not just parents and children. Respondents believe that greater investment in schools will help build strong communities.

Portlanders believe that strengthening education is the responsibility of the entire community, and that school improvement efforts are most effective when sustained by active community involvement and partnerships. Greater community engagement in schools is viewed as a way to improve teaching and learning in the classroom and to promote student development.

# preK-12 Schools

## **Improving the quality of preK-12 education is a top priority of Portlanders.**

Many Portlanders believe the quality of public schools is declining and expressed very high levels of concern over the state of the city’s public education system. There is a strong desire for Portland’s public schools to be national examples of educational excellence, in which every student is equipped with the skills and abilities to succeed in higher education and the workforce. Portlanders are concerned that perceptions of poor school quality are leading families to either move to the suburban fringes or place their children in private schools. Many believe that enhancing educational quality is essential if the city is to remain an appealing place for families to live.

The majority of people commenting on education talked about their desire for a system of strong neighborhood schools that are fully integrated into their respective communities. They see neighborhood schools as a natural focal point for neighborhood involvement, as children, parents and community members strengthen ties to neighbors and gain a sense of place and connection to their community. A portion of respondents, however, actively support the school choice program and view the policy as a major strength of the school district. Some community members value the diversity of educational opportunities offered by magnet, charter and special-focus schools including language immersion programs, arts-focused and environment-focused programs. Of the people who expressed their interest in these programs, many believe such schools provide greater opportunities for academic excellence and better support to gifted students.

***“Students need more than writing, reading and math. They need art, music, physical education and other creative outlets that allow them to discover who they are and become functional adults with great things to contribute to society.”***

***“I would like to see a more effective education system where more students are prepared for college.”***

***“I would like Portland to address the issue of fair funding for high schools. As a native Portlander, I find it shameful—the disparity between predominately white schools and predominately minority schools.”***

# Funding

**Portlanders want stable funding for schools and a responsive and accountable school administration.**

***“I want more fiscal responsibility, accountability and reporting to better understand how money is being allocated and why our school system is falling apart.”***

***“I think the scariest thing for me is the school system—as a parent and a librarian. I hate to see us scraping year after year to patch up a school system that needs a permanent, long-term funding fix.”***

Portlanders are in agreement over the need to provide reliable and stable funding to the city’s public schools, with a large number of people expressing frustration over the predominance of “quick-fix” solutions to school funding crises. Strategies to solve recurring funding problems vary, but most reflect a strong desire for a permanent, state-driven funding solution.

Many people believe that an increase in educational funding is necessary to create better schools. Deteriorated school facilities, large class sizes, inadequate technology, poor library resources and a general lack of educational opportunity are identified by community members as contributors to poor school quality and student learning. However, a number of people believe that educational quality could be improved not by increasing funds, but by focusing on internal reform. These Portlanders argue that schools could operate effectively with existing funds if not for ineffective administrators, organizational inefficiencies and poor decision-making.

Many Portlanders believe that resources should be equitably distributed among the city’s schools. There is widespread belief that significant variations in educational resources and quality exist among the city’s schools. Respondents cited students of color, low-income students, and non-native English speakers as groups currently underserved by the public school system. Many expressed concern about the inequities in school quality and want to ensure that every student is uniformly well-served by the public education system. Portlanders also believe that school administrators should be accountable for any funding increases, ensuring that additional funds are spent in ways that improve student learning and using measurements to determine the effectiveness of any additional funding.

# Higher Education

**Portlanders value the city's universities and colleges as engines of economic, social and cultural advancement.**

Community members want to see Portland's colleges and universities transform into world-class centers of higher education. Portlanders value the contributions these institutions make to the overall livability of the city and convey a strong need for a first-rate public research university. Respondents also want greater support for the city's existing colleges and universities. Increased funding is seen as a smart investment that will lead to sustained economic growth.

Higher education is viewed as essential to the economic growth of the region. Portlanders want colleges and universities to develop the knowledge, ideas and highly skilled workforce needed to produce competitive technologies, innovative products and new industries that diversify and strengthen the economy. Some respondents desire increased partnerships between higher education and industry and a larger focus on research and development efforts.

Portland's institutions of higher education are believed to play a very important role in advancing the ideal of equal opportunity by serving as avenues of social and economic mobility. Respondents want to broaden access to higher education by addressing the under-representation of minority and low-income students and ensure that higher education opportunities remain affordable.

People also value community-based learning programs such as those offered at Portland State University. There is a desire to see even greater collaboration between higher education institutions and the community to address community needs and enhance its well-being, at the same time deepening student's civic and academic learning.

***"Higher education should be made accessible and affordable for all city residents."***

***I want to see: "Better, stronger first rate colleges and universities. Portland (and Oregon for that matter) lacks strong educational centers to help drive business growth and our economy."***

# Community Education

**Portlanders value community education and want residents of all ages and backgrounds to have equal and open access to high-quality learning experiences that promote personal, career and civic development.**

***“Keep community dialogue happening. Educate the...public, not just sound bites, but solid information about what it takes to seriously support an infrastructure and systems that are healthy and thriving.”***

***I would like: “More job opportunities and training for low-skilled workers that did not have the opportunity to go to school.”***

Community members want a diverse range of community education opportunities to meet the varying personal interest of Portlanders. Programs and courses should be offered both inside and outside the formal education system and focus on nurturing personal interests and building a culture of continuous learning.

Many respondents want to see a greater number of employment and career-related education options, such as professional development workshops, job training programs, and English language courses for new immigrants.

Portlanders would also like to see greater efforts made at building community awareness and knowledge around issues of public concern. People want to strengthen the capacity and motivation of community members to participate in civic affairs by providing them with an informed understanding of community issues, needs and assets.





# ENVIRONMENT

**Portlanders cherish the environment and want it protected for future generations.**

***“Teach my children values of keeping our earth clean.”***

***“Less pollution gives us more trees and more trees mean fresher air and fresher air means we are more healthy. It is a chain reaction.”***

***“...It would seem our economy has to grow to keep from collapsing. Perhaps we need to change our economy to be in step with nature.”***

Many feel that Portland sets a high standard with its longstanding commitment to incorporate nature into the urban environment. They recognize that there are current sustainable programs and practices available to residents, but there is also wide demand for enhancing these sustainable services and programs to ensure that Portland’s future generations will benefit even more from the preserved environment. They understand that responsibility for sustaining our natural environment needs to come from individuals, businesses and government, but also that there needs to be an infrastructure to support sustainable lifestyles for everyone. Many people suggest that the City offer incentives to create the change that people want.

Portlanders voice a recurring interest in expanding public education efforts, especially for children, to help everyone understand how they can play a part in preserving a clean environment. They also often suggest ongoing research be a priority to ensure that Portland is making the best decisions about how to support its community members and businesses in sustainable practices.

Simply put, Portlanders envision a cleaner environment for Portland’s future. They want more care for and protection of the natural environment and want to see the prevention of global warming. Portlanders want to implement change in environmental practices and policy that is innovative and, at times, even radical.

# Air

## Portlanders want pristine air for all to enjoy.

While some Portlanders appreciate the existing air quality, many believe there is much room for improvement. They see the diminishing fresh, clean air as a detriment to the current state and future Portland, as the city prides itself on environmentalism. Some people spoke specifically about wanting to reverse the negative health implications, such as asthma, that they believe are related to vehicle emissions. This feeling was expressed particularly strongly by those who live near freeways and are disproportionately affected by polluted air (e.g., NW Portland).

Some suggested that the local government should enforce stricter regulations on industrial and auto emissions and that companies should be held accountable to the existing environmental protection laws. Fewer people commented on the burden of noise pollution, but some did request regulations to prohibit unnecessary noise. People also offered many ideas for ways that individuals can help reduce air pollution through the use of alternative fuels such as biodiesel. Some envision a carbon-free Portland in the future, where transit exudes zero emissions.

***“Portland is known as a “Green” city. However, we have terrible air quality in the metropolitan area. I live in NW Portland and am bothered by asthma and allergies to toxics in our air. In the summer months it is impossible to keep windows open due to the air quality...”***

***In the future: “Pollution is drastically reduced. There are no bad air advisories. Companies will be held legally and economically responsible for their impact on the environment.”***

***In 20 years, there will be: “...a lot less cars, all backyards are connected so that there’s tightly knit neighborhoods, growing lots of food in neighborhoods. Better place: people are connected, water and air is cleaner by reducing car use, and there are many really successful local businesses.”***

# Water

## Portlanders want clean, quality water throughout the city.

***I picture a future Portland with:  
“No waste water, it is all used at  
least twice.”***

***I imagine a city with: “Clean,  
sparkling waters – Willamette  
River is not polluted. People and  
animals can swim in the water  
without fear of disease. Native  
wildlife populations, such as  
salmon, can migrate and thrive.”***

***“I want better and more public  
access to the rivers.”***

Community members like that Portland sets an example for low-impact storm water management and they appreciate the taste of Portland’s tap water. However, some expressed concern over the cleanliness of water from our rivers, streams and occasionally tap water in residents’ homes. People think that clean, quality water should be equally distributed among neighborhoods and that the City government should ensure that water is affordable.

Many Portlanders also believe water should be protected as a valuable resource by supporting programs that encourage wide reuse of water, such as rainwater catchment and grey water systems. They recognize that if Portland had clean water in its rivers and streams, it would lead to more opportunities for local water recreation and enable fish and wildlife to flourish. Many people expressed their hopes to restore natural springs and streams that have been paved over enabling water to flow more freely through the city. Portlanders think industries located near our rivers and water sources, or companies that use our waters for the transportation of goods, need to contribute to keeping the water clean. Many believe that this will require local government to regulate businesses that dump waste in the rivers or that harm the water systems in other ways.

# Energy

## Portland takes the lead in creative energy solutions for a resource-scarce world.

Many Portlanders see the need to plan for the growing scarcity of fossil fuels by making alternative energy sources more accessible. Some think that the hydroelectric power and fossil fuels used for homes and vehicles should be replaced by alternative energy sources such as solar, wind and geothermal power. People are convinced this will require a significant public education campaign on the benefits of sustainable energy combined with an investment in ongoing research to determine the best ways to adapt to global trends on a local level.

Some people think utilities should become publicly owned in neighborhoods or districts, rather than by private energy companies. Also, community members believe in providing more options for renewable energy such as localized solar grids. Frequently people call for alternative energy choices for home and transportation needs that are affordable and widely accessible to all. Many Portlanders realize the need to provide incentives for the public and businesses to increase use of sustainable energy, but that everyone will reap long-term benefits from such changes. They suggest ideas such as the use of carbon credits, easier permits for solar use and short-term tax benefits for commuters using bio-diesel or other alternative transportation methods.

***“Oil prices are skyrocketing, and are only going to continue to get higher. Portland, like all communities, needs to decrease its dependency on oil as much as possible....”***

***I want to see: “Public education workshops and open houses to teach people about the benefits of alternative energy, alternative transportation and native landscaping. These should be free and well-advertised. Change begins with education.”***

***In the future: “Green housing is fueled by solar power, biofuels and energy independent communities.”***

# Solid Waste and Recycling

**Portlanders take pride in our city's emphasis on recycling.**

***“...trash cans should be accompanied by recycling bins for cans, glass and paper, even though I know this wouldn't happen, I would love to see a curbside compost pick-up in addition to trash, recycling and yard waste. Food waste adds a lot to landfills and it could be much more valuable when composted and turned into dirt!”***

***In the future: “I would not have a garbage bill—I would recycle everything.”***

***In 20 years, I imagine: “Having more recycling campaigns.”***

The importance of recycling, reducing waste and reusing materials is a deeply held value for Portlanders. Many community members express appreciation for the fact that Portland seems to embrace such practices. Portlanders welcome local businesses that facilitate the reuse of materials, and are pleased with the common practice of residential and business waste composting. Community members would like to see more public opportunities to compost in order to reuse food waste and yard debris that typically goes to a landfill.

