



PORTLAND PLAN

CONDITIONS, TRENDS & ISSUES

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN ASSESSMENT



Do you recognize these places?

**They were Portland.
But they're not any more.**

Things have changed in Portland.
(And they're still changing.)





Tom McCall Waterfront Park

Harbor Drive was removed and replaced by a 73-acre park, named for former Governor Tom McCall. The park was dedicated in

1978

Harbor Drive became Waterfront Park.



Pioneer Courthouse Square

The city acquired the land in 1979. A design competition was held and Pioneer Courthouse Square opened in

1984

The Meier & Frank parking lot became Pioneer Courthouse Square, the city's "living room."

These projects are the legacy of the planning done by Portland in the 1970s, '80s and '90s...and the hard work of implementation through all those years.

Carrying on the legacy

THE PORTLAND PLAN

This report

is a first step of the Portland Plan, which will guide the growth and development of Portland over the next 30 years. The Portland Plan coordinates several long-term planning efforts including the Central Portland Plan.

The Central Portland Plan Assessment Report focuses attention on the downtown and central city, the hub of Portland where the parts and pieces of the metropolitan region come together. The Central Portland Plan will update the existing Central City Plan, which was completed in 1988 and has helped bring us to where we are now.

The boundary of the 1988 plan (illustrated on the aerial photograph at right) is the starting point for the new study. The area encompasses approximately 3000 acres and includes the downtown retail core with its concentrations of businesses, government, the arts, entertainment and transit. The Willamette River covers about 450 acres of the preliminary study area.



The place we know today as Portland is the tangible result of our city's history of practical, proactive planning over the past several decades.

Parts of the city we take for granted — Pioneer Courthouse Square or Waterfront Park, for example — weren't always there. We tend to forget this, because these places are integral to our sense of what Portland is now.

But Portland people came up with the notion to build these significant places. They put in the effort to create long-term city plans to help these key projects progress from ideas to actions to reality.

1985



Riverplace and Marina

1998



Westside MAX light rail

2000



Portland Classical Chinese Garden

The 1972 Downtown Plan and the 1988 Central City Plan are the two key planning documents created by the people of Portland, adopted by the City Council, and crucial to the development of central Portland as we know it.

The Downtown Plan included the idea of Waterfront Park as one of 17 "First Phase Projects." Another two of the plan's first phase projects were the initial eastside MAX light rail line – the 15-mile route from downtown to Gresham – and the transit mall on 5th and 6th Avenues. Before the '72 plan, these did not exist.



The 1972 Downtown Plan and the 1988 Central City Plan have helped us navigate to now. Much has changed, and we have new challenges.



This didn't happen by accident or by luck.

2001



PORTLAND PEOPLE PLANNED IT.

Likewise, many of the actions recommended in the Central City Plan of 1988 have become memorable parts of today's city: the West Side Light Rail line... the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry on the east bank of the Willamette River...the Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade... and the new Pearl District and South Waterfront neighborhoods, which used to be industrial areas.

In other words, the snapshots of Portland you see on these pages would look a lot different if Portland people hadn't planned.

Neither did this.

2002



**Jamison Square
Fountain**

2004



**Interstate MAX
station sculpture**

2005



**Green Street near Portland
State University**

2006



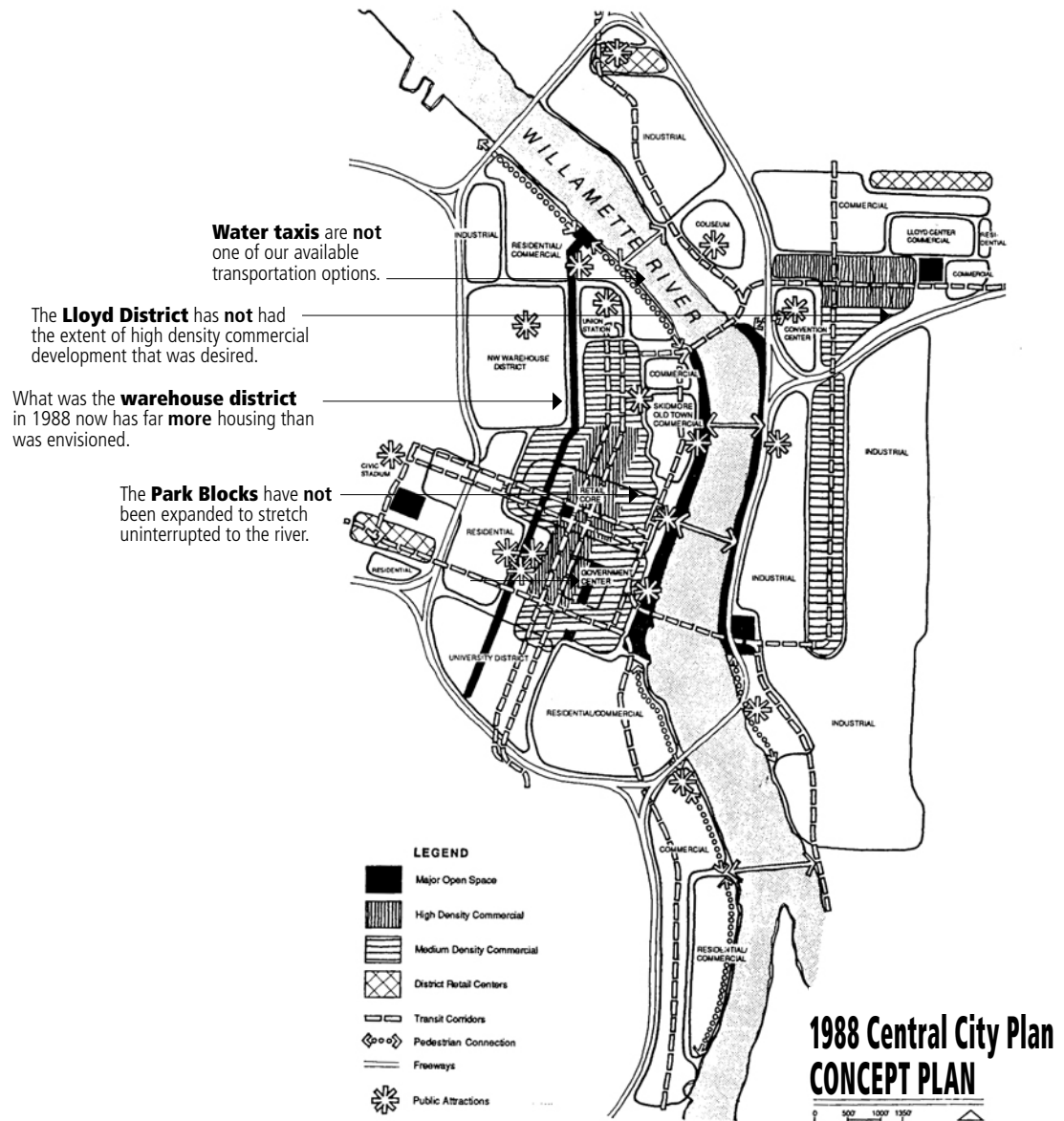
**Gerding Theater in
renovated Armory
Building**



Not everything that was planned has happened, or happened exactly as planned.

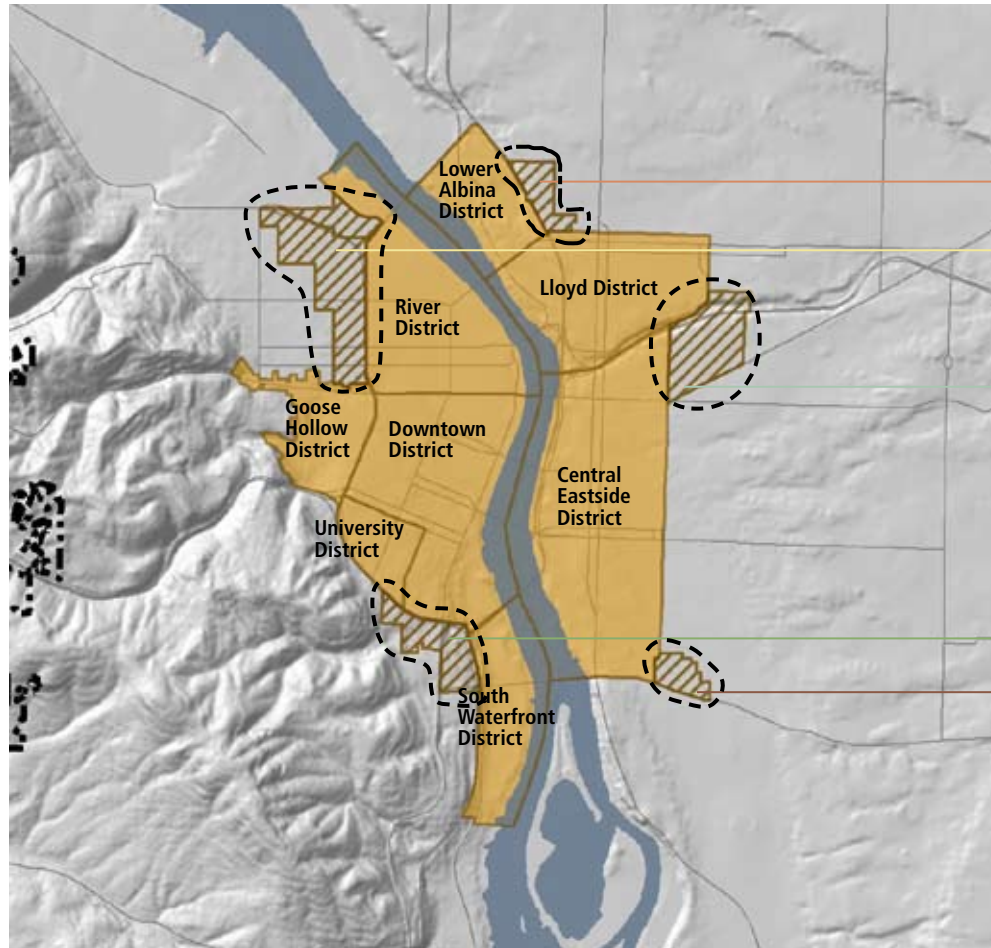
The 1988 Central City Plan did not prioritize a small number of projects, as the Downtown Plan of 1972 did with its 17 First Phase Projects, but instead identified a long list of "action items." The list specified 261 actions, both large and small, from building the westside light rail line to improving individual sidewalks. This list was added to in the years following plan adoption, finally totalling 464 actions. To date, only 12% have not been carried out in some fashion. **88%** of the recommended action items have either been completed, are ongoing, or are in the process of construction or planning.

The 1988 Concept Plan diagram (shown at right) illustrated the framework for the major changes for central Portland envisioned in 1988. Some actions that have not been implemented may still occur in the future. What new major changes do we envision now? What will be our new concept?



WE NEED A NEW CONCEPT MAP

Areas likely to experience major changes might expand the initial central city study area (shown below with existing sub-districts).



**N. Vancouver/
N. Williams
Corridor** north
to NE Russell
Street and Legacy
Emanuel Hospital



**Northwest/
Conway
Site** - west of
405, south of
NW Vaughn



NE Sandy Blvd
and north to the
Banfield Freeway



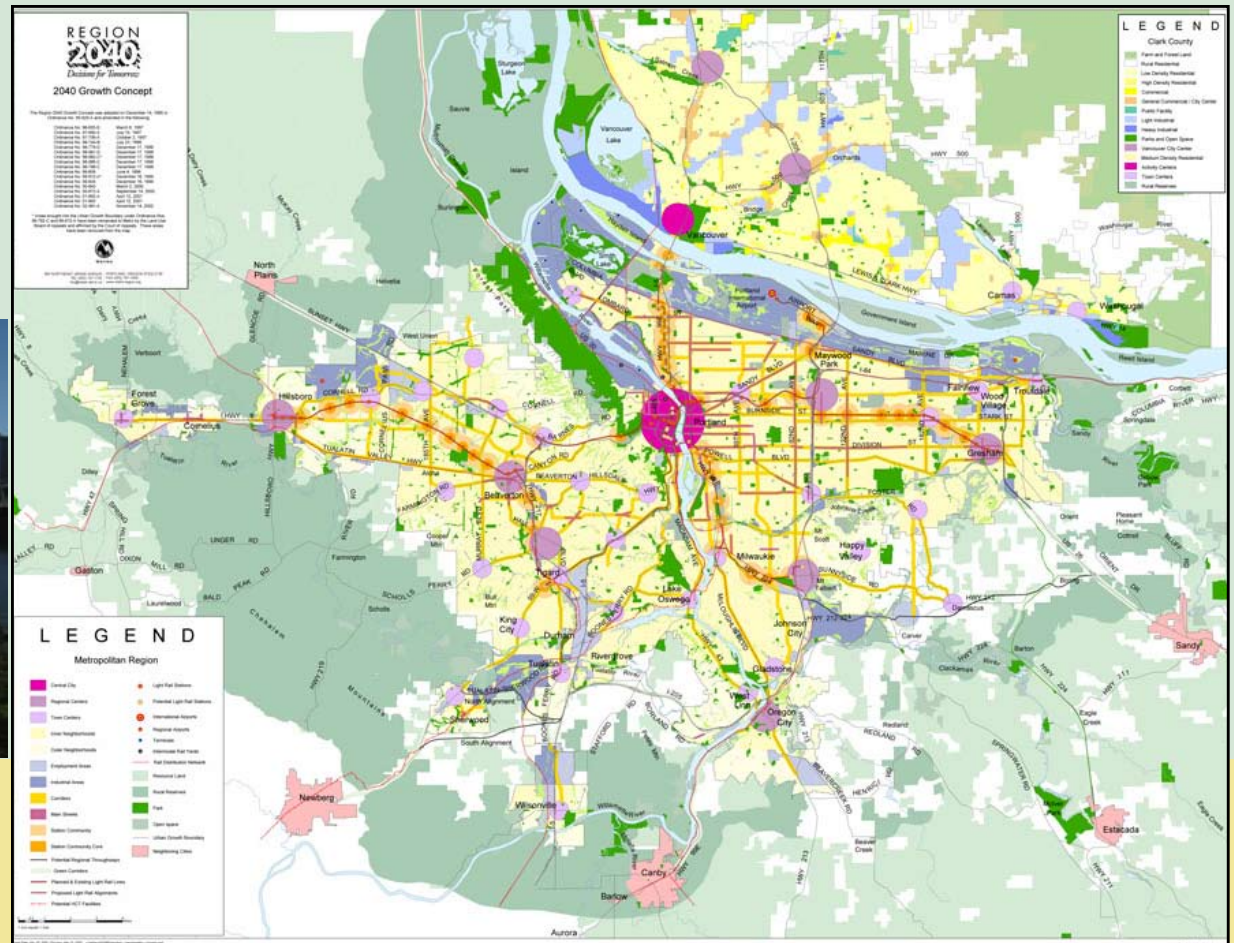
**South
side of
405/SW
Kelly**
in South
Portland



**SE Powell
Triangle** east
of SE 12th St. to
SE 17th

WHAT WILL THESE SNAPSHOTS
LOOK LIKE IN 30 YEARS?

Metropolitan Portland success depends on central Portland success: we are all pieces of one big puzzle.



Whatever new concept we come up with for central Portland for the next 30 years, we know that it will fit in with the plans for the metro region as well, because planning in Portland is a regional effort. The regional government Metro's 2040 Growth Concept is another planning document that has a major effect on central Portland. The 2040 plan (adopted in 1995) is the agency's strategy for handling growth in the metro area while maintaining the high quality of life we value. For instance, it concentrates development within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB), so that rural and natural lands outside the boundary will remain unspoiled.