Many have ideas for how to expand recycling programs to accept more materials that currently cannot be recycled— at least not on a large scale, such as toxic materials. People believe there should be more recycling accessible to residents who live outside the city center, or in multi-family developments. They also want more education about environmental lifestyle practices, and believe there should be increased funding for research on more effective recycling methods that could work for Portland.

# Commitment to the Environment and Sustainability

**Portlanders have a sound understanding of environmental sustainability and value it deeply.**

Portlanders are overwhelmingly grateful for the city's commitment to environmentally sustainable practices. Many believe that for some time, Portland has served as a unique national and international model of balancing economic and urban development needs with preservation of the environment. People also think Portland should set even higher standards for growing a more sustainable city and region.

While people like the easy access to sustainable programs and resources, they are aware that not all Portlanders have the same access to sustainable living options. There is a strong call to share these resources with more people by including underrepresented groups and communities as we move collectively towards a more sustainable Portland.

Portlanders also recognize the broader meaning of sustainability as it relates to our economy, cultural and social issues and environment. With this understanding, people request that all aspects of "sustainability" be considered in future planning and development of the city. They have innovative ideas for how our City government can support businesses, communities and individuals by securing a sustainable infrastructure that will guarantee a healthy, vibrant future for all. One common suggestion is that influential companies should be converted into green facilities and adopt sustainable practices in the workplace. They would like to see more reuse of old buildings as well as new, green and sustainable buildings.

***"...I value how the land has a "place at the table" in many of the social, economic and political decision making bodies."***

***I value: "...the commitment to integrating environment into neighborhoods and urban areas (where else can you see bald eagles from a high rise or walk through a forest or wildlife refuge within minutes of downtown?)."***

# Natural Environment

**Portland's beautiful natural environment is a heritage we must protect.**

***“A good thing about Portland: a million trees, but you're still in the city, with all of the resources of the city. You can get out to nature in two seconds, but you've got all the amenities in the city—with a more relaxed atmosphere.”***

***“Keep cleaning up past environmental problems, sewer overflows, reopen piped up streams, etc.”***

***I would like to see: “More investments in environmental protection/clean rivers/healthy fish and wildlife—less development-based marketing.”***

Portlanders love to talk about their appreciation for park systems in neighborhoods, the abundance of tree-lined streets and accessible urban forests. Portlanders find that the natural environment provides rich opportunities for families with children and for all people to build a sense of community.

People express the need to preserve and restore natural areas, parks, forests, wildlife areas, rivers and urban trees (especially old growth trees). With focused attention on increasing the natural environment, community members believe there needs to be particular attention to offering underserved neighborhoods the same outdoor benefits as others. According to many, individual responsibility will be a necessary part of keeping the natural environment intact including efforts such as energy saving methods in homes and in transportation. Portlanders also believe the future protection of our city's natural environment must involve working with regional groups and governments, rather than in isolation.

# Pollution

## Portlanders imagine a pollution-free future.

Often, people spoke of clean streets, parks, highways, air and drinking water. Some feel that the city cares when they see an abundance of public garbage cans around town and clean streets. People also appreciate efforts such as increasing bike paths help reduce pollutants in the environment by making it easier for people to choose biking over driving. When considering the long-term impacts of pollution, some call out Portland's effort to address peak oil concerns through research and alternative energy promotion.

On the other hand, some people believe that much more needs to be done to alleviate pollution for our city and region. Portlanders are concerned for their own and future generations' health and well being, and feel that their quality of life is compromised because of pollutants. People believe that businesses need to be held accountable for producing toxins in the air and water by enforcing strict penalty systems for industrial pollution. Many think that pesticide and herbicide use in public spaces such as parks should be banned. Some people believe that all public spaces should become smoke-free. Others think there should be stricter noise pollution laws, and a few mentioned that light pollution should also be considered. When considering these suggestions, many would like to ensure that there is equal distribution of pollution clean-up and environmental protection efforts in neighborhoods.

***“...take the reins away from the federal government and spearhead a directed initiative between Washington, Oregon and the various cities located on both the Columbia and Willamette rivers for a true and comprehensive clean-up. In a city that prides itself on green living, a better and functional effort must be made to clean our rivers. Take the initiative.”***

***I want to see: “Clean air! Mainly I would like regulations that reduce our environmental exposure to toxic substances. I would like Portland parks and school grounds to be pesticide free. I would like higher emissions standards for cars and industry. In addition, more bike lanes...more green building...and more community gardens would be very positive changes.”***



# GOVERNMENT

**Portlanders value their government and want it to be as accountable and accessible as possible.**

***“Right now, we’re the city that works. In the future, we should strive to be ‘the city that works for all.’”***

***In the future: “I see a community that puts priority on its public services, including its schools and green space. I see a community that supports and favors its small, local business sector. I see a community that continues to be known throughout the country as the city that pushes the envelope and raises the standards of political, economic and social progress.”***

***In the future: “We would continue to be a beautiful, humane and progressive city willing to take a chance on what we believe.”***

Portlanders want their government to be accessible, accountable and willing to take a stand to protect and preserve those things that make Portland vibrantly unique. Portlanders want their government to reflect their values and would also like it to reflect the community’s cultural and ethnic diversity, with some calling for a greater focus on leadership development within minority communities. They want to see government achieving greater efficiency through collaboration and creative problem-solving and exhibiting more transparency in decision-making.

Current opportunities for citizen involvement are highly valued, with many Portlanders desiring even higher levels of citizen participation in future decision-making. Many Portlanders value the current form of city government because they perceive it to be broadly accessible; others, however, would like to see the form become either more centralized or more decentralized. The desire expressed is to not just be heard, but to actually have influence in shaping the course of city affairs.

While some Portlanders oppose taxes, the great majority imagine a Portland in which people are willing to pay taxes to fund important community goals because they know that their money is well-managed and correctly prioritized. Portlanders value thoughtful, proactive, long-term city planning, believing this provides an antidote to short-term, election-oriented thinking. They believe a clear community vision will enable elected leaders to rise above everyday pressures and make decisions that advance the long-term good of the community as a whole.

# State and Local Taxes

**Portlanders want a stable, equitable tax system to fully fund the services they value.**

Portlanders have a lot to say about taxes, with most comments involving suggestions for how to improve the current system, which is seen as lacking stability and equity. While Portlanders understand that federal and state policies are partly to blame, they still want the City to do everything possible to better align its taxing and spending practices with the people's priorities. Many creative suggestions are offered regarding specific items and activities that could be taxed more or less by the City to achieve a more balanced and progressive system.

Major topics of debate include whether or not to implement a sales tax and whether the current tax burden is too high, too low or just right—and for whom? While opinions vary widely, many community members seem willing to increase taxes to achieve a first-rate education system and, if necessary, to preserve livability. Their willingness hinges, however, on receiving assurance that their money will be spent efficiently and for the intended purposes. Many are frustrated with short-term and seemingly ineffective “fixes” such as the temporary Multnomah County personal income tax for years 2003-2005 (otherwise known as “I-Tax,”). They would prefer for politicians to develop stable, long-term solutions to recurring funding crises.

Significant frustration is also expressed in regards to how tax breaks and incentives are currently used by the City. Portlanders do not want tax breaks used to facilitate private profit-making but rather to advance broad social goals, such as the use of renewable energy, the use of mass transit and the development of affordable housing. To the extent possible, they would like the tax structure to advance equity in society by placing a higher burden on those able to pay, such as corporations, and reducing the burden on those who are not.

***“The city leadership probably needs to form an alliance with other state leaders on an overall tax reform agenda.”***

***“If the money from taxes is spent wisely and effectively, I don't mind paying more taxes.”***

***I think we should: “Begin an ad campaign to educate the public on why paying taxes can be a good thing by showing them the benefits it produces. Portland is great because of all the public goods it provides...”***

# Public Infrastructure

**Portlanders believe that one of the most important functions of local government is the maintenance and improvement of public infrastructure.**

***“Fix the basic services like roads, police/jails, affordable sewers, parks and schools instead of grandiose schemes that suck up the money forever (like the tram and [South Waterfront] SoWa).”***

***“The costs of the infrastructure are not being taken into consideration when new homes are built. The resulting burden on water, sewer, gas, electricity and schools is far higher than the benefits of more people.”***

Whether or not community members feel infrastructure is up to par depends on which aspects of infrastructure they refer to; people love the libraries, the green spaces, the curbside recycling and the walk/bike paths but feel that many roads, school buildings, bridges and highways need major improvements.

Many Portlanders are concerned that infrastructure development and maintenance is not keeping up with population growth, or will be unable to in the near future. A popular suggestion is to require developers of new housing to meet the additional infrastructure needs created by their projects, especially around parking, mass transit, schools and green space.

Portlanders seem to agree that infrastructure should be made available and excellent in all parts of the city before public funds are spent on items such as trams or major league sports. However, there was a widely-held view that Portland should “go back to the basics” with tax dollars, focusing on infrastructure (roads, sewer, street lights, etc.), full funding for schools, fire and public safety. With what’s left, they feel government should do a better job at prioritizing expenditures.”

# Government Performance

**Portlanders believe government can be more efficient, effective and collaborative.**

While many Portlanders are willing to tax themselves for strong public services, there is widespread agreement across the political spectrum that City government could be more efficient and effective. Many cite costly errors and public bickering between officials as examples of time and taxpayer money wasted. Some wonder if a different form of city government would result in greater efficiency and better performance, while others value the current form of government and want it preserved.

Many people want to see higher performance standards for the Portland police, especially in regards to mental illness, cultural/ethnic diversity and non-violent methods of conflict resolution. A common perception is that officers “shoot first, ask questions later,” and that they are not held accountable or properly disciplined for this unacceptable behavior. Portlanders would like a police force that works in partnership with communities to prevent injury and death, rather than creating a climate of fear, which can lead to more violence.

In general, people believe that government performance can be enhanced through better and more frequent collaborations between bureaus and between the City and other entities such as Metro, the County, and the State. As one community member notes, “Portland works best when different government entities work together to find synergistic solutions to common problems.” Some already see this collaboration taking place, while others hold this as their hope for the future.

***“I value the collaborative nature of problem-solving that seems constantly to be taking place, and the fact that citizens are invited, indeed, welcomed into these processes.”***

***In the future: “City and county have made clear, complementary business cases for their missions and investments. Services reflect citizen willingness to pay. With clear identities, city and county interact effectively with service partners (fed/state/metro/profit, and nonprofit).”***

***I would like to see: “Mostly, a change in leadership. The city government wastes tons of money every year and feels no accountability to its citizens.”***

# Spending

**Public money should be spent first and foremost on the people's top priorities.**

***“We talk a great deal about keeping a focus on the working poor, the under or uninsured, about improving our schools and strengthening our communities. But we also pour a lot of our resources into developments that will benefit the most advantaged... but aren't necessarily a great use of our resources.”***

***“Create programs that nurture local small business, local artists, local visionaries, instead of trying to lure big industries here to create jobs – we can create our own and ultimately have much more stability.”***

***“Work on the basics. Don't try to be all things to all people. Hit the basics out of the ballpark. Fix the schools and work on housing (low and middle income affordability).”***

While Portlanders disagree on the value of specific public investments (e.g. bike lanes, the tram, freeway resurfacing), there is wide agreement that tax dollars should be spent with the utmost efficiency, transparency and equity. There is also broad consensus that public expenditures should advance the public's priorities over the priorities of what are perceived as special interests. Many question who currently benefits from public expenditures: developers, the poor, the wealthy, big business, close-in neighborhoods? Time and again, Portlanders ask that money be spent first and foremost on projects/programs that benefit the city as a whole, such as clean air and water, excellent public education, and affordable housing.

The public would also like to see more efficiency in government spending. Many people are unsure how their money is being spent, believing much gets wasted in the current government system. They would like to see less duplication of effort and more coordination between different bureaus and agencies. They would also like to see more spending on preventative measures that are cost-effective and long-lasting such as improving schools and addressing addiction problems rather than having to build more jails.