And it directs growth to certain geographic areas so that projected population increases can be accommodated. The 2040 growth strategy identifies central Portland as the transportation hub and the most densely built-up part of the region. Beyond central Portland (which is shown in the 2040 strategy map above as the dark pink circle in the region's center) are seven regional centers, several town centers, transit station communities, and main street areas. The various neighborhood types and sizes complement each other and offer choices, something for everyone.

A growing and vibrant central Portland is critical to maintaining our region's high quality of life.

The Portland Plan

COORDINATING PLANNING EFFORTS

To guide the development of Portland over the next 30 years, the Portland Plan crosses both geographic and bureaucratic boundaries, involving several city agencies and addressing aspects of city life that need to be examined with a long-term and holistic view. Besides the Central Portland Plan, the Portland Plan also includes plans and strategies for:

- Urban form and urban design
- Public facilities and infrastructure projects
- Transportation
- Housing
- Economic development
- Sustainability

Every element of the Portland Plan is informed by the findings of the **VisionPDX project**.

VisionPDX ranged across the city and heard from more than 15,000 people, in written surveys and small group discussions, about what they envisioned for the future of Portland. All sorts of people weighed in with their dreams for Portland's future, answering both specific and open-ended questions about what they value most about their community, their greater vision for Portland in 20 years, and their thoughts about "How can we get there?"

The core values revealed in these conversations probably come as no great surprise to anyone who has spent any time in Portland. But they confirm that indeed, these are the essential elements that make up Portland's "DNA."

The visionPDX conversations also reveal inherent conflicts – situations where people were unable to reconcile what seem to be equally valid yet perhaps contradictory goals. This may be another of the essential aspects of what makes Portland Portland – and underscores what a delicate but crucial task it is to plan so that we keep the city's essence in the face of inevitable challenges.



NE Russell Street



SE Water Street



Farmers Market at EcoTrust

IDENTIFYING SHARED VALUES

From the citywide conversations of visionPDX, three top values emerged as being shared by Portlanders. They can be summarized with quotes from the visionPDX summary document and from the questionnaires in which people expressed what they most value:

Community Connectedness & Distinctiveness

- "Big-city amenities" with a "small-town feel."
- "Varied neighborhoods."
- "Different from the rest of the country."
- Emphasis on the "local and small-scale," on "trust and relationships."
- "Public spaces where neighbors can interact."
- "Community-based decision-making structure."

Equity & Accessibility

- Emphasis on "meeting basic needs" and "health and well-being."
- "Innovative approaches" to how to meet more than just basic needs.
- "Ability of all Portlanders... to find living wage employment."
- Ability to "keep talented people in Portland" by providing "sufficient employment opportunities...for meaningful work."
- "Benefits and burdens of growth and change should be shared fairly among our communities."

Sustainability

- "Meeting the environmental, social, cultural and economic needs of the present while ensuring the similar needs of future generations."
- "Consider how the choices we make affect other people in our community now and in the future."
- "We support our local businesses to ensure that our community's distinctiveness will continue to flourish."



Bronze man in Pioneer Courthouse Square



Outside on East Burnside



Services in Old Town



Ira Keller Forecourt Fountain

FACING KEY CHALLENGES

The components of the Portland Plan tackle how to reconcile Portland's core shared values with the major global and local challenges we anticipate facing, today and in the future:

Population growth

Metro regional government predicts a million new residents and about 850,000 new jobs coming into the Portland region in the next 25 years.

Growing diversity

The changing make-up of Portland's people (age, race, ethnicity, cultural traditions, and family status) combines with the need to acknowledge and celebrate our diversity and to deal with the present and growing social and economic inequities amongst groups within the city's population.

Changing economy

The accelerated pace of global and technological changes requires Portland to think strategically about how to continue prosperity.

Peak oil

Finite oil and natural gas resources necessitate anticipating how to deal with their replacement.

Global warming

Portland, like all major cities, needs to dramatically reduce carbon emissions and creation of pollution.

Crisis in governance

The gap between the services demanded of government and the funds that government has to provide those services has been widening.



Art Deco on SW Broadway



Farmers Market at the South Park Blocks



Simon Benson house and...



...Benson Bubblers

What Should the Central Portland Plan Focus on?

The city is a complex place. It consists of many people, places, layers of actions and events, conversations, conflicts and compromises. The list at right summarizes the many aspects of the city into separate categories so that we can discuss each topic both more simply and in more detail.

The topic areas represent the major categories by which to describe city life. People need a good place to live, a good job, good schools, efficient and easy ways to get around, and pleasant places in which to spend time together. These needs don't change much from year to year or even decade to decade. But, of course, circumstances surrounding them change greatly over time.

For instance, in Portland in 1988 there was very little downtown housing being built in central Portland, and people had relatively few choices if they wanted to live in or near downtown. The 1988 Central City Plan made housing one of its major goals. Now, that goal has largely been achieved, and thousands more people live in central Portland than did 20 years ago. Now, we look at the housing equation and perhaps see other, more specific housing goals such as: how do we provide an appropriate balance between housing types and ensure that affordable housing is available for all?

This report explores these and other changing circumstances and goals, for the housing topic and the other categories, in the sections that follow.

Topic Areas for Discussion

Economy & Jobs

Transportation

Housing

Environment, the River & Open Space

Social Services

Arts, Culture & History

Finance

Urban Design



ALL OF US NEED A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE, A GOOD JOB TO SUPPORT US , GOOD
SCHOOLS TO EDUCATE US, EFFICIENT AND EASY WAYS TO GET AROUND, PLEASANT PLACES
WHERE WE CAN GET TOGETHER.

Snapshot of Where We Are Today

Economy & Jobs

Jobs in central Portland have experienced more modest growth than jobs in the region have in recent years. While businesses continue to concentrate on financial, insurance and real estate, new niches are developing, for instance, in outdoor/sports gear and apparel, and sustainable energy and green building practices.

Transportation

People use light rail trains, streetcars, buses, bikes and their feet to get around what has become a model city for alternatives to the automobile.

Housing

More people are living in central Portland, and new neighborhoods are rising in what used to be warehousing districts and contaminated industrial sites. Keeping city living affordable, however, is a challenge.

Environment, Open Space & the River

Continuing Oregon’s strong tradition of innovative, sustainable practices and connection to (and protection of) the environment, central Portland is enjoying new open spaces and a cleaner and more accessible Willamette River.

Social Services

Many organizations partner in the ongoing challenge of providing safety and welfare for all in central Portland. A large number of these facilities are located near each other in downtown.

Arts, Culture & History

Portlanders are increasingly creative, including in the ways in which they support the arts, historic resources, and cultural activities new and old, large and small.

Finance

City funding mechanisms are complicated, and there are always more good ideas about how to spend money than how to raise it in the first place. Tax Increment Financing has been the major redevelopment funding mechanism in recent decades.

Urban Design

An emphasis on human scale and the public realm at the pedestrian level results in a walkable city where buildings are “good neighbors” creating a strong urban fabric.

Each topic area is examined further in the pages that follow.

How to use this document

Discussion of each topic area is organized as follows:

- 1. Introduction:** What are the main issues at play here?
- 2. Policy Context & Background:** What policies, regulations, programs, and guidelines are in place?
- 3. Current Conditions & Trends:** Where are we now? Where might we expect to be in the future?
- 4. Opportunities & Challenges:** What positives are there to build on, and what are the major obstacles to overcome? (Sometimes a situation can be both an opportunity and a challenge.)
- 5. Key Questions:** What are the significant questions that help summarize the issue?
- 6. Where to Go for More Information:** Where do I find more details?

This document helps us frame the discussion of what changes we may need to make now to bring about the future Portland that we want to see. It is not the final word; it is simply the Planning Bureau's best efforts to get the most important issues on the table.

Existing Plans & Policies

Below is a list of major adopted plans containing policies and regulations currently governing and addressing central city; boxes indicate which topic area they relate to.

	Economy/Jobs	Transportation	Housing	Enviro/OS/River	Social Services	Arts/Culture/Hist	Finance	Urban Design
Central City Plan 1988								
Metro 2040 Regional Plan								
CCTMP (Central City Transportation Management Plan)								
Subdistrict Plans								
Comprehensive Plan								
River Renaissance Strategy								
Watershed Mgmt Plan								
Statewide Planning Goals								

Economy & Jobs

Introduction

Central Portland has experienced a more modest rate of economic and job growth than the metropolitan area as a whole has over the past several years, and yet the health of the region depends on the strength of its core. Central Portland is the metro region's center not just geographically but also economically, and its jobs, services and products are crucial to the long-term success of the region.

Policy Context & Background

City and regional policies to date have consistently and emphatically supported central Portland's role as the economic hub of the metropolitan region. For example, the Metro 2040 regional growth strategy is based on a concept of "centers," with central Portland being the "central city" surrounded by other, smaller regional centers, town centers, transit station communities and Main Streets. Portland's policies also support state goals for the integration of land use and transportation in order to use land and other resources as efficiently as possible.

Central Portland provides the common ground between outlying areas and the connection point for transportation routes; it remains a logical place to locate large numbers of jobs. Moreover, prevention of sprawl is reinforced by this pattern of intensive land use in the central city.

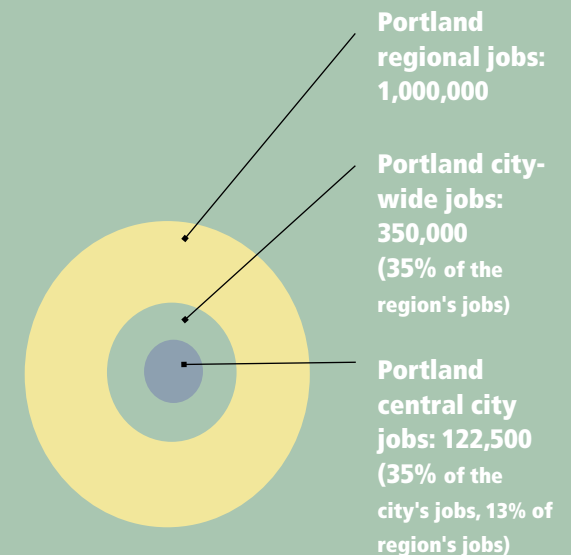
Current Conditions & Trends

Economic conditions and trends are usually described by statistics, which can seem highly abstract. But in essence these numbers are all about people: how many people are working, how much space they are using to do that work, how many of which types of products they are producing, what amounts of sales and investment they are generating. These numbers are "economic indicators" providing a snapshot of the amount of economic activity occurring.

These economic "snapshot" numbers can be compared to equivalent numbers for the region as a whole, to past years' numbers, or to other cities' data in order to give us an idea of how we are doing. Some of the economic indicators providing a statistical "snapshot" of central Portland include jobs, office space, and retail numbers. Details follow on the next pages.



New local businesses crop up even in such unlikely locations as this alley off East Burnside.



A statistical snapshot of some of the numbers relevant to central Portland's economic health

Jobs

- **Nature of jobs in the central city** – despite a similar total number of jobs in 1988 and today, the make up of those jobs has changed as the economy has shifted dramatically from being manufacturing-based to construction- and service-oriented.
- **Jobs in the overall Portland region total over one million** – an increase of 12% between 1997 and 2007.
- **Jobs specifically in central Portland have remained at approximately 122,000** – from 1988 up to and including the latest numbers available to 2007. But with the region's total jobs growing, central Portland's current 13% share is lower than the 15% share captured in 1988.
- **Approximately 4,200 business and government entities are located in the central Portland** – a gain of about 5% since 2001.
- **Business sectors** – the numbers of establishments in most business categories declined since 1998, with the exception of education/health services (up 4%) and hospitality/entertainment (up 7%).
- **Largest downtown employers** – five of the top ten downtown employers in 2006 were public entities– including Portland State University (see box at right).
- **Largest public companies** – five of the top ten public companies in the metro area (as ranked by market value) are located in central Portland; two of these are Fortune 1000 companies (Precision Castparts and Stancorp Financial).
- **Largest business employer citywide** – Oregon Health & Science University (which is also the fourth largest business employer in the state) is currently expanding into the South Waterfront area of central Portland.

Office Space

- **Total amount of office space** – came to about 25 million SF of central Portland office space in 2004, vs. 14 million SF in 1988 – an increase of 80% in 16 years.
- **SF new office space** – almost 300,000 SF of new office space is expected to be built in 2007. This follows a period of decline since 2000, when the Fox Tower (with 438,000 SF of office) was completed.
- **Vacancy rates** – are slightly lower in central Portland compared to the region overall (13% vs. 14%).
- **Ratio of Class A space vs. Class & C** – more than half the central Portland office space is categorized as Class A, the most well-appointed and up-to-date type.

Retail

- **A continual concern** – because of its key role in Portland's economy, providing workers, residents, and visitors alike with food, drink and services.
- **Retail establishments** – have increased by 10% overall between 2001 and 2005, up in 8 of 11 retail subcategories including home furnishings, clothing, food and beverage, personal care/health, and electronics/appliances.
- **Inventory of retail space** – totaled nearly 2 million SF in central Portland, accounting for 5% of the regional metro total.

Who provides the most jobs downtown? Top 10 employers

State of Oregon (including Portland State Univ.)
City of Portland
U.S. Federal Government
Standard Insurance Company
Regence Group (BlueCross BlueShield)
Multnomah County
U.S. Post Office
Portland Trail Blazers/Oregon Arena Corp.
US Bank
Oregonian Publishing Company

- **Retail vacancy rates** – came to about 12% in 2006, which is an improvement from 20% three years earlier, yet still high compared to the average 5% regionwide.
- **Retail lease rates** – the cost of renting retail space in central Portland has dropped 22% between 2003 and 2006, to \$18/SF from \$23/SF. This is below the 2006 regional average of \$19/SF.

Opportunities

- **Expansion of educated workforce** – a continuing influx of young, college-educated people are moving to the Portland area.
- **Land development capacity** – there appears to be enough “zoned capacity” in the Central City Plan area to accommodate projected growth for at least the next two decades; some 400 acres are vacant or “underutilized” for such non-intense uses as surface parking lots.
- **New office development** – many projects are in the proposal or construction stage. (See the boxed list to right.)
- **Renovations and new development in Skidmore/Old Town area** – including renovations of Fire Station 1, White Stag block, and Smith block, and relocation of Saturday Market to Waterfront Park.
- **Existence of some large, multi-block sites** – including vacant or underutilized sites in the Lloyd and North Pearl Districts, and the Central Post Office site, which could over the long-term relocate its facilities.
- **Local and regional access** – transportation into and within central Portland and downtown is arguably the best in the metro region, with many travel options provided and being improved upon, such as the light rail and streetcar line expansions.
- **National/global access** – increase in international and cross-country air travel service, with Portland’s airport linked by light rail to the downtown, and the airport served by 17 carrier and charter airlines. This includes several international airlines with

direct flights to such cities as Tokyo, Guadalajara, Mexico City, Frankfurt, and Vancouver, B.C.

- **International profile rising** – China and other parts of Asia are becoming increasingly aware of Portland’s business and real estate investment opportunities and other economic activities.
- **Tourism** – has been strong in recent years. The 2006 central Portland hotel occupancy rate of 75% was five points higher than the region and 11 points higher than the national average.
- **Amenities and attractions** – central Portland has a competitive advantage in the region (and beyond) by offering a unique and appealing combination of assets for residents, workers and visitors alike – such as vibrant local and national retail, new boutique hotels, riverfront access, new and enhanced parks and fountains, and growing educational and cultural institutions.
- **Special business niches being developed** – sports apparel and gear, animation, wind power – these and other specialties are being targeted for further expansion as business “clusters.”
- **Business services** – are located in proximity to legal and financial operations in the central Portland core, offering geographical efficiency.