Community members offer a number of concrete suggestions for increasing public participation in the budgeting process, believing their interests will be better served if they are more involved. They also call for a number of changes to the budgeting process itself, with the overarching goal of better aligning spending with long-term public priorities.

# Policies

## **Portland is well-positioned to be a policy leader in many different areas.**

Many, many community members deeply appreciate the overall progressive tone of Portland's policies and politics. They support City policies on a wide range of topics, from curbside recycling to preservation of the commons to acceptance of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community and other minority groups. However, within this section there are also areas of strong disagreement, particularly in regards to Portland's attitudes/policies towards business, with the City perceived as business-friendly by some and anti-business by others. Other policy areas which received significant comment include transportation policy, health policy, energy policy and policies around sustainability, diversity, homelessness and public safety.

While most people support the overall direction of government policies, there is a vocal minority who feel very alienated from their government. These individuals believe liberal government policies do not reflect their values and feel marginalized by policymakers who do not seem willing to engage them in meaningful policy debate.

In general, Portlanders appreciate the City's willingness to pioneer progressive policies and would like the City to continue to enact bold and principled initiatives. Many cite past progressive policy innovations at the state-wide level, such as the bottle bill, as examples of the type of policy leadership they expect from Portland. An even greater number want to ensure that, moving forward, City policies and goals are geared toward creating a livable city for all people, with particularly attention paid to children and families.

***I value that: "Portland (and Oregon) has often been ahead of the country with forward-thinking values and policies."***

***"I do not want to drive or walk down the street and feel that I could be anywhere in America. Portland is vibrantly unique. This vision is the force that should inspire planning and laws of the community."***

# Utilities

## Many imagine community ownership of ecologically-sound utilities.

***“Energy management is the topic of the day, and a possible nightmare of tomorrow. Move away from an oil-based economy. A first step is public power, a bigger step is “net zero” building regulations. Or changing code requirements for proximity to basic services for neighborhoods, such as grocery stores.”***

This small section mostly addresses concerns around water, sewage, garbage and electrical utilities. Comments regarding public restrooms also appear in this section, with most people asking for more public restrooms downtown and in neighborhood parks. Other comments revolve around the placement of utilities, with some calling for burying electric and phone/cable lines or moving them to the backs of houses, so as not to get in the way of the beautiful trees that line streets.

Many comments surround water bills, which are perceived as too high, as well as the topic of whether or not the City should purchase Portland General Electric (PGE). A few individuals resent the amount of time, energy and resources absorbed by the PGE discussion, feeling this should be spent on providing basic services instead. Many others, however, advocate public ownership of PGE, believing it will make power more affordable and more ecologically sound. Some people also advocate removing monopolies on utilities such as garbage service and allowing smaller, local companies to provide these services.

Community members who mention utilities in their vision for the future imagine Portland moving towards energy self-sufficiency, with the public creating and managing solar power, wind power and other forms of sustainable energy.

# Long-Term Planning

## Portlanders understand and appreciate the value of long-term community planning.

Most people value Portland's history of strong, forward-thinking planning, crediting past planning efforts with creating the livable, unique, beautiful Portland they see today. Where disagreement and discontent emerge is in regards to the current state of planning, which many feel suffers from lack of long-range vision, lack of genuine citizen input, and an over-willingness to "let developers decide what's best for Portland."

Along those lines, there are strong feelings about the Portland Development Commission (PDC), which many feel is no longer serving the best interests of the city at large. Many distinct but inter-related complaints are voiced (e.g. PDC is too beholden to developers, out of touch with Portland's values, not accountable to the people, lacking creative economic development tools, consistent neglect of certain neighborhoods) along with a number of suggestions to get economic development planning back on track.

Portlanders clearly care very much about their city and want to play a role in shaping its future. Many express gratitude to visionPDX for soliciting their opinions and suggestions, believing that a citizen-led vision is absolutely essential as we look to the future. Portlanders believe in planning and want to work with planners to bring about a city that is true to their values. If these efforts are successful, they imagine Portland becoming "a beacon for the rest of the world as the most livable, inviting and functional city in America. A place that policymakers turn to when they take on the inevitable work of re-making their sprawling, unsustainable urban places into livable cities again."

***"I want us to return to a vision that looks ahead, not just at money and growth. We will end up like Seattle if we continue to let developers decide what is good for Portland."***

***"I love the way Portland has a history of thoughtful city planning. The wonderful mix of parks with neighborhoods. The environmentally friendly ethic, recycling at the curb, bike and other means of transportation incorporated into the planning..."i>***



# PUBLIC HEALTH

**A clean, green, healthy lifestyle is core to Portland's identity.**

***"I value the small neighborhoods in city limits. The ability to walk to stores and mass transportation is very important to my family. I value the health conscious lifestyle that Portland offers. From the availability of organic foods and bike lanes to alternative healthcare options and mostly outside activity opportunities (parks, Mt. Hood, ocean, and the gorge)."***

***In the future, we are: "A healthier society. Physical well-being, social well-being. Happier and healthier."***

People place a strong emphasis on balanced personal and community health. Comments on community health span a wide spectrum, including appreciation for easy access to a beautiful unspoiled natural environment, parks within city limits, low levels of pollution, city-sponsored encouragement of biking and walking rather than driving, urban design amenities and human scale neighborhoods that counteract sedentary lifestyles as well as proximity to world class medical facilities. An almost universal expectation exists that government should provide health benefits for those who cannot provide for themselves.

Community members also value Portland for being relatively stress free compared to other cities. Many Portlanders value the emphasis placed on quality of life. On the whole, Portlanders are proud of the web of amenities that exist here to promote healthy lifestyles and agree that everyone needs to have access to them in order to have a happy and healthy community.

Despite our clean, green reputation, some people believe that we could be doing better in ensuring a healthy environment for everyone. Many point to the pollution in the Willamette River, the increasing instances of obesity, and uneven distribution of parks, greenspaces and pedestrian amenities throughout our community. They see these as signals that there are areas that we need to improve amenities to ensure that all Portlanders receive the same health-related amenities.

Portlanders strongly believe that in the future every community member should be able to enjoy the health, exercise and recreational opportunities available throughout the region. People want Portland to be recognized as the healthiest city in the US, and are excited to model our best practices for other cities.

# Access to Healthcare

**Portlanders value the wealth of health care amenities available to us, but want increased and fairer access to these programs for everyone.**

Many Portlanders value the quality and variety of healthcare programs available in our community. Portlanders also value easy access to local parks and other outdoor recreation areas, citing the importance of daily exercise and other forms of preventative healthcare. For many, access to health amenities also means being able to afford a variety of health care options, including alternative health care, healthy nutritious food, being able to benefit from living in walkable neighborhoods and having access to safe bike lanes. Portlanders understand that it is a web of amenities and a variety of lifestyle options that contribute to an individual's health.

Many community members desire better, more affordable health care. Portlanders are specifically concerned about the ability of low-income families, children living in poverty, the elderly and the homeless to access the health amenities in our region. They state that these groups have limited access largely because of cost and distance to services. Portlanders envision a future where there is more equitable access to the full spectrum of health care programs and amenities.

***“ I would like for housing to be more affordable and for everyone to have access to affordable health care and for people to have jobs that pay a living wage.”***

***“A compassionate health care system would actually make our city safer because people may engage in unsafe practices and risky behaviors when they feel disenfranchised, when they have nothing to lose. In other words, poor or underemployed folks may not feel invested in a community that does not value them. One way to prove we believe in the worth of every individual is to provide basic mental and physical healthcare for everyone.”***

# Cost of Healthcare

**Income should not be a barrier to receiving quality health services.**

***In the future: “Everyone knows where they can find low cost quality health care and they do not have to worry about going into debt over hospital bills. Idealistic? I don’t think so. Perhaps that’s because I’m from Portland.”***

***“The Oregon health system has unraveled and needs to be looked at again from a partnership between the state and businesses to provide cost-contained health care for all. Businesses and public services are bleeding because of health care costs in this state and all over the country.”***

Many people call for a reduction in the cost of healthcare services so that everyone can afford to receive medical and dental attention for preventative care and on as-needed basis, regardless of whether the patient has health insurance. Many Portlanders suggest that either the City of Portland, or the State of Oregon implement universal health care. Portlanders also believe that by practicing preventative health care we can ultimately reduce the total cost of providing healthcare statewide and that expensive medical procedures will be reduced as major health issues are detected early.

Portlanders also feel health care is a right, and not something that only the rich should have access to. They call attention to low-income families, children living in poverty, elders and the homeless as being particularly at risk of foregoing medical attention, procedures or prescription medication because they lack the necessary funds. In the future Portlanders would like to see everyone be able to benefit from regular healthcare, regardless of their income.

# Health Insurance

**Related to cost and access, health insurance is perceived to be the single largest barrier to accessing health care in Portland.**

Many people want health insurance to be more affordable, and advocated for more living wage jobs that provide good benefits, enabling a greater number of people to have access to healthcare. Community members view affordable health insurance as the primary means to access the quality healthcare options available in the region for themselves and their families. Many people suggest that we create a program similar to the Oregon Health Plan so that people without insurance could still receive medical attention.

In the future, Portlanders see everyone being able to afford medical treatment for themselves and their families. They usually conclude that both having access to, and being able to afford health insurance was the solution.

***“The politicians overspend our money, leaving the poor to get poorer and the rich to become richer. They cut the Oregon Health Plan for a lot of people, causing people to either suffer with illness or go into extreme debt to get help.”***

***“They need to make medical coverage affordable for families, like medical and dental, prescription and emergency care. This really needs to happen for low-income families. I want my kids to have insurance, it’s important, but I can’t afford it.”***

***“I would like to see health insurance for all of us! National health care isn’t happening. Let’s do something locally.”***

# Substance Abuse

**Substance abuse is destructive to the lives of individuals, to the safety of our children and to our sense of community**

***“Focus on health and prevention instead of pathology and services for those who have fallen.”***

***“Help for the mentally ill and the children of drug and alcohol abusers. We need to spend money at the root of the problem and not at the end result.”***

Many Portlanders are very concerned over the perceived increase in illegal substance abuse, namely methamphetamine. They are concerned for their personal safety as well as crimes against their personal property and homes. Many people are concerned for the welfare of children exposed to drug abuse and a smaller group mentioned concern over drug use and its relationship to gang activity. A smaller group of people would like to see the use of alcohol and smoking (especially in public areas) severely limited citing both as public health hazards.

The issue of substance abuse, specifically illegal substances, was repeatedly linked to concern over Portland’s continuing struggle with homelessness. Many people perceive the homeless as drug addicts, and therefore potentially dangerous to themselves and the community. The majority prefers compassionate and progressive approaches to drugs and homelessness, however a vocal minority made it clear they are intolerant of any and all drug use and prefer strict prison to rehab, street sweeps, and the like.

A small group praised the success and effectiveness of existing recovery programs in our community. They want more recovery services available in Portland so that others can overcome substance abuse and addiction.

The vast majority seem to acknowledge that treatment and better affordable housing options are a necessary part of the solution in the future.

# Mental Health

**Mental health is an important component of well-being and mental health needs should be addressed.**

Most people who mention mental health link comments on mental health with concern over the homeless population (similar to “Substance Abuse”). A significant number of responses reflect Portlanders belief that inability to access affordable mental health care and medication contributes to homelessness or further exacerbates the issue. Many people are concerned over the amount of homeless downtown and perceive them to a danger to themselves and to others. A smaller number of people also express the need for a more compassionate approach to dealing with the mentally ill homeless, and that the Portland Police are not adequately trained to handle these cases.

Portlanders state a strong desire to see counseling and medication supplied to those members of our community in need, free of charge. Portlanders understand the connection between good mental health and the ability to hold a regular job and find housing. In the future Portlanders want to see mental health needs met, regardless of a person’s ability to pay to ensure all Portlanders receive the care they need to enjoy a high quality of life. At the same time many seek to decrease the amount of homeless on the streets to increase feelings of safety in areas like downtown. Regardless of their motive, many Portlanders envision a future where homelessness is non-existent because we have a more effective system to help the homeless struggling with mental illness to receive treatment.