NEW OFFICE DEVELOPMENT - A 2007 SNAPSHOT

- **Zimmer Gunsul Frasca tower in West End (SW 12th)** – the large downtown architecture firm is designing a tower in which it will consolidate its own offices as well as include below-grade parking, and condos on upper floors.
- **1st and Main SW** – Shorenstein Properties is building a tower without the pre-leasing of office space that developers usually require before they begin construction of a project.
- **Park Avenue West mixed use tower** – on SW Park Avenue between SW Morrison and SW Alder (where Zell Bros. Jewelers and the Virginia Cafe currently stand), TMT Development will build office, parking, retail ground floor, and housing.
- **Mercy Corps** – is renovating and adding to the historic Skidmore Building in Old Town/Chinatown for its global headquarters.
- **Pearl District Safeway** – a two block project mixing retail, parking, offices and condos.
- **“East Pearl” (EP) Project in Old Town/Chinatown** – converting a storage warehouse at NW 2nd and NW Glisan into office/restaurant/penthouse.
- **LA Fitness/Offices** – NW 14th in the Pearl District.
- **Burnside Bridgehead project** – eastside of the Willamette River.
- **OHSU South Waterfront Campus** – preliminary master plan of new buildings includes 2 million SF.

Expansion of higher education facilities in central Portland

- **Portland State University (PSU)** – has been expanding its facilities and offerings, and is projecting an upward growth rate.
- **Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU)** – is growing into its new South Waterfront campus, with the Health and Healing Center already opened, the first of its several buildings to be constructed in the new district.
- **Oregon Graduate Institute (OGI)** – is merging with OHSU as part of a seven-year plan to move its facilities from outside of central Portland to the new South Waterfront district. The new space will accommodate 155 full-time students and bring 162 new jobs to central Portland.
- **University of Oregon's Portland Center** – is expanding its presence in downtown, renovating the White Stag block and two adjacent buildings.
- **Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA)** – has been expanding its offerings in the Pearl District, and has received a \$15 million gift, most of it earmarked for programmatic improvement, some to contribute to a major capital campaign for new campus in central Portland or expansion at their current location in the Pearl District.

Challenges

- **Local/regional image or perception of lack of safety as compared to regional suburbs** – though in fact central Portland's crime rate is favorable compared to other U.S. cities of similar size, with property crimes decreasing 15% from 2005 to 2006, and overall violent crime in that period rising less than one-third of one percent. This compares to an average overall 1.3% rise (and only 3% drop in property crimes) in similarly-sized cities nationwide.
- **Continuing competition from suburban office centers** – which offer similar lease rates, abundant free parking and lower business license tax, creating what businesses perceive as "bottom-line advantages." An example is the robust office market in Kruse Way, which rivals downtown as the most prestigious business address in the state.
- **Perception of higher cost of doing business than in local suburbs** – through charges such as higher business license fees.
- **Lack of blanket internet coverage** – continuing unavailability of consistent, complete internet service being provided throughout central Portland.



The variety of national and local retailers locating in the new Pearl District neighborhood are drawing people in from all over the region

- **Retail energy shifting north to Brewery Blocks/Pearl District** – destination retail stores entering the Portland market north of the downtown retail core could present an opportunity, yet also might sufficiently dilute the market as to threaten the viability of the traditional downtown core.
- **Increasing retail competition from suburban “lifestyle centers”** – new shopping centers mimic the downtown shopping experience, luring not only customers but also retailers who once were located only in the downtown core.
- **Perception that small, local businesses and large or nationally-owned businesses cannot coexist to the benefit of all** – how to mediate the perceived conflicts in scale or ownership of businesses, including the contrast between big box retail and smaller stores, or between national chains and locally-owned shops unique to Portland.
- **Relatively small development sites** – central Portland's 200' typical block size limits larger uses such as large-floor retail or office “campuses,” while the logistical complications of land assembly further contribute to the relative scarcity of large floorplates.
- **Parking** – supply and cost of parking in central Portland are viewed negatively in comparison to the seemingly unlimited amount of free parking available in suburban sites. And yet the average cost of parking in downtown Portland in 2006 was \$12.50/day vs. the national average of \$15.28/day, and

Portland has in place numerous strategies intended to balance parking and transit across the region.

- **Venture capital and academic research funding** – many ideas originating in central Portland end up leaving the city, and even the state, to find funding for further research and development. While Portland is above average for U.S. cities in its rate of venture capital funding, it is far below that of leaders such as the Bay Area (17 times Portland's rate), Boston, Austin, or Raleigh-Durham.
- **Lack of Fortune 1000 companies** – Stancorp Financial and Precision Castparts are the only two such companies located in central Portland, with others having moved out over the years.
- **Continued reinvestment in downtown** – key central Portland Urban Renewal Districts will soon reach their maximum indebtedness or planned end dates, and a sustainable alternative funding option has yet to be identified for the continued redevelopment of the downtown.



The University of Oregon is renovating the historic White Stag Block for its Portland programs, which include offerings in journalism, law, and architecture.

Key Questions:

Regional role

- How can central Portland employment reestablish and maintain a competitive advantage over other employment locations so that it keeps its proportionate share of regional job totals?

Economic drivers

- What are the top two or three industry “clusters” that hold especially strong potential for growth and success in central Portland, and how can we foster their development?
- How can central Portland best capitalize on the opportunities provided by the aggressive expansion plans of both OHSU and PSU?
- What can we do to enhance central Portland’s role in the international economy and with businesses that sell their products outside of this region?

Industrial districts

- What is the future of industrial and manufacturing activities in central Portland?
- Should we consider changes to the protections of land being used for industry in the Central Eastside?

Retail

- What is the role of big-box retail in central Portland? Can it coexist with or complement smaller retail establishments, by adding to the critical mass of retail in a district?
- Does the emergence of the vibrant new Brewery Blocks retail area in the Pearl District threaten to dilute the strength of the Pioneer Square area downtown retail core by creating multiple retail centers?
- How can we ensure that the downtown retail core remains healthy over the long term?
- Should we reconsider the current policies that support expansion of the traditional retail core east to Waterfront Park?

Where to go for more information

Information for this assessment of economic and jobs issues has been culled from many sources, including the following:

- Johnson & Gardner, *Central City Briefing Book*
- Portland Business Alliance (PBA), *Downtown Business Census & Survey* (2006)
- Pacific Security Capital Information, 2nd Quarter Info (2006)
- U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey* (2003)
- Texas Transportation Institute, *2005 Urban Mobility Report* @ <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/report/>
- Colliers International, *Cost of Parking on the Rise for Third Consecutive Year (7/06)* @ <http://www.colliers.com/Markets/USA/News/2006ParkingRelease>

Topic areas for discussion in the Central Portland Plan

Transportation

Introduction

The compact, human scale of central Portland's 200' x 200' blocks helps create an environment where the pedestrian is a priority. Walking is a viable, pleasurable way to get around the city. The phrases "transportation options" and "multi-modal travel" are a reality for people, not just wishful thinking or planner jargon.

Portland has become a model city for innovative transportation planning, with a system that continues to evolve to include multi-modal transportation investments which stimulate high-density pedestrian oriented development.

Light rail, streetcar, bus and bicycle routes are extensive (and expanding). Forward-thinking transit investments have supported economic vitality, reduced reliance on the automobile, and been integral to Portland's unique character and appealing image as a people-friendly, livable, vibrant place.

Policy Context & Background

Portland's city and regional policies have long emphasized the role of central Portland as the transportation hub of the region, in keeping with its role as the economic hub, and efficiently linking jobs, housing and transportation. The Central City Transportation Management Plan (CCTMP) is the current policy document that guides transportation improvements in central Portland. It outlines land use, transportation and parking objectives to implement the 1988 Central City Plan's broad goals of significant economic and housing growth in downtown and the central city.

The root of the CCTMP policy document is the 1972 Downtown Plan. Prior to the Downtown Plan and the closure of Harbor Drive two years later, central Portland was a place that was rapidly losing its economic relevance and its role as the cultural hub of the region to suburban development. Buildings were being torn down to make room for parking lots and air quality violations were frequent. The Downtown Plan and subsequent efforts have helped to turn the tide, transforming central Portland.

However, not all transportation planning goals have been met, or even appear to be achievable now, decades later. For example, one goal of the Downtown Plan was a mass transit system that would carry 75% of the passenger trips to and through the downtown core, and provide a viable alternative to the private vehicle - i.e., a fast, inexpensive, convenient and comfortable system. The 75% "mode split" seems unrealistic (instead, the automobile captures nearly that share, with transit closer to 15%). However, the principal concept behind this goal is still valid: the recognition that aggressive and innovative land use and transportation strategies are needed to support a sustainable, healthy economy and pedestrian friendly environment.

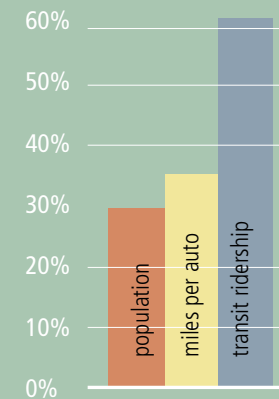


14,563 people bike across the four main central Portland bridges, on a typical day – 21% more than last year's 12,046 daily average.

Current Conditions & Trends

Growth in central Portland has gone hand in hand with the evolution of its transportation system. As such, the system continues to evolve to improve access for all users. Measures of the transportation system's current successes (or shortcomings) include the following:

- **Automobile/truck congestion** – surface roads and the I-5/405 freeway loop are overcrowded, especially at bottlenecks like southbound I-5 in the Rose Quarter and the I-5/I-84 interchange, and regional population and employment growth are anticipated to have a disproportionate impact on central Portland. Thus, while central Portland auto trips are forecast to drop 4% by 2025, an increase is projected for "through" trips - regional trips that neither start nor end in central Portland but drive through it. For example, the forecast indicates that 40% of the increase in traffic on the eight downtown bridges will be by through traffic.
- **Light rail transit ridership** – is up nearly 6% for May 2006 over the same period the previous year – with the Interstate MAX yellow line alone up 17% for that period. Weekend ridership averages were up 13%. Overall MAX ridership has increased each year for the past 13 years (June '93 to June '06), with people taking a total of 32.6 million trips on MAX in 2006 – five times the number of trips taken in '93.
- **MAX afternoon rush-hour highway corridor commuters** – 26% of afternoon downtown commuters traveling east (Banfield Freeway) or west (Sunset Highway) take light rail rather than auto.
- **TriMet transit ridership** – system (bus and rail) ridership has increased 5% for May 2007 compared to the same period in 2006; average weekday boardings are up 2% over last year. Weekly ridership has increased for 18 consecutive years. Ridership in central Portland has experienced similar growth, with yearly increases and a 22% increase from 2000 to 2005.
- **Rail transit route miles offered** – the current 44-mile, 64-station system is being expanded another 23 miles to link central Portland with Clackamas and Washington counties by MAX and commuter rail lines. The Transit Mall, the spine of the transit system in central Portland, is being redesigned to include north-south light rail along 5th and 6th Avenues, from Union Station to Portland State University, as well as new shelters, benches, sidewalk and crosswalk improvements and other pedestrian amenities. This infrastructure investment will allow the extension of light rail service to southeast Portland and the City of Milwaukie and facilitate the expansion of the rail transit system in future years.
- **Air quality** – in part because of central Portland policies encouraging alternative transportation, there have been no violations of air quality standards for carbon monoxide in central Portland since 1984.
- **Bike ridership** – keeps climbing, with Portland boasting the highest bike-commute-to-work rate of the 50 largest U.S. cities. Bikes account for 10% of the total vehicles crossing four main central Portland bridges daily in 2006 – compared to 2% in 1991.
- **Pedestrian travel** – people who walk to work in central Portland make up about 3-4% of total commuters.



While population has grown almost **30%** and the average number of miles people travel by auto on any given day has risen **35%** the number of transit riders has grown **62%**

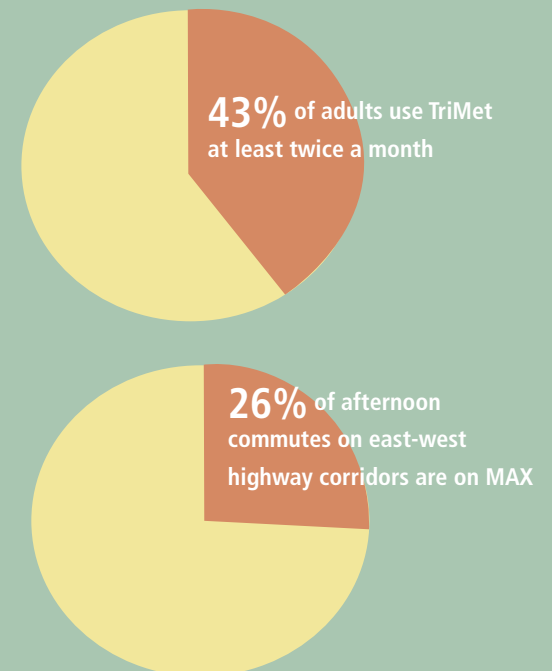
- **Carsharing** – carsharing in Portland has been expanding operations, including in central Portland, where the program has the highest number of vehicles and density of locations in the region. The Flexcar program's merger with Zipcar, which operates internationally, is also raising the profile for carsharing as an important urban transportation option.
- **Carpooling** – PDOT sponsors programs to subsidize and otherwise encourage carpooling and vanpooling; about 4% of employees surveyed in downtown Portland reported commuting to work by carpool in 2006.
- **Smart Trips** – PDOT staff works with the public to create customized approaches to reduce the need for single occupancy auto travel and encourage transit, pedestrian and bicycle trips. Cases from inner east Portland point to encouraging results, with an 8% reduction in vehicle miles traveled and a 47% increase in alternative modes and carpooling. The program has been expanded to include the downtown area.

Opportunities

- **"Peak Oil" concept** – rising gasoline prices and diminishing supply discourage driving and encourage the other modes of travel which are available in central Portland.
- **Public awareness of air quality and pollution issues** – with rising knowledge of the effects of fossil fuel usage, "air toxics," and the "carbon footprint" left by an individual, city and region, auto use is recognized as having negative long term consequences.
- **International recognition as a model for forward-thinking transit** – early and successful adoption of light rail and streetcar have gained positive attention which further encourages continued innovation and investment.
- **Track record of transit infrastructure improvements relating to increased economic development** – light rail and streetcar routes, for example, are seen as spurring private development and neighborhood revitalization in their vicinity.
- **Reputation as a top "bike city"** – with an already extensive system of bike routes, amenities and facilities (including bike-oriented traffic signs and signals, bike parking corrals and lockers) targeted to a variety of users, the city is working on developing a plan that will make Portland, currently a "Gold"-rated "Bicycle Friendly City," the first large city to be rated "Platinum" by the League of American Bicyclists.
- **Tram** – the three-minute, electric-powered aerial route opened in January 2007 linking the South Waterfront (at the Center for Health and Healing, the first of OHSU's new South Waterfront campus buildings) to the Marquam Hill



The MAX light rail train winds through the most historic part of town, near Skidmore Fountain.



OHSU main campus. Initial ridership numbers are twice what was projected – 125,000 people in February 2007. By October 2007, the tram had carried its millionth passenger. The trip is free for OHSU employees, and eliminates 2 million vehicle miles annually, according to current estimates.

- **Streetcar system** – PDOT is currently working with Metro and TriMet on an expansion of service across the Willamette to the eastside and creation of a streetcar loop through central Portland. In addition, PDOT is embarking on a Streetcar System Plan that will act as a road map for the continuing expansion of the streetcar system in central Portland and the city as a whole.
- **Light rail** – PDOT is working with regional partners to extend light rail service from the future Transit Mall expansion at Portland State University to the City of Milwaukie via a new bridge over the Willamette River in the vicinity of OMSI and headed south along SE 17th Avenue and SE McLoughlin Boulevard.
- **Streetscape and roadway enhancement projects** – recently completed projects such as the NW 3rd/4th Avenue Streetscape project in Old Town/Chinatown and the Naito Parkway redesign and reconstruction provide examples of well-maintained streets and offer creative prototypes for other street projects. Innovative designs include "festival streets" in NW Flanders and NW Davis in Chinatown, and "green streets" that manage stormwater runoff on site and provide increased opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Bridge improvement projects** – the Hawthorne, Ross Island, and Broadway Bridges have all undergone major improvements within the past ten years and thus should not require vast expenditures in the near future.
- **Columbia River Crossing** – planning is in process for a multiyear, multibillion dollar project to improve, add to or replace the existing Interstate Bridge between Portland and Vancouver, Washington, and potentially expand the Interstate MAX yellow line to link the metro region across state lines.
- **Health benefits** – research in the health industry is focusing on the link between healthy, active living and the built environment. Studies are showing the increased health benefits of walking and bicycling to work and living in areas of higher residential and employment densities and with a broad mix of uses such as are in place in central Portland.



The Portland Streetcar opened in 2001, expanding downtown's Fareless Square transit offerings. This part of the system, at Portland State University, was added later, beginning service in 2005.

Challenges

- **Aging infrastructure** – many freeways, roadways, and bridges in or adjacent to central Portland need maintenance or replacement. For instance, the concrete pavement of I-405 is the oldest in the state and has outlasted its 20- to 25-year “structural design life.”
- **City street maintenance backlog** - estimated by the city’s transportation commissioner to be over \$400 million in 2007, while the current unfunded liability to keep the city’s transportation department assets in ‘good’ condition is \$327 million.
- **PDOT program cuts** – have exceeded \$12 million since 2001, reducing funds available for funding, while expenses have increased.
- **Gasoline tax remains at 1993 rate** – state gas taxes, which are a major funding source for state road building and maintenance, remain at 25 cents/gallon, not adjusted for inflation, despite increases in the cost of construction materials and labor.
- **I-5/I-405 Freeway Loop** – this 6.5 mile loop carries more than 30% of the region’s freeway trips, while accounting for less than 10% of its total lane miles. (The Freeway Loop Study, released in 2005, concluded that facilities will fail or not meet transportation needs within two or fewer years, and that therefore some action is needed.) Most of the trips on freeways in central Portland are destined to places outside central Portland, adding to the localized air pollution and congestion.
- **“Job sprawl”** – recent job growth has been much stronger in areas of the region outside of central Portland. To accommodate transportation needs associated with growth, central Portland needs to be able to capture a share of future employment growth, particularly in key industries.
- **Population growth** – the Portland metro area is projected to add one million residents (or more) in the next 30 years.
- **Congestion** – continues to increase on freeways, central Portland arterials and smaller roads alike, much of it being “through” trips (regional travel passing through but not stopping in central Portland) or trips that can be made by using alternative modes or at different times of the day.
- **Parking for private automobiles** – there is a common perception that it is difficult to find parking in central Portland, and that current parking regulations are complex and restrictive.
- **Burnside Bridge maintenance** – the Burnside Bridge is undergoing a construction project to replace its 78-year-old concrete deck, repair and replace mechanical parts that open the liftspan, and retrofit the bridge for a seismic event. The bridge remains open except for temporary closures and reduced number of lanes available.
- **Need for bridge upgrades** – especially at the Steel Bridge, where load limits restrict light rail transit capacity.
- **Freight access** – continuing to provide freight access to the industrial areas of central Portland, resolve conflicts between residential development and active freight lines and truck routes, and maintain our region’s competitiveness as a distribution and logistics hub.



Transportation plans take time to come to fruition, but Portland's transit system has reached a crossroads: here, craftspeople install bricks where the extended MAX light rail line meets the streetcar line adjacent to the Portland State University Urban Studies Plaza.

Key Questions

Handling growth

- Given the transit system and congestion we have today, how can we handle the high levels of job and housing growth that are projected?
- What investments can we make to improve the transportation system most dramatically?

Parking

- How can we simplify the current system of parking regulations while making sure we don't abandon our goals of encouraging alternative modes of transportation?
- How can we better inform users about where to find parking to avoid long searches?

Getting out of the car

- How can we make strategic improvements that will encourage greater use of non-single occupancy automobiles?
- How can we encourage people to do more biking and walking?

Innovation

- What new opportunities and approaches to getting the most out of our transportation system should be explored?

Freeway Infrastructure

- How do we address the need for major upgrades or replacement of highway infrastructure such as I-5?

Where to go for more information

Information for this assessment of transportation issues has been culled from sources including the following:

- U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey* (2002-05).
- Texas Transportation Institute, *2005 Urban Mobility Report* @ <http://mobility.tamu.edu/ums/report/>
- *Facts About TriMet* (10/2006) @ <http://www.trimet.org/pdfs/trimetfactsheet.pdf>
- TriMet, *Fixed Route Service and Ridership Information*
- City of Portland, Office of Transportation @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/index.cfm?c=eeghb>
- Portland Business Alliance, *2006 Business Alliance Downtown Business Census & Survey* @ <http://www.portlandalliance.com/pdf/2006census.pdf>
- City of Portland & OR Department of Transportation, *Freeway Loop Study Project Summary Report* (7/2005) @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=104959>
- FHA website, 2.1. Corridor Description @ <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/accelerated/wsor0503.cfm>



Methods of transportation mix and merge at the Willamette River: piers of the I-5 freeway overpass frame the Steel Bridge, which carries pedestrians, bicyclists, autos, buses, light rail and freight trains, while the East Bank Esplanade, for pedestrians and bicyclists, lies in the foreground.

Topic areas for discussion in the Central Portland Plan

Housing

Introduction

The number of people living in central Portland has grown from about 21,000 in 1990 to more than 31,000 in 2005, bringing more “24-7” liveliness to central Portland. What used to be areas of warehouses and contaminated industrial sites have been transformed into new neighborhoods, and continue to evolve. However, the increase in housing hasn’t solved the problems of how to provide quality housing for all.

Policy Context & Background

Getting more people living in downtown and central Portland was a major policy goal both of the 1988 Central City Plan and of subsequent planning. That goal is being realized, with initial target numbers for new units in central Portland being met.

The intention of the 1988 plan was to provide a “jobs-housing balance” that would help create a “24-hour downtown.” In the 1980s, there had been much office construction in downtown, but relatively little new housing was being built.

The focus in creating the 1988 plan was on finding ways to encourage development of more housing in central Portland. Many people did not believe the market would grow. Incentives and policies were aligned to encourage developers to take risks and construct new residential buildings and convert warehouses into living space.

While public policies provided the push to add housing in central Portland, that effort has been matched by market demand over the

past several years. For instance, the Pearl District has been created out of the old warehouse/industrial brownfields area in north-west central city. In the ‘88 plan this area was dubbed “North of Burnside” and “Northwest Triangle.” Subsequent planning efforts combined it into a renamed “River District.” Now the area is commonly known as the Pearl District and is a vibrant neighborhood.

Partnerships – public/private, non-profit/for-profit – are important in providing housing in central Portland. Some of the programs, public agencies and non-profits which contribute to housing efforts in central Portland are:

- Portland Development Commission
- Bureau of Housing and Community Development
- Housing Authority of Portland
- Enterprise Foundation
- Northwest Housing Alternatives, Inc.
- Transition Projects
- Central City Concern
- REACH Community Development, Inc.

Current Conditions & Trends

The new districts of the Pearl, South Waterfront, and the revitalizing West End are growing into distinct neighborhoods, offering a range of amenities and housing choices. The Pearl District alone accounts for some 6,000 new housing units since 1980. Overall some 10,000 units have been built in central Portland since the adoption of the 1988 plan and 7,000 more are under construction or in planning.

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN HOUSING



Museum Place is a West End building offering a range of housing types at various prices, including some that are affordable to families making less than 60% of the median family income.

The trend seems to be for these areas to continue emerging, maturing, and becoming more complete communities over time. Though most of the new housing being built in central Portland is designed for homeownership, housing in central Portland is still nearly 80% rental – compared to a citywide rental rate of just under 50%. The Pearl/River District had the lowest rental rate in central Portland, 36% in 2005.

In all areas of central Portland, affordability is a key issue. The diverse population needs a wide variety of housing locations, types, and sizes to be available at a variety of price ranges. The needed variety has not been provided by the marketplace alone, and government subsidies have been offered as incentive for most of the “affordable” housing that is being built.

Affordable housing is generally divided into categories based on the percentage of the Median Family Income (MFI) that a family earns. For instance, the most inexpensive of the “affordable” categories would be for those families earning up to 30% of the MFI, which in Portland in 2007 was set at \$66,900; this translates into an income of about \$20,000 for a family of four. (Separate scales are set for households of other sizes.) Annual housing costs are expected to be about one-third of the annual family income to be considered “affordable.”

Opportunities

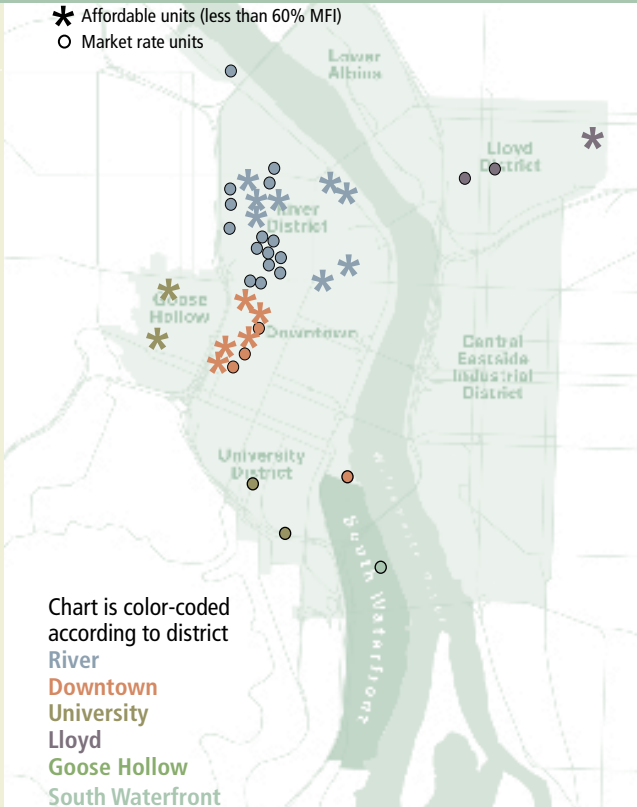
- **Growing regional population** – Metro predicts that the Portland area will add approximately 1 million new residents in the next 30 years.

NEW HOUSING – PROJECTS OF 100 UNITS OR MORE

* Indicates affordable units - less than 60% MFI

Year	Name of Project	District	Units	Year	Name of Project	District	Units
1991	Oakwood Essex Apartments	DT	156		The Lexis	RD	139
	Riverplace Part II	DT	108		Steven Epler Hall (PSU)	UD	130
1992	Alder House*	DT	132	2004	10th & Hoyt	RD	175
1994	12th Ave. Terrace*	DT	119		The Edge	RD	117
	St. James*	DT	122		The Avenue Lofts	RD	170
1997	Pearl Court Apartments*	RD	199		The Henry	RD	123
	Lloyd Place*	LD	202		Park Place	RD	124
1998	Yards at Union Station (Ph.I)*	RD	158		Danmore Replacement*	RD	180
	Riverstone Condos	RD	122	2005	The Elizabeth	RD	182
	Stadium Station Apartments*	GH	114		The Sitka*	RD	222
1999	Village at Lovejoy Fountain	DT	198		Burlington Tower	RD	163
	Yards at Union Station (Ph.II)*	RD	392		Station Place*	RD	176
	Tanner Place Condos	RD	122		The Louisa	RD	246
	Lloyd Cornerstone	LD	117		The Pinnacle	RD	179
	Collins Circle Apartments*	GH	124		The Merrick	LD	185
2000	Kafoury Commons*	DT	129		Broadway Student Housing (PSU)	UD	384
	Kearney Plaza Apartments	RD	131	2006	The Eliot	DT	223
2001	Lovejoy Station*	RD	181		Riverscape (Ph. I)	RD	104
	The Gregory	RD	145		The Meriwether	SW	245
2002	Marshall Wells Lofts	RD	164	2007	The Benson	DT	144
	Streetcar Lofts	RD	134		The Encore	RD	177
2003	St. Francis Apts.*	DT	106		The Metropolitan	RD	136
	Museum Place South*	DT	140		The Strand	SW	216
	Pacific Tower*	RD	156		Waterfront Pearl	RD	192
	Bridgeport Condos	RD	124		The Wyatt	DT	244
				2008	Ladd Tower	DT	201

- **Continued high demand is projected** – Metro predicts that in 2030 there will be a total of nearly 40,000 housing units in central Portland. Currently, growth is on track to meet (or exceed) those numbers: central Portland has been adding an average of 800-900 new housing units every year in the decade between 1995 and 2006.
- **Capacity exists** – there is enough “zoned capacity” today to accommodate some 60,000 new units (more than meeting the predicted 40,000 unit demand cited above) for central Portland housing over the coming two decades. This capacity includes sites available for new housing in the Lloyd District and other areas which have not seen much new housing in the past twenty years.



59% of the housing in central Portland is affordable to families earning 60% or less of the region's Median Family Income.

- **Eventual “build-out” of the Pearl District** – will shift development energy to other areas of town. This is already beginning to happen in the westside subdistricts, with housing activity shifting south from the Pearl to the South Waterfront District.
- **30% “set-aside”** – City Council adoption of policy requiring approximately 30% of any tax increment financing funds to be earmarked for affordable housing.
- **New housing types** – the possibility of providing new, diverse, creative housing product types which might especially appeal to the market of young newcomers.
- **Schools, Families, Housing Initiative** – City Council adoption of policy to attract families to city neighborhoods and encourage them to send their children to public schools, as a means of strengthening schools and neighborhood communities alike.
- **Children in central Portland** – though relatively few families with children have chosen to live in central Portland, this is beginning to change as new young residents are having children.
- **Sustainability connection** – growing public awareness of the importance of density and green building practices for a sustainable environment and lifestyle.

Challenges

- **Affordability** – for all income levels and household sizes, ages, abilities and special needs.
- **Housing for families** – question of how best to provide housing that appeals to and accommodates families with children.
- **Middle-Income/“Workforce” housing** – concern over whether there is enough housing in central Portland for people



The St. James provides affordable rental apartments across the street from the Portland Art Museum in the West End District.

- in the middle-income range – nurses, teachers, police officers, service industry workers.
- **Lack of a “dedicated source” of funding for affordable housing** – funding for housing is unpredictable from year to year, at the same time that federal funding sources for housing are dwindling. For instance, long-term federal contracts with property owners (providing Section 8 housing and other affordable types) are expiring, putting affordable subsidized housing at risk.
- **High cost of land** – increases the cost of providing new housing.
- **High cost of urban construction type** – the construction materials and methods needed to create the bulk, mass and height required for greater housing density generally are more expensive than those to build at a lower density.
- **Green building standards** - striking a balance between higher costs related to meeting sustainability standards and the need for overall affordability.
- **Condo conversions** – are a concern to some, though the rate of conversion from rental to ownership housing has slowed recently, and there still are far more rentals than condos overall in central Portland.
- **Providing an array of amenities and services** – ensuring that parks, schools, grocery stores, and other basics are located near enough to existing and new housing and that these areas are appealing places to live.
- **Gentrification** – displacement of low income people with rising property values.
- **Unpredictability of housing market** – condo and single

family house prices are up but properties are taking longer to sell.