A smaller group mentioned the importance of mental health in everyone’s lives, and its impact on one’s quality of life.

***“We can stand up against the status quo that would tell us to criminalize homelessness, when a majority of the people on the streets are ailing from mental illness, having been either deinstitutionalized or having run out of any other options.***

***We can take a visible stand for the people of Portland, unite beyond differences, call out for community action efforts and make a bold statement that we are the City of Roses and there are no invisible people here!! The people of Portland make the city what she is today, each and every one of them.”***

# PUBLIC SAFETY

**Portlanders want to feel safe and recognize the role of community in enhancing public safety.**

***“Portland still feels like a relatively safe city. If I want to go for a run, I just leash up my dog and go, no matter what time of day. As a woman, that means a lot to me.”***

***“Police have to do a better job in the black community, treating them with respect.”***

Portlanders believe their city to be wonderfully clean and safe, especially compared to other places they may have lived. However, for many, safety is a significant concern. People understand that several aspects of community life contribute to the overall safety of the city, including popular destinations like parks and public squares as well as larger areas like downtown Portland and our public transportation system. Respondents strongly advocate that the city center should be welcoming and safe for everyone, including families with small children and the elderly. People frequently cite the homeless, panhandlers and crowds of street youth as being intimidating and verbally aggressive. Portlanders also refer to public transit as being threatening, usually based on the dangerous appearance and behavior of other passengers.

Despite a great deal of concern about Portland’s safety issues – many people also talk about how much they love Portland for its sense of safety, security and peacefulness. They clearly understand the connection between the quality of life we share and being a city that is welcoming, non-judgmental, less stressful, more easy going and cheerful.

Portlanders see public safety as a responsibility that should be shared between the community and police and envision a future where both parties share in the peace-keeping of our city.

# Policing

**Many Portlanders believe that our policing practices are heavily biased and need reform.**

Many Portlanders are alarmed by the behavior of the police in recent months. They call for major reforms in the current policing of our neighborhoods, stating that their current practices are unfair and dangerous to several community groups. Many people talk specifically about their fear and concern over the police shootings over the last couple of years and want to see training that will prevent interactions escalating into violence and the use of deadly force. Portlanders are also very concerned over the unfair practice of racial profiling. There is a strong belief that racism is the underlying cause for racial profiling in Portland. Many people express deep concern that racism is rarely discussed publicly and advocated for better education on different races and cultures to break down the walls of mistrust and prejudice that exist in our community.

Many Portlanders believe police officers need to be trained in cultural awareness and in more effective and appropriate practices for dealing with the homeless and mentally ill. Portlanders also frequently called for more community oversight of the police department. In seeking to rebuild trust with the police, people called for more community policing to increase neighborhood and personal safety (see Community Policing). Portlanders envision a future where the relationship between the police and community members is built on trust and understanding rather than prejudice and fear.

A smaller number of people talked about how they appreciate the police and the services they provide our community. These people liked the police on bicycles and horseback downtown because they feel more accessible.

***I would like to see: “ An improved police force that can maintain public safety and be a role model for the community.”***

***In 20 years: “Our police force is a model for improving community/police relations (we have had no taser or other deaths resulting from excessive force or police brutality).”***

***“We can speed the dismantling of racism by giving police better, regular cultural awareness and diversity training...continuing education of police and citizens and by a more bi-lingual and culturally diverse police force.”***



# Crime

**Some people perceive Portland as having a relatively low crime rate, but others experience the negative effects of crime regularly.**

***“I’ve always felt that Portland was a safe place to live and you didn’t need to be frightened to leave your home. I’m beginning to feel that this is not necessarily so anymore.”***

***“Recently things have deteriorated into a more criminal atmosphere. I would like to live peacefully and not fear from my children why they are at school, be able to walk safely down the street at night, and park my car on the street without the threat of it being stolen.”***

Portlanders are very concerned about crime such as drug use, car theft, house burglaries, prostitution, gangs, graffiti and vandalism. They believe that the police should enforce existing rules more fairly to ensure that the entire community benefits from their protection. Portlanders are very concerned over the apparent spike in methamphetamine use, pointing to it generating neighborhood crimes such as burglaries and car break-ins. The solutions posed to address crime vary greatly, from strict incarceration and preventing the early release of criminals who may become repeat offenders to studying the root causes of crime.

Some community members are also very concerned over gang activity. This was given special importance because it directly affects Portland’s youth—and involvement with gangs threatens their individual quality of life as well as the greater community. Many people (families, younger children and the elderly) fear gang activity and groups of people that appear dangerous or intimidating loitering in downtown, in parks and some residential areas. People called for better education and support programs for young people by improving Portland’s school system.

Additionally, people perceive graffiti and vandalism as a by-product of gang activity. They value the beauty and cleanliness of our city and believe graffiti makes Portland look dirty, unkempt and uncared for.

# Neighborhood Safety

## Portlanders envision all neighborhoods feeling safe.

Portlanders frequently mention how much they treasure Portland's safe neighborhoods, which they value as safe places to raise children. They likewise enjoy the feeling of being protected from criminal activity. However, a significant group talk about how they want increased neighborhood safety and police presence.

Portlanders also talk about how they value and appreciate "safe streets," as a component of neighborhood safety and allude to the sense of ownership a community can feel for this shared space. Portlanders want their neighborhood streets to be safe for children, pedestrians, cyclists and cars. Many people suggest strengthening neighborhood safety and security by increasing community policing as an essential component of crime prevention. In the future, Portlanders envision all neighborhoods to be safe, crime-free community spaces.

***I value: "The overall openness of the people. This is very uncommon for a city of this size. I feel that someone would stop and help me if I was hurt on the street and I feel relatively safe."***

***"I value how safe I feel in the city because feeling safe allows me to run along waterfront park alone at lunch, take a stroll down the park block, or meet a friend for dinner."***

# Community Policing

**Portlanders want to see community policing increase to help keep neighborhood crime down.**

***I would like to see: “More community policing, thus more community participation within neighborhoods. Also, more outreach community activities to help local people in our own communities.”***

***In the future: “We have a little more peace and our kids have stopped killing each other. Our communities have come together and work as one. The police have become better partners in the community. My kids are safe in the community.”***

Portlanders view community policing as a very effective tool to improve neighborhood safety because it weaves together the energy and on-the-ground knowledge of active and civically minded neighbors and police officers to collaboratively monitor criminal behavior in neighborhoods. Advocates of community policing want police officers to be better integrated with the communities they serve and suggest officers have regular beats, be friendly to all community members and become recognized and known within the communities they serve. These people also believe that community policing will be made more effective if we develop a new “book” or tool kit/knowledge base for police officers to follow when interacting with the public.



# SOCIAL ISSUES

***“Change the way police target poor people and people of color. Stop treating us so bad.”***

***“It is clear that Portland values its people and that its people value Portland.”***

***In the future: “All homeless people are in transitional programs or have transitioned out of them into affordable housing close-in, in safe neighborhoods where they are a part of a community that supports their transition and continued self-reliance.”***

**The equity and justice of social and economic arrangements is a top concern for Portlanders.**

Portlanders voice their hopes for overcoming racism, classism and other forms of oppression as a way to ensure that people’s basic rights to essentials like housing, food and education are met. Wanting the issue of homelessness solved is perhaps one of the most often mentioned desires of the community. Portlanders view these social issues as threatening to our entire community’s quality of life. Community members understand that people who are already struggling to make ends meet are directly impacted when funding for schools is cut, jobs and job training programs are limited, affordable housing options are slim and when it is too difficult to start or maintain a business in one’s own neighborhood.

People express their appreciation for Portland’s services and opportunities for involvement in decision making. They want to see more diverse political leaders and public officials that represent diverse community interests and values rooted in the common good. Portlanders would like to see more creative and effective educational outreach methods on issues such as homeownership, renters’ rights and food security. They also want more understanding, compassion and acceptance of people negatively impacted by social inequity. They envision more integration of well-served, diverse people in neighborhoods, learning from each other and working together with leaders that are attuned to their interests.

# Diversity

## Portlanders imagine a future in which diversity is fully embraced.

Many people feel that Portland is incredibly diverse, and they appreciate the amount of diversity in its population, but just as many people voiced their belief that Portland is overwhelmingly non-diverse, and hope that the city becomes more diverse. One example that many people spoke of is about a sense of comfort in the fact that it feels safe and welcoming in this community to be openly gay, although people want to have the right for everyone to marry, including same sex marriages. Community members believe there should be more diverse businesses and more opportunities for minorities to operate and own businesses in their neighborhoods.

Portlanders were extremely concerned with the growing socioeconomic gap along with segregated neighborhoods and schools. They would like to see more ethnically and socio-economically integrated affordable housing in desirable areas, as a way to address gentrification and segregation. Community members see this happening through greater diversity in land use plans, such as having more affordable housing in more high-income neighborhoods. People also want to see more diversity trainings for the police, government officials and the general public. It was touched on that young people, especially minority youth, are not provided opportunities to have a voice in decision-making. Portlanders also expressed the need for more dialogue across cultures and having physical spaces to allow for such communication.

***“I am a teacher and I feel often that my voice and the voices of our most marginalized students are not heard.”***

***“I would love to see a police force that is more culturally diverse. I am a parent of three African-American children and it is my biggest fear that a police officer will harm them at some point in their life merely due to the color of their skin.”***

***In the future: “Not one person will be living under a bridge, people of color and those that are marginalized will not be treated with indifference, but with dignity and respect. We will not just be mouthing these words, rather we will take action.”***

# Homelessness

**Portlanders want homelessness addressed and do not want to see it in the future.**

***“I value all the great services for homeless people downtown...There’s also some really nice places to live and they’re some really caring people working at those places. It makes me feel valued.”***

***“Arresting and berating and debasing people is not a suitable way to deal with a social issue, nor is it acceptable to give in to local merchants and their one-dimensional view of how homeless people are “limiting their economic growth.”***

***In 20 years: “All homeless people are in transitional programs or have transitioned out of them into affordable housing close-in, in safe neighborhoods where they are a part of a community that supports their transition...”***

Homelessness is one of the most frequently mentioned topics. The ways that people express their concern and ideas to address the problem vary. Some talk about feeling unsafe interacting with people experiencing homelessness that panhandle or that are in public spaces. Others say that homelessness is disruptive to tourists and to downtown businesses. Many people, however, want to confront the issue of homelessness from a place of compassion and understanding. They consider housing and social services a fundamental right for all. Because they believe circumstances force individuals and families out of places they consider their homes and displace them from their communities and call for providing educational programs to help the community better understand issues related to homelessness.

The lack of jobs, affordable housing and the growing socioeconomic gap in Portland are all connected issues that people think should be considered when addressing homelessness. People value the existing agencies that provide services to the homeless, but some think there is a need for more comprehensive and innovative services and systems that offer people transitioning out of homelessness a sense of dignity and respect. Portlanders believe that more funding should come from the local governmental bodies, civic groups, and businesses to prevent homelessness for people experiencing poverty. Portlanders put a particular emphasis on serving youth, single women, women with children and pregnant women.

# Social Services

**With equitable access to social services, all Portlanders can strive for success.**

Portlanders greatly appreciate the quality, variety, and amount of social services available. People believe that there is an abundance of resources that provide for basic needs like food and clothing. They also are concerned, however, that there are not enough services in certain areas, such as shelters, transitional housing and affordable housing options for people, especially women.

Generally, Portlanders think there should be more stable funding coming from government and big businesses. They suggest that providers avoid unnecessary duplication of services through better coordination between agencies that serve similar populations. They also would like to see increased accessibility of services by alleviating barriers for all groups. Some imagine having centers in neighborhoods that offer multiple services under one roof.

Portlanders emphasize prevention and treatment over punishment and criminalization that leads to detention. They advocate for an increase in activities and programs available to youth and young adults. Many also suggest that agencies allow service recipients to have a stake in shaping service programs in order to increase rates of success.

***I would like to see:*** “Continued attention and focus on provision of social services and affordable housing for those in need. We can only set a good example by doing better than we are in these areas. If we are a truly compassionate city, let’s walk the talk!”

***I would like to see an:*** “...All inclusive community center for skill building, job training, counseling, problem solving. A one stop Resource Center is a very important need.”



# Ethnic and Cultural Minorities

Feelings run strong on the topic of ethnic diversity in Portland.

*“I have lived in Portland for almost two years. In my time here, I have witnessed drug sales on the property where I live, racial discrimination, death threats against myself, physical threats against my person, and constant harassment...there appears to be a problem with racial equality in the City of Portland.”*

*In the future “We’re much more diverse, and much more comfortable with it. Every part of the city offers people of all ages comfortable, safe and enjoyable options, and people appreciate the gifts of others of different ages, as well as from other lands, across genders, etc....”*

*“We need to be sure to support people of all ethnicities coming to live in Portland, whether that be through better communication and multi-lingual staff in support roles, and/or financial support for some time for those who may need it.”*

Whether people identify with the mainstream or minority groups (that vary by overlapping categories such as ethnicity, race, class, sexual orientation, faith, ability, age) they often have something to say about the subject. Many people appreciate Portland’s diverse groups and the cultural array of restaurants and entertainment options. People hold the impression that Portland is generally accepting of different groups. Those speaking from minority perspectives often mention experiencing underlying inequities and injustices such as racism when it comes to quality of neighborhoods, schools, housing and access to health and leadership positions.

Portlanders suggest that there be more cultural/public resources for all socioeconomic levels, culturally-specific services in schools and places for cultural groups to congregate on a regular basis. Many people voice a concern about gentrification and express a need to hold community dialogues about affected neighborhoods. People would like to see more opportunity for integration of minority groups in all neighborhoods. Some also suggest greater recognition of specific cultural and minority groups’ history in the region.

# Family and Youth

**Youth and families represent the future of the city and must be supported and nurtured.**

Quite a few people consider Portland to be an attractive city for raising children because of the slower pace and small town feel. They believe the city accommodates families with features like the many sustainable practices, public transportation, bike and pedestrian options for commutes, neighborhoods with local businesses, public spaces and parks. People appreciate the many activities and places that are child and family friendly. One common concern is whether future generations of families will be able to live here, given the under-funded schools and lack of affordable housing. Portlanders are extremely concerned about homeless youth and families, and the need for more accessible services. Portlanders imagine a city where the norm is affordable housing, flourishing neighborhood schools and where all children and families have health coverage and are well fed.

***“We need more money to keep youth programs going. Things are extremely tight, programs are going away...We need people in leadership who know how to “think outside the box”, especially our school officials. Our schools are consistently deteriorating; it must end somewhere or you will lose families to Vancouver, WA.”***

***In the future: “All neighborhoods are safe and affordable for many family types and income levels, and diverse family types feel at home and welcomed...”***

# Abuse

## **Abuse exists and must be confronted and stopped.**

***“Portland has a strong Early Childhood Community. I am interested in investment in our youngest citizens because that is where I believe we can stop cycles of abuse, neglect and poverty leading to a healthier community.”***

***“...Drug treatment and rehabilitation facilities/programs that help drug addicts treatment and rehabilitation facilities/programs that help drug addicts get and stay off drugs is critical, as is protecting children from hunger, abuse and neglect...”***

Few people voiced an opinion about the social issues of abuse, but those who did have strong ideas on how it impacts many Portlanders. Some people appreciate the amount of services that exist in Portland for individuals and families that seek services for issues such as domestic violence, child and elder abuse and neglect, mental health issues, drug and alcohol addictions and homelessness. Others are certain that more services need to be offered in these focus areas, including eradicating the abuse of animals. Others cite the need to confront another form of abuse that they feel comes from local police targeting people of color and people experiencing poverty and homelessness.

People appreciate the many businesses that support services in this field, but many people think that there should be more support from businesses and government. They believe that better and more frequent evaluation of services needs to occur in order to identify what services are missing and who is not receiving services. People also think that confronting our community’s root causes of social problems will help alleviate their long-term impacts such as high costs of detaining youth, people of color, and those who experience poverty. Some also suggest more services that focus on prevention of abuse through investing in young people and children, and helping people overcome poverty.

# Religion

**Religion is a deep and powerful influence in some people’s lives.**

People are grateful to have freedom of religion and belief systems in Portland. They value their faith communities and how they can serve others in need. Some people think that religious groups could do more proactive work to address social or neighborhood issues. One issue voiced by some was that they do not feel they are treated with respect. Portlanders recommend more interfaith work—not only by different faith-based groups partnering on community projects, but also by local government, neighborhood organizations and community leaders while ensuring the separation between church and state. Also, people would like to see the inclusion of non-English speaking communities by encouraging more multi-lingual and multi-ethnic faith programs. Some people want more religion in education.

***“We have many churches in the city. That means to us freedom of religion.”***

***“I would like to see our community [Arab Community] more recognized and respected by others. I would like others accepting our culture and respecting our [Muslim] holidays. Schools could be the starting point. Our holidays should not be counted as an absence for kids.”***

# Disability

**People with disabilities seek inclusion in Portland and access to the city's many cultural, recreational and educational offerings.**

***Little consideration is given to handicapped riders. Most riders will not concede a handicapped seat to those that are handicapped. Many bus drivers are rude when one needs to use the lift and are sure to show their disapproval for the delay..."***

***"Because my life work is on behalf of people with disabilities, I would like to see the recognition of the need for our diverse population of Portland to be represented at decision-making tables, accommodation needs considered in planning any city-wide event, concrete action (not just words) that affirms the value of every person."***

People with disabilities want their city to be even more inclusive and they desire an environment in which people with disabilities are recognized and supported as valued community members. Some praised the access to public transportation, although they mentioned that bus riders and drivers are not as accommodating as they could be. Others appreciate the many social services available in Portland and value school professionals who are competent in assisting young people with disabilities. People commenting on this issue want disabled youth given the same rights and access to quality schooling and other meaningful opportunities as their peers. Often people express an appreciation for programs, such as career training, and events that are specific to people with disabilities. They suggest providing one central office that offers all necessary services under one roof for families, parental guardians and individuals dealing with disabilities. Portlanders ask that people with disabilities be included in decision-making, and that they are able to lead more outreach to their own community around issues related to disabilities. People with disabilities would also like to have more independent living options.

# Aging

**Elders wish to be active, involved and contributing members of our communities.**

People recognize the many existing programs to help elderly people with housing costs, but despite the them, they resoundingly expressed concern for expanding services to seniors who cannot afford housing and are having to move from their homes. Many people suggest offering seniors assistance or exemption from paying property taxes. People also recommend that the Portland Development Commission and housing agencies plan ahead for the expected trend of an aging population in the coming years by developing enough affordable housing that is accessible for older people. Portlanders also want to see more independent living options for elders that allow them to remain integrated into neighborhoods. Some also requested free medical and dental benefits, the development of more senior centers, and more dedication to the public safety needs of seniors, particularly those who live in low income neighborhoods. In addition, elders would like for their years of experience and wisdom to be tapped. They want to be looked to for advice and knowledge in decision-making.

***“PDC funding and efforts should aim to provide housing for the homeless and for the elderly. The City needs to plan and provide resources for the bulge-in-the-snake Baby Boom demographic that will retire in the next 20 years by providing more housing, transportation, and recreational/cultural opportunities that will meet that generation’s needs and will keep them as an active community asset.”***

***In the future: “...I’d hope to find a solid support network, instead of being pushed out for the new. Already, my neighborhood is becoming gentrified and more and more older citizens are unable to stay. A solid mix of all ages and income levels make a city more alive.”***

# Hunger

*“Eliminate hunger and home insecurity.”*

***In 20 years: “We have the healthiest population in the country. Poverty is unheard of, hunger is a thing of the past, and the community sees itself as responsible for the whole.”***

**The need for food is a basic necessity that remains unmet in our community.**

Portlanders appreciate the many free food options and other programs that work to prevent hunger. However, they remain concerned about the rate of hunger, particularly for children but also for individuals and families struggling with poverty and for people experiencing homelessness. Many people want to see hunger lessened, but just as many insist that hunger be eliminated. People talk of their belief that no one should have to choose between putting food on the table, paying bills or buying medication. People would like for our city to address the root causes of hunger.

# Civic Engagement

**Many have a sense of pride in Portland, and act to maintain or enhance their quality of life and that of others.**

People appreciate the proactive, forward-thinking nature of Portland residents, and the fact that many community groups are willing to take risks by developing ideas for innovative change. Portlanders are not afraid to speak up for rights and justice by collectively confronting issues and influencing policy that impacts their lives. People appreciate the opportunities that allow the public to participate in shaping policy, although many believe there should be greater access and opportunity for early involvement in decision-making processes. This would require government representatives to go to the community and listen to all voices, especially to those without power or privilege.

Portlanders envision a future where diverse community leaders are supported and the planning and development of neighborhoods is influenced by all residents, rather than a select few. They imagine community knowledge driving government decisions and government adequately supporting communities. Many believe that young people should have more options for community service and involvement in decision making so they develop a stake in the future of Portland. People also encourage more investment in our city through financial support and volunteer time.

***“I would like to see an even greater shift in emphasis away from private and towards public. This includes in governance. We should always strive towards direct democracy and a greater involvement for citizens of Portland in the process that goes far beyond voting on a narrow range of issues decided on ahead of time by those in power. Direct participation in the decision making structure needs to be even more easily accessible to all residents of Portland, and actions such as protests and boycotts should continue to be encouraged...”***

***“Change “us” and “them” attitude between community and government. The community should work to resolve problems rather than expecting the government to do everything.”***



# TRANSPORTATION

**Portlanders want the city to be a leader in creative and environmentally-friendly transportation options.**

***“I think there should be incentives for people who commute using the MAX, Bus, Carpool, or bike/walk/run. Either in the form of a city tax break of a certain percentage or coupons that could be used around the city for museums, theater, zoo or other tours that people can use in return for helping with our traffic problem.”***

***In the future: “most people get around by bike and transit most of the time...When you need to drive, the roads aren’t clogged.”***

Portlanders think of transportation as an inter-connected system of “multi-modal” methods of moving people from one place to another. They value transportation because it helps them stay connected to each other and the places they love in Portland, but they also worry about the effects of transportation on the environment, which they cherish. Portlanders imagine a future in which travel is safe, convenient, stress-free, affordable and low-impact or even no-impact environmentally. They therefore advocate expansions of mass transit as well as alternate modes of transit (bike, walk, run, etc...) and want to see Portland “lead the country in creative ways for people to get from one place to another in the city.”

At the same time, many Portlanders recognize that cars will not disappear any time soon and that transportation planning must be realistic in acknowledging this. They advocate innovative, “out of the box” thinking and a system-wide approach in the pursuit of transportation options that work equally well for drivers, cyclists, pedestrians and mass transit users from all sections of the city. They also advocate for increased public education around traffic laws as well as the impacts of different modes of transportation on the environment and the city. When it comes to transportation, Portlanders are surprisingly passionate; they interface with transportation every day and it’s impact on their lives cannot be overstated. They see transportation as a key quality of life issue and expect the City to address transportation issues proactively, thoughtfully and creatively.

# Traffic

**Traffic needs to be dealt with now, before it becomes a major problem.**

Most people who mention traffic believe it's becoming a major problem, and foresee it getting worse in the future if steps aren't taken soon to develop comprehensive, long-term solutions. While all agree that sitting in traffic creates stress, unnecessarily pollutes the environment, and reduces quality of life, there are major disagreements about how to solve Portland's growing traffic problem. Three distinct perspectives emerge from the data, each with a large number of adherents who propose workable but often conflicting strategies for reducing future traffic. Despite these disagreements on methods, Portlanders agree that traffic problems must be addressed soon if the City is to prevent the traffic nightmares common in other West Coast cities.