- **Changing transportation needs** – as the residential population in central Portland increases, transportation needs increase, though not necessarily at the same rate or with the same ratio of mode choices, as, for example, potentially more people both live and work downtown and therefore travel shorter distances to work.
- **Air quality issues** – concerns about housing locating near freeways, in regard to toxic auto emissions and health.

Key Questions

Housing incentives

- Do we still need the current wide range of policies and incentives to encourage housing production, or should this attention better be directed to meet other goals, such as affordability, preservation, unit size and location?
- Should certain types of housing be targeted with incentives - for instance, shelters, affordable, middle income, family-size, ownership, rental?

Low-income housing

- Is the high concentration of low-income housing in the West End and Old Town/Chinatown districts a benefit or would they better be distributed across a broader geographic area?

Middle-income/“workforce” housing

- Is this primarily a central Portland issue or one best addressed citywide?

New neighborhoods

- What can we learn from the success of the Pearl District?
- How can we improve new mixed use neighborhoods emerging

in other parts of central Portland?

- What will it take to bring the energy of the west side development market to the Lloyd District?

Children in central Portland

- What can be done to help ensure that families can remain in central Portland as their children grow?
- What types of housing, services and amenities will make central Portland more family- and child-friendly?

Regional growth

- How does a heavily residential central Portland fit into the regional growth management plan?
- Does our transportation system work as well for moving people from housing in the center to jobs in the surrounding area as it does for moving people from the surrounding area housing to jobs in the center?

Where to go for more information

Information for this assessment of housing issues has been culled from many sources, including the following:

- U.S. Census Bureau (1990)
- Documents supporting *Central City Plan* (1988)
- Portland Development Commission (PDC), *Central City Housing Inventory* (October 2005) @ http://www.pdc.us/pdf/housing_serv/pubs/central_city_inventory_200510.pdf
- All condominium data available from Multnomah County filings
- Portland Bureau of Planning, *Central Portland Development Capacity Study (draft)* (April 2007) @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=154257>

Topic areas for discussion in the Central Portland Plan

The Environment, the River & Open Space

Introduction

Part of the special character of Portland comes from its unique location between the Pacific Ocean and 11,249 foot-high Mt. Hood, each about an hour's drive away, and the Willamette River flowing through the Central City. This natural setting contributes to Portland's strong environmental tradition.

Portland's "green" legacy both connects to and protects the environment. We see it in the city's longstanding national leadership in recycling, public transportation, green building and other sustainable practices, natural resource conservation and stewardship, and in the emphasis on public access to the river, parks and other natural areas.

Policy Context & Background

Portland's focus on the environment has been reinforced over decades of planning. It builds on not only the city's natural setting and resources but also on a gift from the city's original founders, the series of linear park blocks laid out in the mid-nineteenth century in the town's original plat. These North and South Park Blocks contribute to central Portland's unique urban "green" character even today.

The Olmsted Parks Plan of 1903 established a green space network citywide, connecting the park blocks and plazas of central Portland to larger natural areas such as Forest Park and Terwilliger Boulevard. The 1972 Downtown Plan recommended open green space along the river where there was a freeway at the time. The 1988 Central City Plan emphasized the river by identifying the Willamette Riverfront as Fundamental Policy 2, with the goal of

creating an enhanced waterfront which would "knit the city together."

Numerous other environmentally progressive policies and plans have continued to refine and advance this commitment to natural resources, open space, parks and the river. Other plans include:

- **River Renaissance Vision and Strategy** – an "umbrella" of river-related initiatives adopted by City Council in 2001 and 2004 respectively.
- **Centennial Mills Framework Plan** – a plan outlining opportunities and key principles for development of the 4.5-acre site northeast of the Broadway Bridge including riverside open space and access to the water; approved by City Council in 2006.
- **Portland Watershed Management Plan (2006)** – describes new approaches to evaluating conditions in the city's watersheds and to implementing projects to improve watershed health. Hydrology, habitat, water quality and biological communities are all addressed. Approaches include installation of new stormwater infrastructure and new methods to repair and maintain existing infrastructure using combined efforts of city bureaus, agencies and citizen groups.
- **Citywide Green Streets Policy (2007)** – promotes the use of green street facilities in public and private redevelopment, as an important development strategy to manage and treat stormwater as well as increase urban green space.
- **South Waterfront Plan (2002)** – details the implementation of new high density residential with sustainable building and environmental practices.
- **River District Planning** – the many phases of this effort have transformed industrial railyards into a new neighborhood,



The Great Blue Heron makes its home on the banks of the Willamette River in central Portland, including parts of Ross Island which have been donated to the city as a wildlife preserve. As Portland's official city bird, the Great Blue Heron has a week set aside each May to celebrate it, and is the namesake of one of the city's most popular locally-brewed beers.

guided by the River District Vision (1992); Development Plan (1994); Plan (1995); and Design Guidelines (1996).

- **Willamette Greenway Plan** – originally approved in 1979, this plan was updated in 1987 and now is being updated through the River Plan (part of the River Renaissance Vision and Strategy mentioned above) in three geographical sections or “reaches,” North, Central, and South.
- **Downtown Waterfront Urban Renewal Area** – established in 1974, due to expire in 2008.

Current Conditions & Trends

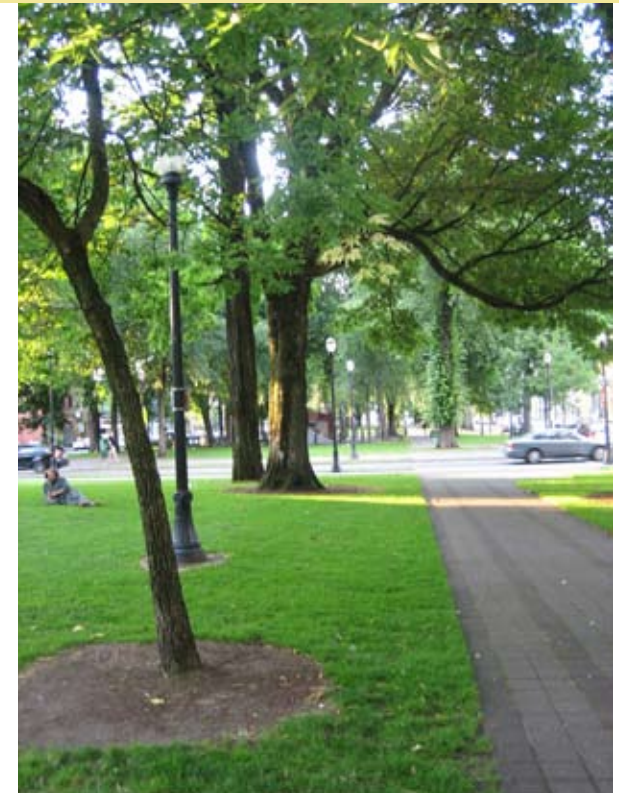
Sustainability is one of Portland's top three shared values, as identified in the visionPDX project. It provides an overarching philosophy for the city not just in its open space and natural resources but in everything it takes on, including economic, cultural and social programs. The popular movement toward environmental sustainability and responsibility has long been a beacon and symbol for the Portland community's values. And, proud as we may be of our environmentally friendly policies and practices, our reputation for being “sustainable” and “green” should put added pressure on us to keep up these high standards of innovation and leadership.

A recent example of major improvements in our environment is the entirely new South Waterfront neighborhood. The district, still in its early construction stages, will be a high-density mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings (OHSU is mounting a major expansion by building a new campus there). The area is being developed according to the recommendations made in the 1988 Central City Plan. Its construction is in keeping with sustainable “green

building” practices, and the area's natural habitat is being restored in ways that have advanced since development of the 1988 plan.

Opportunities

- **River Plan** – addresses the Willamette River and land within one-quarter mile of it. The plan arises in part from the state-required update to the Willamette Greenway Plan. One of the objectives is to provide a connected greenway trail system along the entire river. The “Central Reach” segment of the River Plan includes central Portland.
- **Alleviating air and water pollution** – through a variety of methods including planting trees; installing swales, greenways and ecoroofs; and providing incentives for “green” practices.
- **Improving natural habitat for fish and other wildlife in the urban setting** – by incorporating native plants and eco-diversity into parks, landscaping, roof gardens, and ecoroofs; looking for opportunities to increase food, refuge and resting areas for fish and wildlife; lowering watershed temperature and sediment flows; and increasing ground water and wetland recharge.
- **Innovative stormwater management practices** – such as ecoroofs and green streets help improve water quality by reducing runoff of polluted stormwater into the river.
- **Sustainability emphasis** – growing public desire to reduce the impact of human activity on the natural environment, and an understanding that a “sustainable lifestyle choice” could include living/working in central Portland as a way to take transit and walk more often, create less pollution, and generally use less energy.



Lush tree canopy in the North Park Blocks creates habitat for native and migratory birds. Increasing the urban tree canopy has been shown to be the most valuable way to conserve native breeding birds.

- **Citywide coordination to improve watershed health** – an Interbureau Watershed Planning team meets regularly to discuss opportunities to implement infrastructure projects in ways that protect and enhance watershed health.
- **Existing public parks** – total about 75 acres in central Portland.
- **Park space along the river** – a total of seven miles of riverbank is designated park space within central Portland.
- **New parks in construction stages** – the as yet unnamed Park Block 5 in downtown.
- **Park sites in planning and design phases** – the Fields will be the last of three planned parks for the River District.
- **Reservation of sites for future new parks** – the Centennial Mills site will include a park, about 700 feet of which will be along the river. The South Waterfront district will boast neighborhood parks as well as more than a mile of riverfront, reclaimed as part of the Willamette Greenway, with an average 100-foot width. Crescent Park, under the Hawthorne Bridge, will be about 3 acres, including 1000 feet fronting the water.
- **Gift of Ross Island property to the city** – 45 acres of Ross Island, directly across from the South Waterfront District, have been donated by local philanthropist/publisher Robert Pamplin.
- **I-405 and the east bank waterfront** – the 2005 Freeway Loop Study confirmed that major improvements to the I-5/I-405 freeway loop are essential to the functioning of the city and state transportation system. It recommended that planning for these improvements begin as soon as possible. The study also suggested that the planning consider how the freeway loop improvements could be a critical opportunity to reclaim central

Portland waterfront for public use, i.e. by removing the current bridge/overpass system and replacing it with an I-5 tunnel under the river and east bank.

Challenges

- **Providing enough park space to keep up with population growth** – while the number of residents could potentially double (or triple) in coming decades, open space is not likely to increase at the same rate. This will place more importance on high quality design, maintenance and appropriate use of the spaces that are provided.
- **Designing buildings that are safe for birds** – preventing migratory birds from flying into reflective glass of high-rise structures.
- **Reducing/eliminating sewage overflow** – while the Bureau of Environmental Services' "Big Pipe" project will reduce sewage overflows to just a handful of times a year, it won't stop overflows completely. For this investment to continue to yield benefits as development increases, we will also need to use other methods of stormwater interception, detention and treatment, such as landscaped stormwater planters, eco-roofs, green streets, and swales.
- **Engaging the public** – Portland's citizens, businesses and development community need to be informed on how green infrastructure can enhance, improve and connect neighborhoods so that they all will support, demand, and continue funding for these projects.
- **Changing the city's work practices** – much of the ongoing work of the city, including repair and maintenance of existing



Purple flowers bloom on the roof of this central eastside county building, showing how ecoroofs bring nature into the city and improve the sustainability and health of the urban environment at the same time.

PORTLAND'S FOCUS ON THE ENVIRONMENT HAS BEEN
REINFORCED OVER DECADES OF PLANNING.

infrastructure and construction of new infrastructure, can be modified at little to no cost to protect and enhance the health of Portland's watersheds.

- **Funding** – increasing maintenance costs and the need to finance the creation of new parks.

Key Questions

Continuing leadership in sustainability

- How can we make the central Portland area a true showcase for sustainable development?
- How do we determine which strategies provide the broadest range of benefits and/or best address issues affecting central Portland? Strategies can produce multiple benefits; for example, functioning eco-roofs treat stormwater, sequester carbon and increase energy efficiency.
- How can we integrate green building and green infrastructure strategies so they complement each other?
- How can we focus our efforts on changing behaviors that will have the greatest impact on reaching true sustainability?

Environmental hazards

- What sorts of new environmental challenges or hazards might the future bring (such as climate change), and how can central Portland best prepare to prevent them or cope with them?

Watershed planning

- How should we reflect the city's watershed plan goals and objectives and stormwater management policies in the long-range policies, investments and strategies for central Portland?
- What are the opportunities for central Portland policies, investments or strategies to significantly improve water quality in the Willamette?

Riverfront vitality

- What can we do to truly incorporate the river into Portland life and connect the east and west sides of central Portland?
- How can we overcome the slow pace of development and low levels of activity along Naito Parkway and achieve more vitality at Tom McCall Waterfront Park?
- What is the potential for the waterfront land that may be able to be reclaimed with a possible reconfiguration of I-5?
- What should be the public goals for the riverfront near I-5?
- What is needed to create the mandate and ability to begin planning for freeway loop improvements that affect the riverfront?

River use

- In the next 30 years, could the river be used not only as a healthy habitat for fish and wildlife and a place for public recreation, but also for water taxis or other public transportation, as has often been mentioned as a goal in the past?
- Are there opportunities for river-oriented commercial uses in and along the river?



The Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade covers 1 ½ miles and opened in 2001. It is named in honor of Mayor Vera Katz for her vision, leadership, and particular support for creation of the esplanade, which had been identified in the 1988 Central City Plan as a major project to reclaim the eastside waterfront.

Where to go for more information

Information for this assessment of environment, river and open space issues has been culled from many sources, including the following:

- River Renaissance, *Willamette River Conditions Report* (October 2004) @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=78882>
- Portland Parks & Recreation, Three Downtown Parks Projects website @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?c=edcbc>
- Bureau of Environmental Services, *Portland Watershed Management Plan* (2005) @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/BES/index.cfm?&c=dijgf>

Social Services

Introduction

Sisters of the Road. Central City Concern. Outside In. The Union Gospel Mission. Portland Rescue Mission. Blanchet House. All are located in Portland's downtown and offer help to a diverse population. The services offered by these and other nonprofits supplement city departments such as Police and Fire, as well as Multnomah County programs, in the ongoing challenge to provide for the safety and welfare of Portlanders. Indeed, providing social services is not the sole responsibility of any one group or governing body.

Policy Context & Background

The Central City Plan in 1988 considered social services as three of its primary 13 Functional Policies: Human Services (focused on "special needs populations" and assisting "dependent individuals to become more independent"); Public Safety (creating "an environment in which people feel safe"); and Education (expanding educational opportunities and establishing "Central City as a center of academic and cultural learning").

Other plans, policies, and programs, both public and private, that are in place to support the social services functions of central Portland include the following:

- **Community Policing programs** – since 1990.
- **Downtown Clean & Safe program** – managed by the Portland Business Alliance with funds provided by its downtown business improvement district, for enhanced maintenance of 213 downtown blocks. The program began in 1988.
- **Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program (DARE)** – since 1993.
- **Gang Resistance Education and Training Program (GREAT)** – since 1993.
- **Home Again, a Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness** – since 2005.
- **Mental Health/Public Safety Initiative** – going through the City Council approval process in 2007.
- **"Community Connect"** – project studying citizen engagement/neighborhood association representative system; began in 2005.
- **"Our Bill of Rights - Children and Youth"** – written by youth, adopted by City Council in 2006.
- **Street Access for Everyone (SAFE)** – began in 2006.



An inscription outside Central City Concern quotes Andy Warhol: "They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

Current Conditions & Trends

Awareness of the challenges of providing social services to the city's population and creative attempts to alleviate and overcome problems is expanding as time goes on. In some cases a particular event has catalyzed positive action. For instance, the city initiated the Mental Health/Public Safety Initiative mentioned above in the wake of the death of a schizophrenic homeless man, James Chasse, in September 2006.

Opportunities

- **Mayoral initiatives** – such as SAFE and Mental Health/Public Safety (listed previously).
- **City Council proposal for an upgraded 24-hour day access center** – to provide restrooms, seating and other facilities for all members of the public. Prior to completion of the center's upgrade, the Mayor began a program keeping City Hall bathrooms open to the public 24 hours a day.
- **Chronic homelessness down 70%** – from nearly 1,300 in 2005 (the first full year of the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness) to just under 400 in January 2007.
- **Continuing compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards** – to ensure communication, physical access and mobility for people of all ability levels.
- **Crime statistics down** – total property and violent crimes have declined for three consecutive years, in both the Central and the Northeast Police Precincts, which encompass central Portland.
- **Community policing** – with patrol including officers on foot, bike, and horseback.



Sisters of the Road serves hot meals in exchange for volunteer work or other non-traditional methods of payment at their cafe on NW Sixth Street in Downtown.

Challenges

- **Homelessness** – while not considered “chronically homeless,” there are approximately 1,400 people/night on the street in Portland in 2007, while another 3,000/night are in shelters or temporary housing.
- **“Sidewalk Obstructions Ordinance”** – commonly known as the “Sit-Lie Ordinance,” the policy is intended to keep a person from sitting or lying on the sidewalk. It applies to one or two people using the sidewalk in the public right-of-way; three or more people together may legally be considered as being protected by the First Amendment.
- **24-hour day access center** – providing public restrooms, seating and day-access facilities as proposed by City Council (this is an opportunity as well as a challenge).
- **Sidewalk queuing** – for lack of an alternative, clients for social services (meals, shelter, etc.) wait in line on city sidewalks.
- **Inadequate funding** – continual need to secure additional funding.
- **Budget cuts** – several consecutive years of cuts at Multnomah County, which historically provides numerous social services for the city’s population. Meanwhile, state funding cuts to programs for the mentally ill have resulted in more people living on central Portland streets and using city jails for access to treatment.
- **Young people hanging out on public streets and sidewalks** – creating an environment perceived as unpleasant by some businesses and shoppers.
- **Clustering of services and facilities** – social service providers are grouped in Old Town/Chinatown, while shelters and

SROs are clustered there and in the West End. Such concentrations may also be considered an opportunity in some ways, by providing people with the convenience of having a broad choice of facilities within a small area.

- **Informal moratorium on numbers of services and shelters** – the Old Town/Chinatown neighborhood has agreed not to try to displace existing services and shelters, but also has said they do not want any more such facilities.
- **Concentrations of poverty** – despite the rapid construction of luxury condos in parts of central Portland, downtown has some of the highest concentrations of poverty in the region.



Downtown sidewalks sometimes become places for young people to sit, rest and visit with each other.

Key Questions

Centralization of social services

- How can we best fulfill neighborhood redevelopment goals while providing convenient and efficient social services?

Meeting needs for social services

- Is our current network of services meeting the needs of disadvantaged populations in central Portland today?
- Will the current system be capable of meeting needs in the future?
- What has to be done to ensure future needs are met?

Equity and the public realm

- How do we most effectively and fairly balance rules prohibiting loitering while also protecting basic human rights and providing basic services?

Where to go for more information

Information for this assessment of social services issues has been culled from many sources, including the following:

- National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Community Snapshot-Portland and Multnomah County* (June 2007) @ <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/general/detail/1665>
- City of Portland and Multnomah County, *Home Again* (March 2007) @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=151674>
- Portland Police Bureau, precinct information on Website (2004-2006) @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/police/index.cfm?c=43598>



Outside In, located in the West End, helps homeless teens and low-income adults to get back on their feet and find a home.

Arts, Culture & History

Introduction

Central Portland has historically been and continues to be the center of the region's arts and culture - a downtown serving the entire state of Oregon and southwestern Washington.

The vitality and liveliness of Portland depends on its historic, cultural, artistic and entertainment elements being strong and active. The "arts, culture and history" topic area encompasses the places and ways in which Portlanders pursue the myriad activities that enrich their lives. Arts, cultural and historic resources are major contributors to the region's outstanding "livability" because they encompass many of the special extras that give Portland its character and appealing uniqueness.

Policy Context & Background

Plans, policies, and programs which currently are in place to support the roles of the arts, culture and history in Portland include:

- **Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC)** – a nonprofit established in 1995 to work with the public and private sectors to integrate art into communities and enhance public art collections in the Portland metropolitan region. They distribute more than \$2 million each year as direct cash grants. On average since RACC's inception, 78% of its public art expenditures have been made in central Portland.
- **Percent for Public Art Program** – enacted by the state in 1975 and the city in 1980 to provide a public legacy of commitment to art in public spaces, this program requires a percentage (currently 2%) of total eligible costs or total eligible funds of all improvement projects be set aside for public art. An example is TriMet's incorporation of public art in the Portland Mall Light Rail Project, for which \$750,000 is being dedicated.
- **Historic districts and landmark designations** – historic resources are identified through either a City of Portland process or through listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The designated resources are subject to certain protections, such as historic design and demolition reviews, and are eligible for preservation incentives, such as tax and zoning benefits, to ensure their long-term preservation.
- **Central City Fundamental Design Guidelines and Historic District Guidelines** – originally 1990, updated in 2003.
- **Preservation and Public Art Zoning Incentives** – applying to the Central City Plan District.



Most of the materials used to build the Classical Chinese Garden were imported from Portland's sister city, Suzhou. The design is based on the classical Chinese garden tradition, and was constructed by artisans from China.

Current Conditions & Trends

Portland is known for the range and variety of its artistic output and resources, from historic districts boasting intact terra cotta and Italianate buildings, to large art museums like the Portland Art Museum, to small, unique collections such as those displayed at the 3D Center for Art and Photography.

Public Art and Cultural Organizations: Central Portland's offerings of art work, programs and facilities include the offbeat and unusual, the traditional and the classic. For example, there is a regular series of Portland Symphony concerts held at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall near the South Park Blocks. There is the Time Based Art Festival, an international exhibition of performance art which is the annual signature event of the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA). And every year, the month of February offers both the Portland International Film Festival and the Portland Jazz Festival.

Ongoing programs and policies add to Portland's cultural vibrancy as well. For instance, Central City Design Guidelines provide direction for how to incorporate public art into new (or redeveloped) buildings and open spaces - as site- and building-specific works commissioned for their particular location. The renovated Central Library illustrates this with its sidewalk benches and Beverly Cleary children's room bronze tree sculpture.



Skidmore Fountain graces Ankeny Plaza in the Old Town District; an inscription on it reads, "Good citizens are the riches of a city."

PUBLIC WORKS IN PORTLAND - ART + UTILITY

A short history of fountains in central Portland:

- **Skidmore Fountain in Ankeny Plaza** – completed in 1888, from a donation by a local druggist, Stephen Skidmore (specifically, legend has it, "to serve horses, men and dogs.")
- **Benson Bubblers** – the bronze public drinking fountains seen on streetcorners throughout central Portland began appearing in 1912 when Simon Benson installed the first of them along logging roads to relieve the thirst of his employees. The bubblers were designed by the acclaimed A.E. Doyle, local architect who also designed the historic landmark-designated Multnomah County Library and the Meier & Frank (now Macy's) building.
- **Shemanski Fountain** – (1926) in the South Park Blocks, includes functional drinking fountains within a classical sculptural podium.
- **Three modernist, concrete fountains in downtown** – designed by the world-renowned landscape architecture firm of Lawrence Halperin; the most famous is the Ira Keller Forecourt Fountain, completed in 1971, and ever popular especially with youth.
- **Salmon Street Springs Fountain** – (1988) in Waterfront Park - another favorite of youngsters.
- **Portland Dog Bowl** – (2001) artist William Wegman's 8' x 10' "bubbler" drinking fountain for dogs, located in the North Park Blocks.
- **Jamison Square Fountain** – (2002) in the Pearl District, designed by landscape architect Peter Walker - the latest hotspot for the youngest Portlanders.

Public art in central Portland means not just “artworks” per se but also the utilitarian elements which contribute to the rich experience of being in the city. Like the benches at the Central Library, streetlights, paving patterns, even water fountains all can contribute to the city as a work of art. (See the box at left for a list of some of central Portland's fountains.)

The creative efforts of all sorts of Portlanders themselves is another way in which the city becomes a rich work of art. To this end, the Creative Capacity Strategy has been initiated by Commissioner Adams's office to “build and support a sustainable creative community.”

Historic Resources: Central Portland has the region's largest concentration of historic resources, including nine historic districts (some are partially outside central Portland) and more than a thousand individual historic landmarks. These assets enrich our civic identity, sense of place and urban environment. Despite an increase in the number of designated historic resources since 1988 and many successful renovations, countless buildings have also been removed.

Those losses include many of the well-designed “background” buildings which make up the strong “urban fabric” that is Portland's public realm. Examples are the St. Francis Hotel, taken down in 2002 (to make room for the Museum Place residential/retail project, which is seen as a catalyst to revitalization of the West End), or the Rosefriend Apartments, pictured at right.

The 1984 Historic Resources Inventory has been an important tool for understanding central Portland's historic assets, but is now badly out-of-date. A new inventory would greatly assist with preservation planning, by identifying resources that have become eligible for designation in the last two decades, yet the effectiveness even of a new inventory may be constrained by state laws that now require owner consent for designation.

Financial incentives for preservation include federal tax credits and the state's Special Assessment program, although recent changes to the latter may limit its availability in the future. Local incentives include PDC's seismic loan program and certain regulatory incentives. There is a lack of programs offering financial and technical assistance specifically for historic preservation; for instance, the Urban Conservation Fund, a program in place through the 1980s, has lapsed. Local financial assistance has decreased and some of the existing preservation zoning incentives, such as transfers of development rights, appear to be underutilized.

Some designated historic areas, such as the King's Hill and Alphabet Historic Districts, face increased development pressure that threatens historic resources. Others, like the Skidmore/Old Town and Yamhill districts, struggle to get any redevelopment, as the gaps created in the urban fabric in the 1930s through the 1960s, when so many buildings were demolished, remain today, as surface parking lots robbing the area of vitality.



The Rosefriend Apartments, standing since 1910, were demolished in 2007 to make way for the Ladd Tower, a new residential building constructed according to certified sustainable principles. The new development did save the historic Ladd Carriage House, however, by moving it off site temporarily, and incorporating it into the final site design.

1989	New Japantown/Chinatown Historic District designated
1990	Oregon Convention Center opens
1995	Rose Garden Arena opens
---	Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI) opens new building on riverfront
---	Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) established
1997	Renovated Central Library opens
1998	Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA) moves to new building in Pearl District
2000	Classical Chinese Garden opens in Old Town/Chinatown
---	Alphabet Historic District designated
2001	Civic Stadium reopens as renovated PGE Park
2003	Expanded and renovated Oregon Historical Society opens
---	Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA) holds first Time-Based Art (TBA) Festival
2004	Remodeled MSI opens
2005	Expanded and renovated Portland Art Museum opens
2006	Portland Center Stage opens new Gerding Theater in the renovated Armory building
2007	PNCA receives state-record-setting \$15 million gift

Opportunities

- **Museums and institutions** – there is a wide variety, from large to small, well-established to recently founded (see boxed list at right). Many are going through significant expansion programs.
- **Festivals/events** – music, art, film, beer - all these and more are celebrated in such public gathering places as Waterfront Park, Pioneer Square and the Park Blocks (see boxed list).
- **Skidmore/Old Town Historic District revitalization energy** – The district's National Historic Landmark nomination is being updated, streetscape and open space improvements have been planned, and new design guidelines and investment tools are being developed. Rehabilitation is also underway on several historic buildings, including the "White Stag Block," which will house the University of Oregon's Portland campus, and the Skidmore Fountain Building (Reed Building), a renovation/addition which will be the new global headquarters for Mercy Corps.
- **Historic residential neighborhoods** – take pride in their architectural character and livability. These qualities are reinforced by guidelines to preserve the positive historic characteristics for future generations.
- **Bosco-Milligan Foundation** – this non-profit group has been strengthening its Portland historic preservation role, with the completion of its Architectural Heritage Center in the Central Eastside and expansion of its educational programs.
- **Do-It-Yourself ("DIY") attitude** – art, crafts, jewelry, clothing, puppet shows, and even buildings (the Ace Hotel is one example) are infused with the DIY spirit in their creative reuse and reinvention of otherwise cast-away items.
- **Continued influx of young, creative residents** – population of "twenty/thirty-somethings" increasing throughout the '90s and into the current decade.
- **New venues and organizations** – for instance, the Portland Art Center and Disjecta.



"The Horse Project" epitomizes Portland's DIY artistic spirit – plastic toy horses are anonymously attached to existing historic carriage rings all over town.

Challenges

- **Funding for public arts** – corporate and other private funding lags that of other western cities (though it is better than the average American city's arts funding).
- **Lack of an updated historic inventory** – Central Portland historic resources have not been recorded since 1984.
- **Underutilization of policy incentives** – such as transfers of development rights and other historic preservation zoning incentives.
- **Lack of financial and technical assistance programs** – such as the Urban Conservation Fund.
- **Changes to the Oregon Special Assessment program** – and the general need for local financial incentive programs targeted to historic resources.
- **Conflicts between preservation policies and zoning entitlements and redevelopment pressures** – sites where zoning allows for higher intensity new uses, thus making it financially more lucrative to demolish an older building and build new.
- **Gaps in the historic building fabric** – vacant sites and surface parking lots in historic districts continue to resist infill development.
- **Limitations on local landmark designation authority** – including state legislation requiring owner consent.
- **Lack of an umbrella organization for historic preservation efforts** – coordinated, systematic management could help maximize effectiveness of separate efforts.
- **Housing/workspace for artists** – how to solve the catch-22 of pricing the artists out of the neighborhoods they helped create in the first place, when gentrification transforms what began as a low-cost, underutilized neighborhood into a popular, more expensive place to live.

Central Portland Museums & Institutions

Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI)

Portland Art Museum (PAM)

Oregon Historical Society (OHS)

Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA)

Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA)

Classical Chinese Garden

Portland Center Stage

Portland Center for the Performing Arts (PCPA)

Architectural Heritage Center/ Bosco-Milligan Foundation

Old Town/Chinatown Arts and Culture Committee

Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center

Oregon Jewish Museum

Oregon Maritime Museum

Museum of Contemporary Craft

Oregon Sports Hall of Fame



The streets take on a festival atmosphere during “First Thursday” in the Pearl District.

Central Portland Festivals & Events

- “First Thursday” public art gallery openings – attract pedestrians to wander the Pearl District and other downtown streets where there are many art galleries. The galleries stay open late for the monthly event.
- Waterfront Park festivals – including the Rose Festival (2 million visitors), Blues Festival (120,000 attendance), Oregon Brewers’ Fest (50,000 attendance)
- Portland Jazz Festival
- Time-Based Art Festival
- Farmers Markets - on the South Park Blocks, in the Pearl District
- Saturday Market - Saturday (Sunday too) under the Burnside Bridge, but moving to a new waterfront location
- Pioneer Square concerts, movies, festivals and other special events
- Sporting events and concerts at Rose Garden Arena and at PGE Park
- Film Festivals including the Portland International Film Festival, Cascade Festival of African Films, Portland Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, and the NW Film & Video Festival

Key Questions

Maintaining Portland's cultural center:

- How can we best ensure the stability and growth of cultural institutions, businesses and programming and the range of cultural offerings in central Portland?