***"The transit system here is progressive and convenient. Portland doesn't have the congestion and car culture that a lot of larger cities have."***

***"I think the city is noticeably more difficult to navigate in the past four years. I agree with the city's efforts to create a dense core, but more attention to traffic – cars, bikes, and pedestrians – is needed."***

***"While it is great that we are promoting bicycles the vast majority can or will not ride. To continue to ignore the need for streets and street improvements will lead to bad roads and slow down the traffic flow with roadblocks when we really need to smooth the autos out of the living areas of the inner city- not clog them more."***

# Public Transportation

**Portlanders want efficient, fast, safe, clean and “eco-friendly” public transportation that serves all neighborhoods equitably.**

***“I value our commitment to public transportation. I value designing cities for residents instead of automobiles.”***

***“Although the city has been very forward thinking and ‘doing’ as far as mass transit, the result is not really ‘rapid’ transit.”***

***“I am totally hooked on public transportation. It is wonderful to be able to get anywhere in the city without driving. I am continually impressed with how quickly I can get somewhere using the bus and Max, especially during rush hour.”***

***“Why can’t Tri-met be more attractive to ride? [I would like to see] Bus only lanes that go on for miles with more frequent busses and routes that beat the traffic.”***

People imagine a Portland where people can get around easily without a car and where the majority uses public transportation, combined with alternate modes such as walking and bicycling. They want public transportation expanded, although there is considerable debate about whether the city should focus on MAX expansion or expand buses, trolleys and streetcars, which are generally perceived as serving a much greater number of people.

There is concern that Portlanders will not abandon their cars in favor of public transportation as long as travel times are so much shorter in cars. There is also concern that public transportation is not available in all parts of the city and that it can be unpleasant and/or unsafe for riders. Finally, there is concern with cost; most people want to see the cost of public transit reduced.

Within this section, a smaller number of Portlanders believe that that “the car is here to stay,” and that public transportation should not be expanded any further. These individuals feel that spending money on public transportation is a waste and only distracts from the larger problem of making sure Portland’s roads and freeways are ready to handle a growing population. However, the vast majority agree with this Portlander who imagines a future in which “public transportation (and bike support) is good enough that single-driver cars are the least popular way to get around.”

# Alternative Transportation

**Many Portlanders believe our future lies in alternative transportation.**

Overall, community members are very supportive of alternative modes of transportation. They value these modes because they contribute to a cleaner environment, help build cohesive communities with a strong sense of place, and reduce traffic and dependence on fossil fuels by keeping cars off the roads. In general, people would like it to be easier and safer to walk, cycle, skate, etc... They speak of the need for separate lanes and continuous routes for cyclists, so they are not having to share the roads with moving vehicles and parked cars. They advocate for expanded walking trails and bridges, bicycle and pedestrian-only areas and measures to enhance the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. A surprisingly large number of people want to see a clean Willamette River utilized as a transportation resource for water taxis, kayaks, and other forms of public and private transit. Many Portlanders believe that the future lies in alternative transportation and that the City should encourage these modes through better road design, creative incentives, public education and other available means.

***“I love that you don’t need a car to live in Portland. You can bike/streetcar/max/tram anywhere you need to go in town, including the airport. It just amazes me.”***

***“With light-rail and mass transit connecting all major parts of the city, more people would walk, bike, or take mass transit than drive. Full connective bike lanes, public spaces, and community meeting spots would turn Portland into the most pedestrian and bike friendly city in the nation.”***

***My suggestion is: “Make a city-wide declaration of an alternative transportation week. Challenge people to not use their car and maybe even have them keep a week journal listing the problems and conveniences they experienced.”***

# Walking/Pedestrians

**Portlanders value walking and imagine an even more walkable city.**

***What I value about Portland is: “It’s... a pedestrian city, city of wonderful neighborhoods and commercial hubs, easy to get around and do all one’s living within a few mile radius. Culturally friendly, tolerant, creative and whimsical.”***

***“It’d be great if each neighborhood or section could close their streets one day each week to make them into a pedestrian mall. This could be done on a rotating basis.”***

***“To achieve a pedestrian-friendly city, conduct studies of other cities such as those in Europe who have successfully achieved that. Bring businesses to the table to get their input.”***

Portlanders highly value neighborhoods and districts with shopping areas, entertainment, services, and amenities within walking distance. Being able to “do errands on foot” and “walk to everything I need” is seen as a central ingredient of livability and makes Portland warm, neighborly and convenient. People want to see pedestrian paths, bridges and roads increased and overwhelmingly advocate making some parts of the city pedestrian-only or, at a minimum, car-free. They want to see fully walkable neighborhoods, a walkable downtown, and greater pedestrian access to the Willamette River. They imagine a future in which many more people choose to walk to school, work and social activities because walking is safe, convenient, healthy and adequately supported by public transportation.

# Bicycling

**Portlanders are proud of this city’s “bike-friendly” attitude, people and policies.**

Portlanders want to see their city become the most bicycle-friendly city in the country and imagine a future in which bicycling is a highly attractive transportation and commuting option. The primary concern around cycling involves safety; both cyclists and automobile drivers feel that the current road-sharing arrangement is stressful and unnecessarily dangerous. Supporters of cycling also believe it deters a large number of bicycle-friendly people from choosing cycling as their primary mode of transportation. Separating cars from cyclists is seen as a safety imperative, along with better driver’s education and stiffer penalties for cyclists who ignore traffic rules. Numerous additional strategies emerge to increase the safety and attractiveness of cycling, which many hope will flourish over the coming years.

***In the future: “There is more freeway space and roadways, and bicyclists aren’t SHARING the roads, they have dedicated bikeways. MAX/Tri-met is a convenient and easy system to use with no delays.”***

***“I love the encouragement the city gives cyclists. I’ve never lived anywhere that is so dedicated to alternatives to cars.”***

***“...Make cycling, walking and riding transit easier and more pleasant. You can’t expect many people to ride in NW Portland without more bike lanes; it’s dangerous, so bikes end up on the sidewalks.”***

# Parking

**Portlanders have widely differing opinions regarding parking, based in large part on their feelings towards automobiles and traffic.**

***In the future: “Parking is not an issue because there’s such good public transit that people don’t use cars to get downtown and around the core.”***

***“I would like to see more parking facilities designed underground and overground when master-planning the new towers, shopping centers, offices, etc... It really isn’t that difficult if it is considered a necessity rather than trying to force people out of their cars.”***

***“In 20 years, the ideal Portland has the following: Parking is cheap, easy to find, and located near numerous and frequent public-transport sites. The public-transport network is much more extensive (think Boston MBTA).”***

Those who imagine automobiles falling from favor in coming years advocate increasing the price of parking, reducing parking availability and transforming parking lots into usable community spaces such as parks, gardens and affordable housing.

Those who want to continue using their cars advocate for expanded and more affordable parking, especially downtown and around new development. Those who support the expansion of public transportation call for above-ground or (preferably) underground parking lots near MAX stations, freeway exits and other outlying areas, which would be linked to the city center by fast, frequent public transit. In addition to these general viewpoints, many individuals voice specific neighborhood parking issues which they hope the City will resolve in coming years.

# Commute Times

**Portlanders dislike commuting and want to reduce commute times as much as possible.**

Some people feel that commute times are relatively good in Portland, while others who commute cross-town feel their commute is far too long. Many Portlanders mentioned wanting to be able to get to work in twenty minutes or less and imagine a future in which “commuting and traveling in and out of the city is easy, safe and uncongested—a pleasant experience.” Strategies to reduce commute times included: a) creating more affordable housing so people can live close to their places of work; b) increasing the speed and efficiency of Portland’s mass transit system; and c) reducing automobile traffic through staggered commute times as well as a number of strategies mentioned in the “Traffic” section of this report. Portlanders are also generally supportive of City efforts to increase the number of people who walk and bike to work.

***I would like to see: “A focus on creating more self-sustaining neighborhoods. The reason for this is to reduce the number of people commuting into the city core for work. Living close to work is the only way to alleviate this problem.”***

***In the future: “Lots of intelligence and money have gone into designing and maintaining the road ways, so a ten minute trip to the store does not end in road rage and a commute to work leaves you feeling like a human being at the end.”***



# URBAN LIVABILITY

**Livability is key; Portlanders value it immensely and want it preserved and enhanced.**

**What I value about Portland:** *“It’s investment in a high quality of life. I’m impressed that laws and planning can be so inspiring, so as to create a livable, human scale city such as Portland.”*

**I value:** *“Livability. I appreciate the ability to live close in to the central city, to live in a neighborhood with walkable access to all my needs, and yet to access to everything offered by a large urban center.”*

**I value:** *“Its livability in terms of pleasant downtown area, lots of good public transportation and good public events, attention to environmentally-sound living, its reputation as a city of books, bikes, brew, progressive thinking and its abundance of trees and the rain that keeps them green.”*

Portlanders mention livability time and again as a much-prized virtue of Portland and as a quality we should constantly aspire to enhance. They attribute livability to an inter-woven set of factors, many of which are described in greater depth in the sections that follow. Factors seen as reducing Portland’s livability include the rising cost of housing, the struggling public school system, contamination of rivers and air and the persistence of homelessness in our community. Many fear that growth will reduce livability and express mixed feelings regarding whether new development enhances livability or reduces it.

Portlanders recognize that livability does not come about by chance, but rather is intentionally created through concerted community effort and forward-thinking planning and public policy. Portlanders ask that livability be used to guide public decision-making (e.g. Does a given policy/program/expenditure enhance or reduce livability? For the city at large or for a specific group? Is this the group that needs it most?) By keeping the focus on livability, Portland will thrive, naturally attracting the most forward-thinking, innovative and community-minded residents and businesses. This is a key point for Portlanders—they want public funds to be spent on enhancing the livability of the city as a whole, both now and into the future.

# Parks and Open Space

**More parks and open spaces are needed as populations increase in size and density.**

People express a deep appreciation for parks and open spaces, believing that access to these places within the city contributes immeasurably to Portland’s livability. People appreciate the variety of recreational opportunities available at parks, including opportunities to play sports, take classes, hike on trails, and experience wildlife within the city boundaries. Community members repeatedly mention the connection between parks and community building, noting that parks create neighborhood pride as well as public gathering places.

In terms of access, many Portlanders are impressed with how easily accessible parks and open spaces are. Others, however, would like accessibility improved, especially for people with disabilities, children (more playgrounds, safe public restrooms) and residents of low-income and minority communities. Portlanders are concerned with equity in regards to parks and open space, calling for more parks and better-maintained parks in low-income and neglected neighborhoods.

Looking to the future, Portlanders want current open spaces preserved and more open spaces created as the city’s population grows and increases in density. Community members believe that every neighborhood should have a lush, green, well-maintained park within walking distance. They want land set aside for parks and open space now, before it becomes unavailable or too expensive. Overall, this very large section demonstrates that parks are extremely important to Portlanders.

***I value: “Our amazing surroundings. The parks truly make Portland what it is...the only place where I see generations merge!”***

***I value: “The parks, because they are community builders, gathering places, and give kids of all classes access to the same facilities...They also provide access to outdoor recreation – hiking, biking—and they’re beautiful.”***

***In the future: “We have a vibrant waterfront community on both sides of the clean Willamette river. There is a good mix of parks and urban spaces in all quadrants of the city and all quadrants are easily accessible by an affordable light rail system.”***

# Neighborhood Livability

**In the future, Portland’s neighborhood system will provide greater equity across neighborhoods and better connections between neighborhoods.**

***I value: “The neighborhoods; that I can walk to the bank, the grocery store, etc... It makes Portland warm, neighborly, and convenient.”***

***In the future: “The city has a higher population, but is still affordable and livable. Sprawl has been contained and traffic has not gotten worse. The density has risen but not at the cost of green spaces. Local businesses are still common and cost effective. Corporate chains have not invaded every street side.”***

***In the future: “Everyone feels safer. Streets and sidewalks are clean. Every neighborhood has its own website with links to local resources.”***

Portlanders highly value our “village” model of unique and vibrant neighborhoods, each with access to amenities and a sense of identity and character. Many want to preserve the uniqueness of neighborhoods by protecting and stimulating local businesses, which are overwhelmingly valued for their many contributions to community livability. Community members are careful to note, however, that they do not want an overabundance of boutique-style shops to eclipse to essential businesses and services available within walking distance.