Culture and economic vitality:

- How can we more fully realize and leverage the benefits of artistic and cultural energy and diversity into economic returns such as jobs?

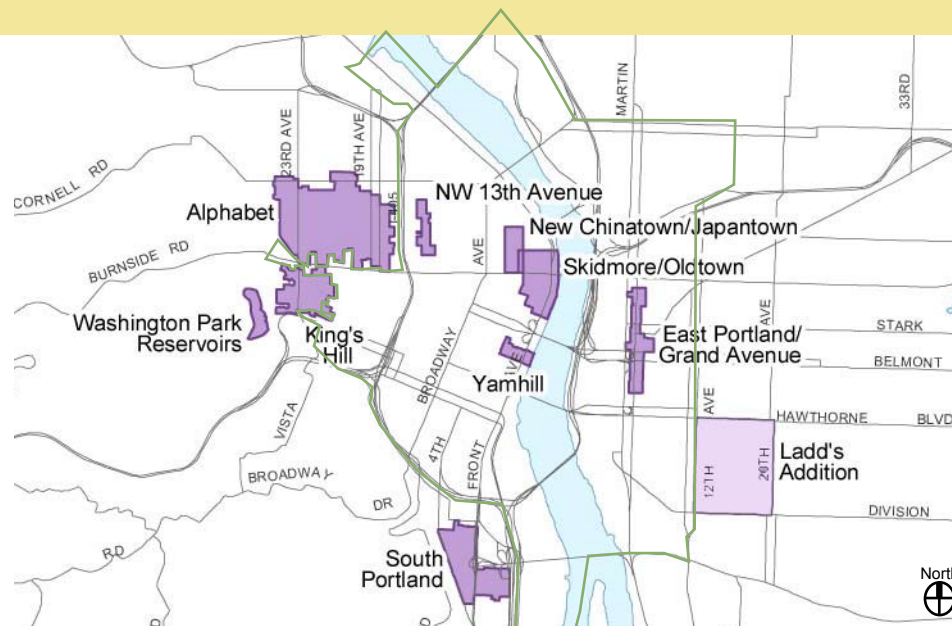
Central city as a home for cultural production:

- What actions may be necessary to ensure a place in central Portland for artists to live, work and display art, as the cost of land, housing, and commercial space rise? The future of industrial zoning in the central eastside is closely linked to this issue.

Where to go for more information

Information for this assessment of arts and culture issues has been culled from many sources, including the following:

- Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC) website, @ <http://www.racc.org>
- RACC, General Brochure, @ <http://www.racc.org/about/docs/GeneralBrochureRevised.pdf>
- Portland Mall Light Rail website, @ <http://portlandmall.org/about/publicart.htm>
- Bureau of Planning, Historic Resources, @ <http://www.portlandonline.com/planning/index.cfm?c=39750&a=132551>



Of the nine historic districts located entirely or partly in central Portland (shown in purple), all but New Chinatown/Japantown have corresponding historic design guidelines to help direct development and protect historic resources. In the Southeast, Ladd's Addition historic district (shown in pale purple) is directly outside the Central City boundaries.

Topic areas for discussion in the Central Portland Plan

Finance

Introduction

Funding in cities is nearly always an issue, and Portland is no exception. “How do we pay for what the city needs?” and “How can we make the most of the money we do have to create the greatest benefit to the city at large?” are typical questions asked by any city. Portland has answered these funding questions in the past few decades in large part by using tax increment financing as a major funding tool to leverage private investment in development projects.

Policy Context & Background

The city’s Office of Management and Finance manages the process for developing and preparing the annual budget, along with the monitoring of expenditures over the course of each fiscal year. Specific programs, agencies, and infrastructure projects all vie for their share of city dollars. Other means of funding might provide for a specific project – for instance, voters may pass a “bond measure” authorizing the city to issue bonds as a way to protect natural areas by purchasing significant sites from willing sellers.



Tax increment financing was a major tool used to raise funds to renovate the Holman Building into RiverEast Center. The former warehouse, located in the Central Eastside Industrial District, now contains a boathouse, offices and retail shops.

Current Conditions & Trends

Much investment in central Portland has occurred over the years since the 1988 Central City Plan was adopted, with significant public projects leveraging a range of private projects. Many of the most effective public planning and development projects are coordinated through the Portland Development Commission (PDC), a public, semi-independent agency which is subject to City Council review and approvals.

PDC's main goal is to use public funds to stimulate private sector investment, job creation and expansion of the tax base. Projects financed can include parks, streetscape improvements, community centers, affordable housing, capital investment in manufacturing facilities, rehabilitation of historic properties, and small business loans for facade improvements.

PDC's funding is provided through a variety of financing mechanisms including the following:

- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) – (see box at right for explanation)
- Bond sales
- Federal grants
- Tax credits and abatements – including federal New Markets Tax Credits, Low Income Housing Tax Credits, Historic Preservation Tax Credits
- Portland Family of Funds (PFF)
- Local Improvement Districts (LID)
- User fees
- Partnerships with private organizations
- City General Fund allocations

WHAT IS "TIF?"

Perhaps the least well understood of the commonly-used funding tools is Tax Increment Financing, or "TIF," which involves the establishment of an Urban Renewal Area (URA) as a way to fund specific, physical, "bricks and mortar" projects within that geographic area.

Under the TIF funding method, property tax revenues attributable to new development within the URA are reinvested directly back into the area to subsidize further improvements, rather than being distributed to the taxing districts that the URA is a part of. In a sense the public is "banking on" (that is, borrowing against) future property tax increases (the "increment" of increase from current tax rolls) as new development in the URA is built and comes on the tax rolls.

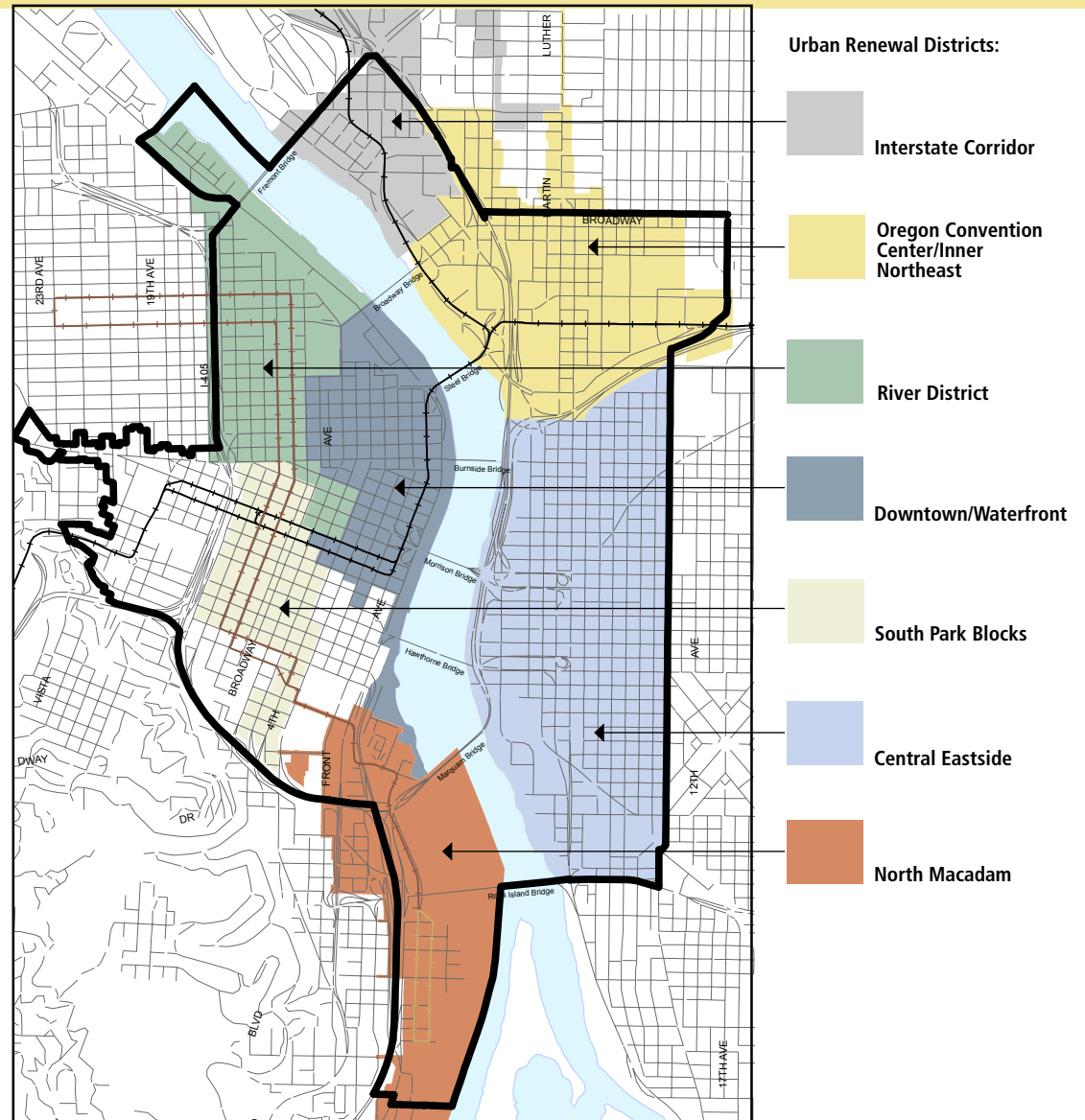
Another way to describe the TIF process is that it "primes the pump" with initial expenditures of public funds in the URA leveraging much greater future private investment in that area, thus producing revitalization that continues at a healthy, self-sustaining level. For the TIF mechanism to be successful, the initial TIF-funded public projects must add to the property tax rolls (i.e., create "increment"), so that they generate the funds for further improvements (by paying back the money borrowed for the initial publicly funded projects). At the end of the time period defined for the life of the URA (usually 20-30 years), and after all debt obligations have been repaid, the property tax revenues attributable to new development enter into the pool of general funds that all the other property tax revenues do.

Opportunities

- **URA options** – some URAs are continuing, while others will either have their time limits extended and/or some part of their area incorporated into a non-expiring district or new district. Two of the central Portland URAs, Downtown/Waterfront and South Park Blocks, will expire in the near future and traditional tax increment funding in these areas will not be available for an extended period of time. Various solutions are being studied by a public-private stakeholder task force led by PDC.
- **City budget in surplus** – for the second year in a row (after several prior years of budget and program cuts).

Challenges

- **Replacement funding for TIF** – the city is close to the statutory limits placed on urban renewal that, along with expiring URAs, will reduce the future availability of tax increment funding in central Portland.
- **Uncertainty of incentives programs** – ongoing question of whether federal New Markets Tax Credits program will be extended (a coalition is working to extend program to 2012).
- **Leveraging public investment** – question of how affordable housing, requiring subsidy, will generate tax increment funds (under City Council's adopted policy requiring typically 30% of all urban renewal funds to be allocated to some form of affordable housing).



Key Questions

Public development resources:

- What will replace TIF if that funding tool is no longer in place?

Fiscal impacts:

While new development adds tax revenues, it also increases demands for public funding for capital projects and services.

- What is the estimate of costs versus revenues for projected central Portland growth and development?

Partnerships:

The Mayor and others have said that the old paradigm of local government taking care of all needs of citizens is broken. The costs of meeting all needs is far above the revenue provided by an acceptable level of taxation. New partnerships for sharing the burden are required.

- What are the opportunities for new commitments to share responsibility?
- How can we be most effective in building these partnerships through the Central Portland Plan?

Where to go for more information

Information for this assessment of finance issues has been culled from many sources, including the following:

- PDC website
- City of Portland website - Office of Management and Finance



Tanner Springs Park demonstrates how water is naturally filtered and cleansed in the process of rain falling on this eco-garden's sand and wetland plants. The park was funded in part by tax increment financing.

Topic areas for discussion in the Central Portland Plan

Urban Design

Introduction

Urban design plays a unique role among the topic areas that need to be addressed in the Central Portland Plan. The city is a physical place, and urban design refers to how we build that place.

This section of the Central Portland Plan Assessment Report relates to but does not substitute for the Central Portland Plan Urban Design Assessment (produced by the Urban Design Group of the city's Bureau of Planning, and available online; see "Where to go for more information" at the end of this section).

The impact of urban design in central Portland is far reaching and comprehensive. Urban design concepts, goals and actions are embedded throughout our current guiding document, the 1988 Central City Plan. Successful implementation of them has helped Portland acquire its reputation as a model city with great urban design.

Over time the 1988 Central City Plan's initial clarity has been eroded by changes in context, inconsistent revisions to the plan's sub-districts, and new priorities. This erosion has often hindered Portland's ability to create coherent and vibrant urban places. This in turn has limited the benefits such places can provide as economic and cultural catalysts.

A new Central Portland Plan offers a unique opportunity to re-evaluate the role of urban design in city building and enhancement.

Policy Context & Background

The 1988 Central City Plan provides urban design direction in its Concept Plan, Policy 12 (Urban Design) Map, and the Central City Plan Map. In addition, Policies 11 and 8 address Historic Preservation and Parks & Open Spaces, respectively. At the local scale, each sub-district also has its own urban design map. These various sources guide urban design responses, therefore, at multiple levels.

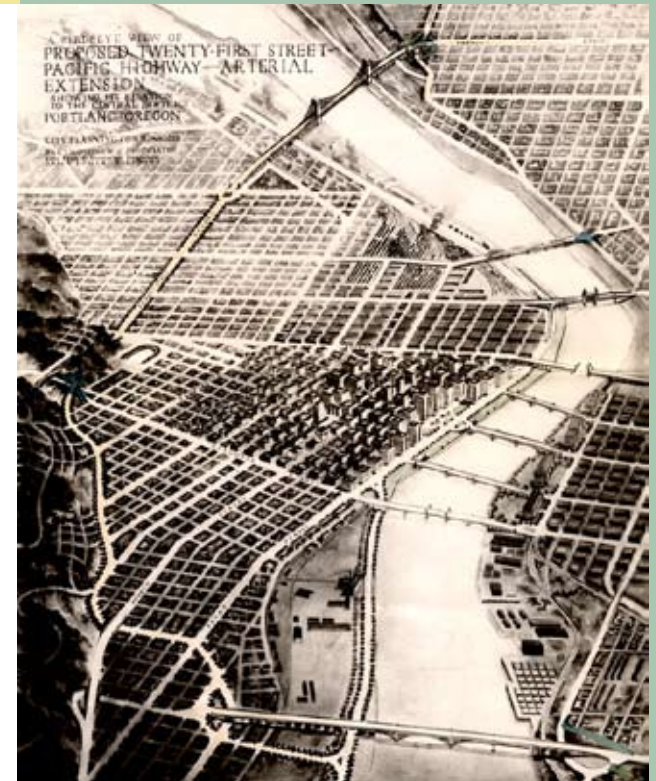
Such distributed intent has helped ensure that urban design considerations are not lost in specific development efforts. Unfortunately, these multiple sources of guidance can also be confusing, resulting in a frequent loss of collective focus and in distorted outcomes. This confusion is amplified by progressive inconsistencies brought about through periodic plan amendments of smaller plan areas.

Current Conditions & Trends

Within central Portland, there are several issues which help frame future urban design concerns:

New development energy: Since 1988, central Portland has experienced unforeseen development energy (e.g. the Pearl District), and a desire for more density in the downtown (e.g. Ankeny Plaza, Skidmore Fountain). There are new retail and mixed use concentrations, such as at the Brewery Blocks and on Stark Street, which have created competition with the city's designated retail core. There also is new development interest in locations that have great potential for place-making, such as at the central city bridgeheads.

CENTRAL PORTLAND PLAN URBAN DESIGN



The Bartholomew Plan was the vision of Portland's future drawn up in 1932, and included a proposal to extend NW 21st Street as the Pacific Highway, north across the Willamette River.

Sufficient development capacity: The 2007 Central Portland Development Capacity Study estimates that at current development and absorption rates, it would take 40-60 years to exhaust the identified development capacity. The most immediate urban design implications of this study are that changes in entitlements such as height, FAR (Floor Area Ratio), and bonuses should not be driven by the perception that central Portland has a shortage of developable land. There may however, be fewer options for uses requiring large sites.

Maximizing entitlements: Steady increases in project development costs are compelling larger floor areas and greater height. This has resulted in many central Portland developers seeking to maximize their FAR potential by purchasing FAR from properties unlikely to use it. This is pushing allowable building envelopes and stressing both ground level relationships (with public spaces) and existing above ground views and solar access.

Open Space: Continued growth and change will generate ongoing pressure to provide public open space and recreation opportunities in areas that lack these. Connections that network such resources together will avoid duplication. For example, to the extent the central Portland absorbs more residences, existing and new open space amenities will need to accommodate increasing demands, while developing additional open space becomes more difficult and expensive.

Transportation: Although the city has a hierarchy of streets in terms of transportation (i.e. collectors, arterials etc.), there is less clarity on how design and development along the streets should vary with the street's role and importance. Clarity on the urban design hierarchy of streets helps central Portland's urban environment be more easily understood and navigated. This in turn affects the social life of streets and districts.

Green City Infrastructure: Introducing nature back into the urban environment is an emerging aspiration in central Portland. Design and development should continue to help manage heat island impacts and stormwater runoff, and should create better sustainable urban environments that extend beyond the pursuit of maximizing the number of individual LEED rated buildings.

Community-building: Central Portland has significant clusters of public-serving and community-enhancing amenities such as grocery stores, libraries, schools, and places of worship. Our planning, design and development should more directly consider those assets as essential ingredients in emerging central Portland neighborhoods.

Opportunities

- **A Clear Urban Design plan** – an easy to understand urban design diagram that identifies the location and purpose of central Portland's most important existing and desired elements (places, corridors, buildings, open space, etc.) will underscore the role of built form and place-making.

URBAN DESIGN

Urban design's essential role is to ensure a high level of ambient urban quality. To be successful, urban design must stitch together the public and private realms, offer new social and economic potential, foster sustainability and instill pride and shared ownership in the city's everyday users.

Previous Great Plans for Portland

Since the 1903 Olmsted Plan, Portland has used a number of "great plans" to steer its urban development and form. While most of the big ideas involving major infrastructural change in each plan were not implemented, each plan has contributed parks, bridges and other infrastructure that endure today. The big urban design ideas of Portland's 1972 Downtown Plan have, however, endured. These ideas have been adopted and built upon in the 1988 Central City Plan.

Past Influencing Plans

- **1903 Olmsted Plan**
- **1912 Bennett Plan**
- **1921 Cheney Plan**
- **1932 Bartholomew Report**
- **1943 Moses Report**
- **1966 Comprehensive Plan**
- **1972 Downtown Plan**
- **1988 Central City Plan**

Over time Portland has moved away from architecturally clear expressions of urban form to larger more policy based aspirations. A new plan should incorporate greater architectural and design clarity.

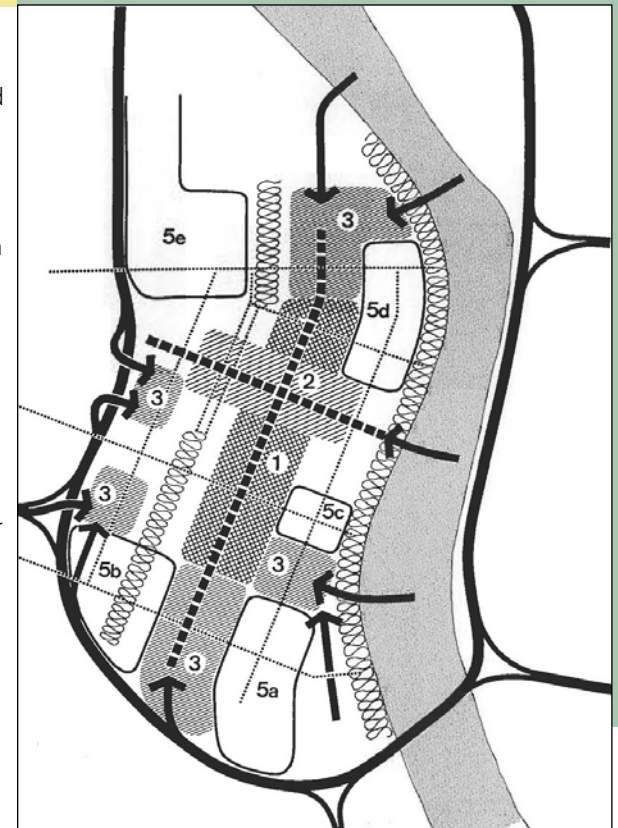
- **Emphasizing Portland's identity** – the competition between cities to stay relevant and attractive is increasing. Identifying, pursuing and enhancing identity is a key to a city's resilience. This suggests Portland could consider (in addition to Mt. Hood) a distinctive skyline, iconic buildings, or other identity-giving elements.
- **Setting high standards and aspirations** – Portland's great competitive advantage as a city has been its ability to push known planning and urban design boundaries and pursue high standards. Clarifying key urban design objectives with greater site specificity will help maintain this edge.
- **Leveraging amenities** – communities are increasingly asking that entitlements such as height and FAR be treated as tools to realize desired urban form and leverage neighborhood specific amenities.
- **Encouraging environmental sustainability** – Portland is known for "green" public and private investments. To build on this reputation, the city should pursue central Portland and district-wide "green" systems, including more integrated and contiguous habitat corridors. District-wide green infrastructure should complement LEED-rated architecture.
- **Using better diagnostics** – as technological tools become cheaper and easier to use, three-dimensional urban simulations can highlight necessary urban design and planning trade-offs.
- **Better implementation tools** – Portland should accelerate its efforts to respond dynamically to changing development conditions and potential. For instance,

charrettes (or focused two-three day work sessions) have helped articulate responses to shared public and private aspirations. These outcomes have resulted in relevant shifts in public and private development emphasis. The informal nature of these design sessions has ensured creative and enduring urban design outcomes. Similar or more contemporary approaches should be considered.

Challenges

Place-making

- **Linking desired results with the means of implementation** – Portland is not short on aspirations. Yet for its most important public spaces and places, it lacks clear short- and long-term implementation tools.
- **Short- and long-term strategies to focus limited development energy** – In a central city with ample development capacity, an active and vibrant public realm will depend largely on the city's ability to concentrate and populate its more desired places and corridors. Short-term strategies that support this are all the more significant to ensure such continued vibrancy.
- **Closing gaps and inconsistencies** – The composite of currently adopted sub-district plans illustrates discontinuities along newer sub-district boundaries, unequal levels of plan detail, and areas where the plan no longer reflects what is happening on the ground. A future plan should close these gaps and incorporate better ways to minimize them.



The 1972 Downtown Plan concept plan diagram continues to provide the basis for the urban design framework that endures in central Portland even today.

- **Greater urban design clarity and related performance criteria** – many of the conflicts embodied in successive plans, visions and designs occur when there is poor translation between the design and city goals. Clear statements that identify the “importance” of places and describe their essential urban design “performance criteria” will help address this issue. For example, although the significant role of Burnside Street is not disputed, ambiguities on the roles it must perform have contributed to confusion around an acceptable design.
- **Better integration of public and private infrastructure and community building assets** – such strategic consideration of the city’s most important public and private assets should become an explicit basis for new interventions, strategies and plans.
- **Balancing community amenities** – many of central Portland’s districts do not have a balanced mix of “community-enhancing” anchors (e.g. community centers, schools, daycare centers, libraries, etc).

Providing such anchors can boost or ensure more balanced development and promote social equity. Greater urban design attention around these anchors will reinforce their associated communities.

Public Infrastructure

- **Reinforcing the existing street classification** – the current street classifications for central Portland do not clarify the urban design role of the city’s transportation network and identify the segments that have the most significant place making roles.



Comparative Cities

Comparing patterns and innovations in other cities reveals approaches and solutions that might not stand out when examining Portland alone. The following considerations emerge when examining cities that share Portland’s characteristics of a grid, topography, proximity to water and identity:

- **Grid.** Changes in the grid pattern are unique place making opportunities. The ability to combine or further subdivide gives flexibility.
- **Topography.** Natural land forms are urban design opportunities.
- **Water.** Binding together both sides of a river with entertainment, educational, and public facilities is rejuvenating.

- **Identity.** Equity in public amenities, emphasizing history, the design of public spaces, orienting towards innovation and youth are positive.

A survey of the urban design approaches in several new downtown plans suggests Portland might pursue:

- **Its own unique urban design approach**
- **Identity through architectural design**
- **A deliberate attitude on iconic structures and skyline**
- **The use of technology to understand future opportunities**
- **Site specific urban design diagrams that express future intent**

- **Better integrate transportation assets with urban design** – flexible standards that allow more creative public streets will blend better with Portland’s increasingly creative private streets. This will help create a more integrated and seamless public realm. Enhancing the design, lighting and function of bridges would also allow public transportation infrastructure to contribute to the iconic and distinctive

elements of central Portland. Focused development strategies that help transit station areas become unique and distinctive places will also help create urban design quality where it will be most symbiotic.

- **Enhancing the role of bridges** – Central Portland’s Willamette River bridges do not reinforce a seamless city, nor do they offer the experiential and iconic qualities they could.



Portland



Seattle



Pittsburgh



Chicago

Comparing the street grids of other cities to Portland's 200' grid shows the fine-grained, human-scale fabric that Portland has to work with.

Connections

- **Connected networks** — transportation, open space, green infrastructure and community amenities should be identified and used as a deliberate basis to create great public places and community anchors. Such places should either help create or capitalize on the natural intersections of such networks. Such integration will ensure cumulative urban quality in a denser city. Using an increasing understanding of how people navigate and congregate in real time will greatly improve our responses.
- **Connecting open spaces** — most of central Portland is within a three-minute walking distance to open space. However, many of these open spaces are not well connected. For example, the Eastbank Esplanade, North Park Blocks and the Classical Chinese Garden would all benefit from integration into a clear and linked open space system.
- **Creating a relationship with the river** — though central Portland seeks to bind both sides of the river, visual and physical access to the river is discontinuous.

Key Questions

Good urban design can be realized in many ways. A new Central Portland Plan can reflect and underscore its relative emphasis and role. For example, should urban design be a collection of place-making tools (standards and recommendations) that are implemented after broader policy considerations are addressed, or should it be an important basis upon which new and enhanced development occurs?

Independent of a preferred approach, Portland should ponder the following key urban design concerns:

Citywide civic quality and pride

- How can the distribution and adaptability of public infrastructure cumulatively contribute to shared utility, city identity and public pride?

Adaptive infrastructure

- How should transportation and open space respond to an evolving central Portland? How can public infrastructure such as open space adapt to changing surrounding land uses?

Environmental integration

- How can urban design assist in a more sustainable and appealing urban environment?
- Are there particular strategies that may encourage natural systems to re-assert themselves in urban settings (e.g. day-lighting creeks and linking urban and natural swales)?

Better utilization of high value sites

- Should urban design help determine the highest and best uses for Portland's assets?
- How can such awareness become the basis for approving the best possible development of such sites?

District and neighborhood enhancements

- What community amenities are missing in central Portland's districts?
- How can these amenities become catalysts or community anchors that ensure a high quality of life?
- In what ways can these be leveraged with development?

Connective tissue

- What strategies will better integrate the urban design of public as well as private investments such as streets?
- How can we enhance and preserve central Portland's greatest spaces (including the Willamette River) and create appropriate networks that connect them?

Better tools

- What tools can the city use to respond to rapidly changing areas to ensure a synergistic relationship between developments, neighborhoods and civic amenities?

Where to go for more information

Please refer to the urban design pages of the city's website, which will bring you to the complete Central Portland Plan Urban Design Assessment (six modules):

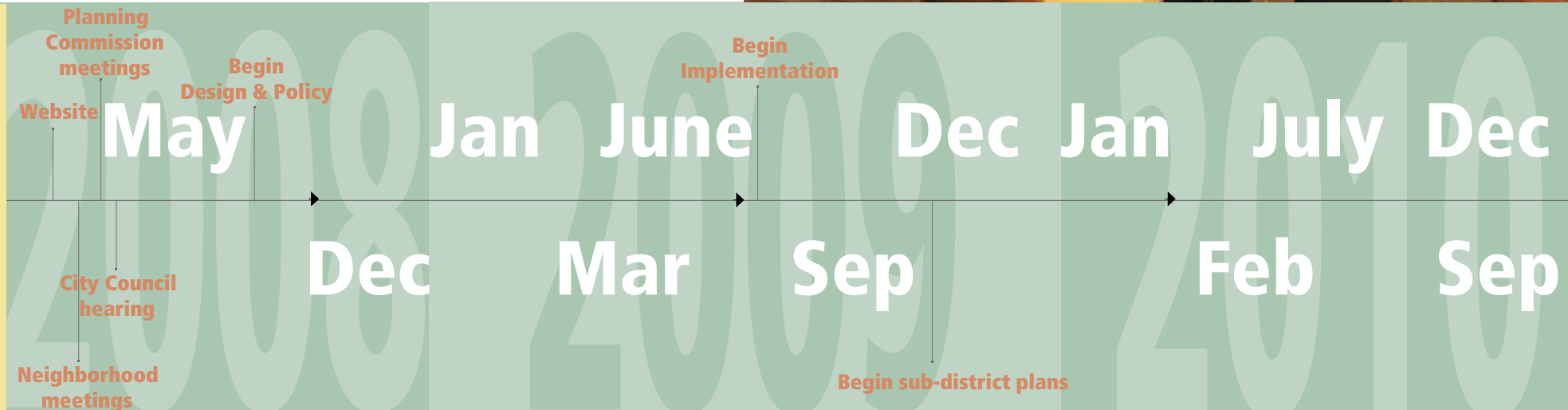
- <http://www.portlandonline.com/planning/index.cfm?c=44083>
- 2007 Central Portland Development Capacity Report: <http://www.portlandonline.com/planning/index.cfm?c=diddi>

WAYS TO BE INVOLVED

Join us.

There are many ways in which to participate. You may find yourself particularly interested in a certain topic, or stage of the project. An updated schedule is available on the Bureau of Planning website, <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>

- **Workshops**
- **Open Houses**
- **Website**
- **Video kiosks**
- **Special "Summit" event**
- **Stakeholder Committee meetings**
- **Planning Commission meetings**
- **Neighborhood meetings**



CREDITS

Portland Bureau of Planning

Tom Potter, Mayor

Gil Kelley, Planning Director

For more information on this report and the
Central Portland Plan, contact:

Steve Iwata, Project Manager, 503-823-9904

email: Steve.Iwata@ci.portland.or.us

For more information on the Portland Plan,
contact:

Christine Appleberry, Public Engagement
Coordinator, 503-823-9907

email: Christine.Appleberry@ci.portland.or.us

City of Portland, Bureau of Planning
1900 SW Fourth Avenue, Suite 4100
Portland, Oregon 97201-5350
Phone: 503-823-9907