Portlanders value having a “neighborhood voice” but disagree over the extent to which that voice currently exists. Some feel Neighborhood Associations work well with City government, while others feel that neighborhood voice is often overlooked, especially in regards to urban renewal and in-fill development. Still others feel that neighborhood associations are unrepresentative of the neighborhoods they serve, advocating instead for new methods of obtaining community input. Many people support the idea of increasing density within the urban core, but want to be consulted and have a voice in decisions affecting the character, quality and future of their neighborhoods.

# City Appearance

**Portlanders value beauty and want it made accessible to all.**

In this section, community members describe the features of both the natural and built environment that contribute to creating a sense of beauty within the city (e.g. low skyline, public art, views of mountains and rivers, historic architecture, appropriate scale). Portlanders value their city's aesthetic and consistently define beauty as a certain harmony between the natural and built environments. Community members feel that a beautiful/pleasing city appearance helps generate a strong sense of place and civic pride, setting Portland apart from more homogenous American towns and cities. They disapprove of changes which reduce the beauty of the city, such as inappropriate infill, "uninspired" new development, and buildings that appear cheap or poorly designed.

Many view the city as very clean, especially when compared to other American cities. Others view the city as gritty but prefer this to "over-sanitation," believing it enhances the city's charm. Still others lament what they perceive as deteriorating levels of cleanliness, especially downtown. These individuals believe that a culture of permissiveness has allowed "street kids," drug users, pan-handlers and the homeless to create a downtown environment that is dirty and unfriendly.

Portlanders express the belief that city design has a direct and powerful effect on human sentiment and behavior and is therefore incredibly important. They communicate an awareness that the city's appearance has not come about by random chance, but by progressive processes and policies that reflect the values of Portlanders. Looking to the future, they want the city's unique character to be preserved and its beauty to be enhanced and made accessible to all people.

**What I value is:** *"The attention to urban design and development. Why? Because it provides the vessel for enjoying urban life—street trees, buildings that have interest and harmony, a downtown that works, is of human scale, and well-served by public transit; neighborhoods that are cohesive with retail and service areas."*

*"Portland is extremely livable...the public areas are beautiful, buildings are built and maintained in a manner that preserves the old-style feel of the Pacific Northwest, the city is vibrant and used as a place to live-work-play, public parks/fountains/walkways create a feeling of community and beauty that is accessible to everyone."*

# Cultural Opportunities

**People imagine Portland becoming a regional cultural hub for the Pacific Northwest.**

***“I value Portland as a landmark place of beauty, culture, creativity, vision, and progress. That’s what it is. That’s why I’m here.”***

***“I would also like to see more interaction between the city’s diverse cultural and social pockets, resulting in creative projects that bridge economic racial and cultural divides.”***

***In the future: “The presence of public art throughout the city will help to broaden the populace and will inspire an open dialogue between the citizenry. Art begets art, so this increase will likely translate into more attendance at theatre, concerts and dance performances throughout the area.”***

When it comes to cultural opportunities, some people feel that Portland is lacking while others believe we “pack a lot of culture into a relatively small city.” Portlanders value being able to access artistic and cultural events in the downtown as well as within their neighborhoods and express strong support for community-based artistic and cultural endeavors. They value the city’s vibrant music, film and literary scenes as well as the abundance of restaurants ranging from fine dining to authentic and affordable ethnic fare.

Portlanders imagine the city’s art and culture scenes growing in coming years, turning Portland into a regional cultural hub and national leader in arts funding. However, there are fears that our collective appreciation for art and culture will dissipate over time if music and arts aren’t reintroduced into public school curriculums. There are also requests for “more events that bring members from all communities together” and more opportunities to highlight the artistic and cultural endeavors of ethnically diverse groups.

People overwhelmingly call for more public art, more neighborhood-based artistic and cultural events, more affordable museum access and even more museums. They also want to see funding and support for the arts and culture increased, with requests for more work/live space for artists, more corporate support for art, and more government funding at all levels for arts and culture.

# Population Growth

## Portlanders have mixed feelings about population growth.

Portlanders have strong and widely differing opinions on the topic of population growth. Many people value the city's current size, while others feel it has already become too large. Still others feel that Portland is currently too small and that it needs more people in order to become a truly diverse and cosmopolitan city. These disagreements over what the "ideal" size of Portland are reflected in community members' differing visions of the future.

One group wants Portland's population to stay roughly the same or even shrink and therefore advocates policies to discourage growth. Another group reluctantly accepts population growth and advocates for policies which will keep Portland livable in the face of this growth through improved transportation infrastructure, more affordable housing, preservation of green space. A final group welcomes growth, believing Portland will benefit from new ideas, more diversity, more culture, more jobs, and more tourism. While this last group is probably the smallest, all three perspectives are loudly and clearly voiced in the data, making this one of the more contentious sections of the report.

A notable theme running through this section is the fear that incoming residents will over-ride the current values system and spoil the very elements of Portland that make it attractive in the first place. Many people expressed this concern, along with the related concerns that new residents will make Portland increasingly congested and unaffordable. Livability is the main underlying issue; Portlanders cherish it and are suspicious of any changes that might make the city less livable.

***"We are losing our sense of difference as more people move here. The very attributes that attract many to Portland and the metro areas are being swamped or simply let go as incomers try to recreate the communities they were comfortable with back home. How to incorporate the strengths and diversity of the new while retaining the core values of the old is an ongoing issue."***

***"I hope and dream that PDX will be able to accommodate the expected growth while staying true to the small town/big city feel that makes it so special."***

***"Because of the sustained influx of people from across the country and of immigrants, Portland will have lost it's 'provincial' feel for good and will be more cutting-edge."***

# Land Use

**Portlanders want land use planning to enhance their livability, not reduce it.**

***“Portland is already a terrific place to live, but it can certainly be improved. In 20 years, I’d like our City to be the model for responsible planning and development (no sprawl!!), innovative and environmentally friendly public transportation options, and last but not least – the best public school system in America.”***

***“I think the zoning boundary around the city needs to be put back. That is the main thing that put Portland on the map. It is what every city needs to do...I grew up in Las Vegas (I’m 54) and watched it grow from 48,000 to two plus million and it wasn’t pretty.”***

***My suggestion is to: “...Encourage housing near jobs. Save natural open space. Encourage eco-roofs and bioswales –natural treatment of runoff. Encourage civic engagement, including volunteering. Teach new Oregonians about ‘why’ we plan land uses.”***

Some Portlanders are concerned about development and the role of the Portland Development Commission, city planners and developers in shaping our built environment. A very large number of individuals worry that developers are currently driving the planning process, as opposed to vice versa. They overwhelmingly advocate for the City to uphold strict design standards, so that new developments are high-quality, visually attractive and priced to be affordable across a wide range of incomes.

People want planning that protects green space, preserves views, supports small business, and encourages the creation of affordable, family housing. They would like redevelopment efforts to target the truly neglected parts of town, such as outer SE, Albina/Williams and parts of North Portland, as opposed to places they believe would develop anyway such as downtown. They want “planners to be users” and to consider essential services and infrastructure needs of planning redevelopments. They imagine more mixed-use buildings, more creative use of vacant and run-down buildings and more architectural daring and inspiration. Most importantly, they call for “land use planning laws to benefit all” as opposed to what are perceived as narrow, special interests of developers, land/housing speculators and others.

Portlanders clearly believe in land-use planning and see good planning as providing the needed counter-balance to short-sighted, market-driven opportunism. They are proud of the city’s history of progressive planning and want to see that tradition upheld over the coming years. They imagine Portland as a beacon of good planning, providing inspiration to cities across the country and around the world.

# Residential Land Use

**If the land must be filled, make the houses affordable, high-quality and attractive.**

A number of “hot button” issues emerge in this section, including the recent condo developments downtown and along neighborhood strips, the character of infill housing, gentrification and housing affordability. In general, Portlanders appreciate the need for density and understand that growth means an increase in the housing stock. However, they want new development to match the character of the surrounding area, to be environmentally sensitive and to be accompanied with appropriate and necessary infrastructure such as parking, street improvements and additional green space.

People complain bitterly about tract housing, tall “skinny” housing, McMansions, and expensive, look-alike condos ruining the character of charming, historic neighborhoods. Portlanders worry about the current condo “frenzy” in the Pearl, and on the South Waterfront. They feel these condos are unaffordable to families and individuals earning average wages and that their development should not be subsidized by the City. Rather, community members prefer that public funds be used to create affordable housing options both downtown and in close-in neighborhoods.

Portlanders are also very worried about gentrification. While many acknowledge that rising property values are desirable, they do not believe that this should push long-time residents out of their neighborhoods. They would like PDC and/or the City to stop providing subsidies for developers and start providing financial relief to long-time residents of gentrifying neighborhoods. They would also like to see development dollars spread more equitably among Portland’s different neighborhoods, with more focus on neglected areas in North Portland, East Portland, and Southeast Portland—and less focus on downtown.

***“I feel a lot of the development happening in Portland right now is developer driven. This usually results in the construction being cheaper. The buildings also lack a strong vision which then affects the user and the longevity of the building. I don’t mind the idea of smaller homes being infilled on larger lots but Portland needs to develop stricter design and materials standards to make these homes a nice place to live and something that will be nice addition to the neighborhoods...”***

***“Leave places open! Slow development; stop land/house speculation. Deal with poverty and anger. We can leave land for new houses in 20 years—we don’t have to fill it all now.”***

***I would like to see: “Affordable and unique housing, rentals and real estate. The City is starting to look and feel a little bit like my hometown, and southern California is ugly and soulless.”***



# Business and Industrial Land Use

**Portlanders love their small businesses and want them supported, but they are concerned about losing Portland's industrial base**

***“Invest in neighborhood business districts to create a more pedestrian and transit-oriented Portland.”***

***“I'd like to see the city's low-rent, low-rise commercial strips (such as Powell and Barbur) transformed into something else.”***

***“I think we can start opening up abandoned public buildings to non-profits willing to educate the uneducated and provide job training for the jobless and homeless.”***

***“...the Northwest Industrial area could be rezoned to be a NW Clean energy/sustainable industries sanctuary—become a worldwide center for those important and cutting-edge industries bringing well-paying jobs and strong positive identity to Portland's economy.”***

This small section mostly addresses concerns around industrial activity and whether or not it should be concentrated on the waterfront. Some people would like to see this activity relocated so that the waterfront can be accessed for recreational and commuting use, while others prefer industry to have its own zone on the waterfront and not be mixed in with residential or commercial/retail zones. Other topics brought up in this section include worries that Portland is losing its industrial base, concerns about strip malls on the outskirts of town, and calls to clean up abandoned industrial sites. Portlanders also mention their appreciation for small businesses in neighborhoods and mixed-use buildings (commercial/residential), and would like zoning practices, taxes and incentives to favor small, local businesses over out-of-town corporations.

# Growth Management

## **Growth must be actively managed to keep Portland livable.**

Portlanders express deep appreciation for the City's strong planning efforts and for the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), which has prevented Portland from sprawling like many other US cities. Portlanders credit the UGB with enhancing urban livability in a number of ways including: keeping surrounding farmland and countryside intact, creating a denser, more vibrant urban core and creating a compact and accessible city. In the face of predicted population growth, most Portlanders want to see the UGB maintained, although a very small group feels it should be relaxed or even removed to keep housing prices affordable. The more popular view, however, is that increased affordable housing and access to green spaces should exist alongside a strong UGB.

In addition to discussions on the UGB, this section contains discussions on density, growth and their relationship to urban livability. Many Portlanders value density and would prefer to see the city build up rather than out to accommodate a growing population. Others, however, value the city's current "human scale" and do not want too much density if the results include taller buildings or obstructed views of nature. Additional concerns are raised regarding the character of infill developments, many of which are perceived as architecturally inappropriate as well as unaffordable to middle and lower-income residents. Many, many residents are concerned about rapid growth and want the City to thoughtfully and pro-actively manage this growth, as it has done in the past.

***"Right now, the critical issues we face are growth, livability and education. We must promote smart-growth development including livable affordable housing. We must update the area's water-works, clean-up the Willamette, protect watersheds, and educate our children."***

***"We must not assume that population growth cannot be influenced by public policy. If we view current predictions as cast in stone, and we only plan on accommodating the growth, then we will be the agents of that growth. We must find ways to shape and control the growth such that it will not be at the expense of the amenities we cherish. The leadership in the city must make serious efforts to influence the attitude of the people so that a culture develops which supports the city as we envision it."***

***In the future: "Sprawl has been prevented and regional population has remained stable, successfully averting the basic resource scarcity plaguing the rest of the world."***

# Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens

**Local, homegrown food builds community, improves health and reduces reliance on the global economy.**

***“Create incentives for people to turn lawns and parking strips into gardens.”***

***I would like to see: “Farmers markets, community gardens within walking distance (.5-1 mile) of every household.”***

***In the future: “Each neighborhood grows lots of their own vegetables, grains and protein sources... The terms ‘green building’ and ‘organic food’ become so normal, affordable, and commonplace that they are just referred to as ‘building’ and ‘food.’”***

Support for locally-grown food is the main idea expressed in this section. There are no opposing voices, just many suggestions regarding how to build more local gardens, foster more urban agriculture, create more awareness around local food, and extend the benefits of healthy, local food to people of all income levels. Portlanders overwhelmingly value farmers’ markets, grocery stores that carry organic, local food (New Seasons is much appreciated!), community-supported agriculture, community gardens and programs that help people learn to grow food for themselves.

Many people envision more urban gardening in the future, with eco-roofs, converted parking-lots, vacant lots and other under-utilized spaces providing food for the city’s residents. They also envision more community education around urban gardening, permaculture and local food production. Portlanders articulate many inter-related benefits to supporting local food, including increased connection to nature, enhanced sense of community, reduced reliance on fossil fuels, greater regional self-reliance, and improved nutrition and health, especially for the city’s lower-income residents.

# Access

## **Portlanders want equity in access to a very wide range of services, amenities and opportunities.**

Portlanders value the city’s proximity to nature and our commitment to nature in the city for aesthetic reasons as well as recreational opportunities. They also value being able to easily access basic services and cultural opportunities, both downtown and in their neighborhoods. Community members believe this ease of access is made possible in part by the city’s relatively small size and compact layout, the neighborhood hub structure and our strong public transportation system.

Many people want to enhance our focus on neighborhoods and main streets, so that everyone has access within biking or walking distance to the basic services and amenities offered in our best neighborhoods. This is mentioned both as a quality of life issue and as a possible response to growing congestion. Portlanders also call for increased pedestrian and bike accessibility, increased access to farmers’ markets and local food, and better accessibility for the disabled, such as streets and buildings that incorporate universal design (e.g., are fully wheelchair accessible).

In general, Portlanders imagine a future in which there is greater equity of access to a wide range of amenities, including cultural/social events, social services and support, education, City decision-making, transit, housing, information, natural areas and more. They also imagine the whole city benefiting from increased access to a “clean, swimmable Willamette River,” to the internet (free wi-fi), to arts and culture, and to public transportation.

***“I love that this is still a livable city for individuals and families, that we can access natural areas easily, that art and culture seem to be valued, that public transportation is accessible and attractive to use, that the county library system is fantastic, and that – regardless of the funding crises in which we find ourselves – there seems to be a great deal of civic involvement and interest in education and social issues.”***

***“There should be more caring and sharing in the city. It is fine if you are a middle-class, educated white person, but if you aren’t, it is still difficult to access the opportunities that exist.”***

***In the future: “There is more equity of access to real estate, be it home ownership, renters rights, or more performance space for smaller arts groups.”***

# Outdoor Activities

## **Proximity to the outdoors is a cherished attribute of Portland.**

***I value: “Portland’s relationship to the outdoors...green spaces, rivers, bike friendly...This makes Portland what it is and why it’s valued by old timers like myself.”***

***“I appreciate the quality of life here, particularly the green spaces, the relatively clean air, the river access, the great walking trails, the parks. This city invites you to be outdoors.”***

Portlanders value outdoor activities/areas and see them as contributing to both the overall livability of the city and the feeling of community connectedness among residents. They value proximity and easy access to outdoor activities, which they attribute to the balance maintained between the natural and built environments. Although Portlanders enjoy the ability to drive short distances to access the coast, the Columbia River Gorge, high deserts and mountains, in this section they speak mainly of preserving and enhancing proximity to outdoor activities within the city itself.

Portlanders make a number of connections between outdoor activities and urban livability. They value the vibrancy created by people spending time outside of their homes, and see outdoor activities/areas as another form of community space. Many people want to preserve and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities given their role as community builders: places/events wherein neighbors, family members, or people with similar interests can bond and increase their feelings of connectedness to one another and the city. They also credit easily-accessible outdoors activities with encouraging a healthy and active lifestyles among residents.

It is important to note that Portlanders tend to advocate policies and practices that are not limited to one group or area of the city but rather enhance the common good. For example, most seek to create a system of outdoor recreation that is equitably distributed amongst Portland’s different neighborhoods, accessible via foot and public transit, and that accommodates a wide variety of interests.

# The People

**Despite their differences, Portlanders express deep appreciation for each other.**

One of the defining characteristics of Portland is the extent to which its people value each other. Community members have a deep appreciation for their fellow Portlanders — for their friendliness, easy going attitude, ability to value the “simple pleasures in life”—books, bikes, brew and good food—and their positive, “can-do” attitude towards addressing community problems. They appreciate our funkiness, our non-conformism, our do-it-yourself approach, our civic-mindedness and our willingness to put our beliefs into action. They value the extent to which Portlanders care about each other, the environment, and the least fortunate members of the community (for an example, see the section on “Homelessness”).

Portlanders also admire and seek to preserve the progressive, forward-thinking values and policies that define the community’s political and social life. Many believe that the community should be accepting and open to different lifestyles, groups and ideas. However some individuals feel that Portlanders fail to exhibit an appreciation for true diversity and difference. These community members see racism and a lack of diversity as enduring problems that affect the quality of life for minority residents. Along these same lines, Portlanders with more conservative values feel excluded from the city’s civic and cultural life. They perceive the liberal claim of open-mindedness as hypocrisy, given the level of intolerance often expressed towards conservative views and lifestyles.

Overall, community members seek to promote an open, tolerant civic environment wherein people are encouraged to share their ideas freely. People want the city to remain friendly, “funkily functional,” and true to its values over the coming years.

***I value:*** “The way people feel empowered to have an idea for their community and realize it. From bike commuters to public music to schools to farmers markets. Portland feels like a ‘yes we can’ place.”

***I value:*** “[the] relative openness among Portlanders to experimenting, trying new actions in politics, the arts, schools, support for libraries. Why? Why not? Why should I not value the ability to change in an ever changing world– to tolerate, accept difference, new viewpoints?”

***I value that:*** “More often than not, people – strangers and acquaintances – are friendly to each other.”

# Entertainment

**Portland’s entertainment scene is good, but it could also be improved.**

***I value: “The community, the family-friendly events and living space, the weather. The fact that you can get big city art, culture and education in a small city.”***

***I would like to see: “More plays, more gathering places. Where I see everyone – babies, elderly, youth, everyone.”***

***“Sports teams are a great way to get people to love their city.”***

When people speak of Portland as having a small town feel with “big city amenities,” they are very frequently referring to Portland’s abundant artistic, cultural, and entertainment offerings. Portlanders love that there is “so much going on” and appreciate being able to access free and/or affordable entertainment in their neighborhoods as well as the city center. They love the “weird” ways in which Portlanders entertain themselves, such as pillow fights in Pioneer Courthouse Square, Zoobombing (riding tiny bikes downhill from the Zoo), etc.. and feel this contributes to Portland’s sense of being different from “Anywhere, USA.”

In the future, Portlanders want to see more entertainment options for youth under age 21 and some advocate more entertainment options for sports fans (there is a big debate between advocates of Major League Baseball, Football, Soccer, the Blazers or none of the above). Many Portlanders see the Willamette River as an untapped resource—they imagine a clean Willamette serving as an affordable source of exercise, recreation, transportation and community entertainment.

# Small-Town Feeling

**Many want Portland's small-town feel retained in the face of population growth.**

While Portland has many of the amenities of a large metropolitan area, it has something that many large cities lack: a “small town feel” which Portlanders value deeply. Portland is laid back, friendly, walkable, community-oriented, familiar, soulful and infused with nature—a “livable small city with heart.” Portlanders cherish the city’s small town feel and describe its various components clearly and eloquently in this section. They also express worry that this will be lost or is already being lost in the face of population growth and an influx of residents from other parts of the country. In particular, they worry about upscale developments, which are perceived as catering to lifestyles that may erode the current community feeling. In terms of the future, most people would like to see Portland’s unique identity and small town feel maintained and enhanced. A small minority would prefer to see Portland evolve into a more cosmopolitan city along the lines of Boston, Seattle or San Francisco.

***I value that: “That Portland offers the big city with a small town culture and feeling. I want music, movies, culture, events sports and all that a big city offers but I still want small neighborhoods with local coffee houses and locally owned shops that I can walk to and get to know my neighbors. I think Portland has done a good job of this and can continue to improve on this model.”***

***“I value the feeling of home it gives me. I know that it is a larger city, but the way that it is set up, all the parks, the easy access to public transportation, and the uniqueness of all the wonderful neighborhoods... make it feel like a close, tight-knit community.”***



# Family Friendly

**Portland is generally perceived as a safe, supportive and wonderful place to raise a family.**

*“...Portland is very family friendly –a totally unique trait to any other “international city.” This is a fundamental reason why many families, even young, working professionals without children, choose Portland. There is still hope of good housing and a promising future for raising a family in a balanced urban environment.”*

***I would like to see:*** “Less concentration on high-rise apartment/condo buildings and more on family housing and parks. It seems we are forcing families out of the city. I would hate for downtown to be unaffordable and unlivable for families.”

***In the future:*** “We are a community that supports children and families at all stages of life.”

Portland’s “family-friendliness” is upheld as one of the city’s greatest virtues and a primary reason why many people and companies move here from larger cities around the country. However, some people worry that families are being pushed to the suburbs by rising housing costs and troubled public schools. They also worry that “family-friendliness” is becoming less of a public priority as attention and resources are increasingly devoted to major infrastructure and urban renewal projects.

Parents, grandparents and a surprisingly large number of childless people agree that the noblest legacy is the preparation of today’s children to be tomorrow’s future leaders, artists and entrepreneurs. People believe that by keeping the focus on improving the quality of life for families (which includes affordable housing, access to parks and green space, improved schools, etc...), everyone will benefit. Portland will continue to strengthen its position relative to other “international cities” and will be able to attract the most desirable residents and businesses, keeping the city vital and preventing urban decay.

# Sense of Community

**Community connectedness is a major theme and over-arching value of Portlanders.**

The sense of being connected to a vibrant local community differentiates Portland from other cities and is a quality of Portland that community members seek to preserve and enhance. Portlanders believe neighborhood features such as commercial hubs, walkable streets and public spaces create a strong sense of community among residents. They also believe that Portlanders' caring, helpful, friendly attitudes contribute to creating a strong sense of community. At the same time, they worry about different communities becoming isolated from each other, and want the City to develop innovative ways for people from different communities to come together, whether to work on common projects or participate in common events.

***“It is very important to me to feel connected to my immediate community, and Portland’s land use planning and emphasis on community development helps make this happen.”***

***“Portlanders love their community gathering spots – so why not increase their amount in town? Target all different types of people and cast the biggest net possible.”***

# Acknowledgements

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