

## Spotlighting important issues

In seeking resolution to a complaint, the Ombudsman may draw the matter to the attention of the public and elected leaders. In 2017, the Ombudsman used a variety of means to make public important issues of broad concern.



### 911

The Ombudsman issued a report that found that for more than a decade the City's 911 Center had been materially overstating how quickly operators answer 911 calls. In response to the report's recommendations, the bureau took steps to ensure it accurately measures call answer times and is working toward meeting national standards for emergency response.



### Toxic Dust

The Ombudsman testified before City Council in support of new regulations that protect all Portland children from exposure to toxic dust released during residential demolitions. Development Services proposed the regulations in response to an Ombudsman investigation that found that children across Portland were not equally protected from toxic dust stirred up during demolitions.



### Fair & Moral

The Ombudsman drew the attention of the public and elected leaders to an overlooked "Fair and Moral Claims" process that allows the City to compensate members of the public for City-caused damage or injury in cases where it is not legally liable. In response, the City is reinstating the process. The first case to be considered is one where police caused thousands of dollars' worth of damages to a rental property while apprehending a suspect barricaded inside. The property owner is seeking reimbursement for the damage.

om·buds·man | noun  
[om-buhdz-muhn]

1. An independent and impartial individual who responds to complaints from the public about government services and practices;
2. One who handles complaints from the public in a direct, informal and consultative manner;
3. An advocate for good, fair and just government.



### Contact the Ombudsman

(503) 823-0144

ombudsman@portlandoregon.gov

1221 SW 4th Avenue, Room 310  
Portland, OR 97204

Learn more at [www.portlandoregon.gov/ombudsman](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/ombudsman)



**Mary Hull Caballero**  
Auditor

**Margie Sollinger**  
Ombudsman

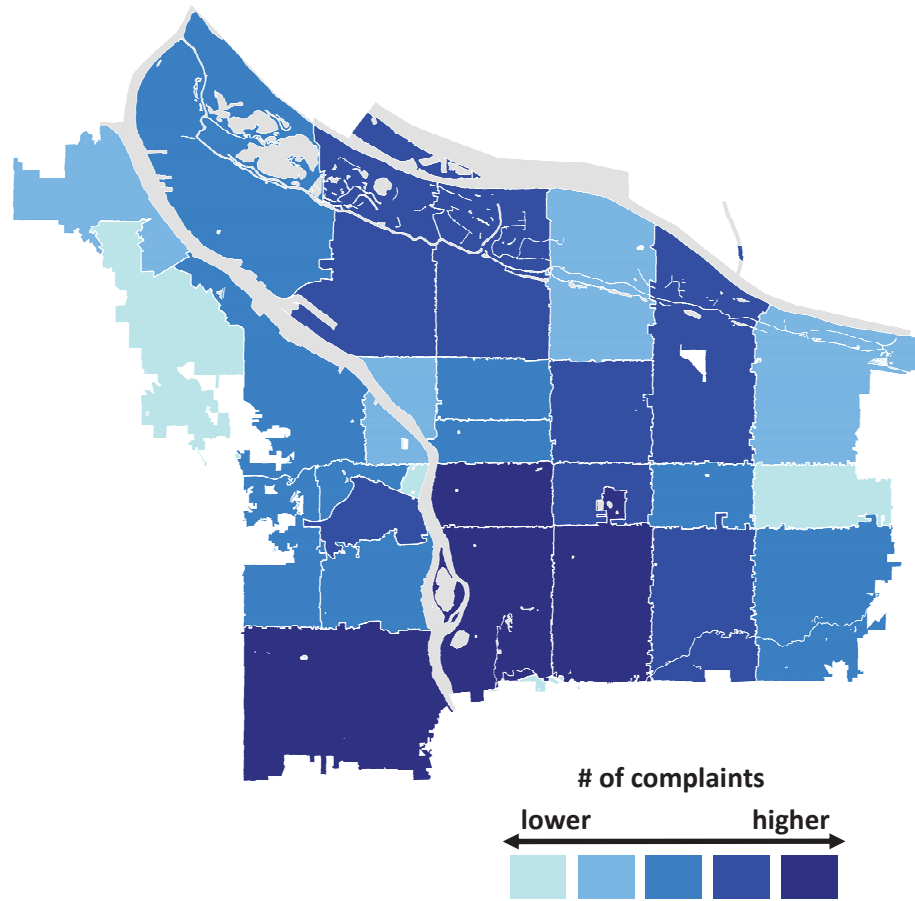
Portland City Auditor  
Portland, Oregon



### Demand for services

**20%**   
Jurisdictional complaints

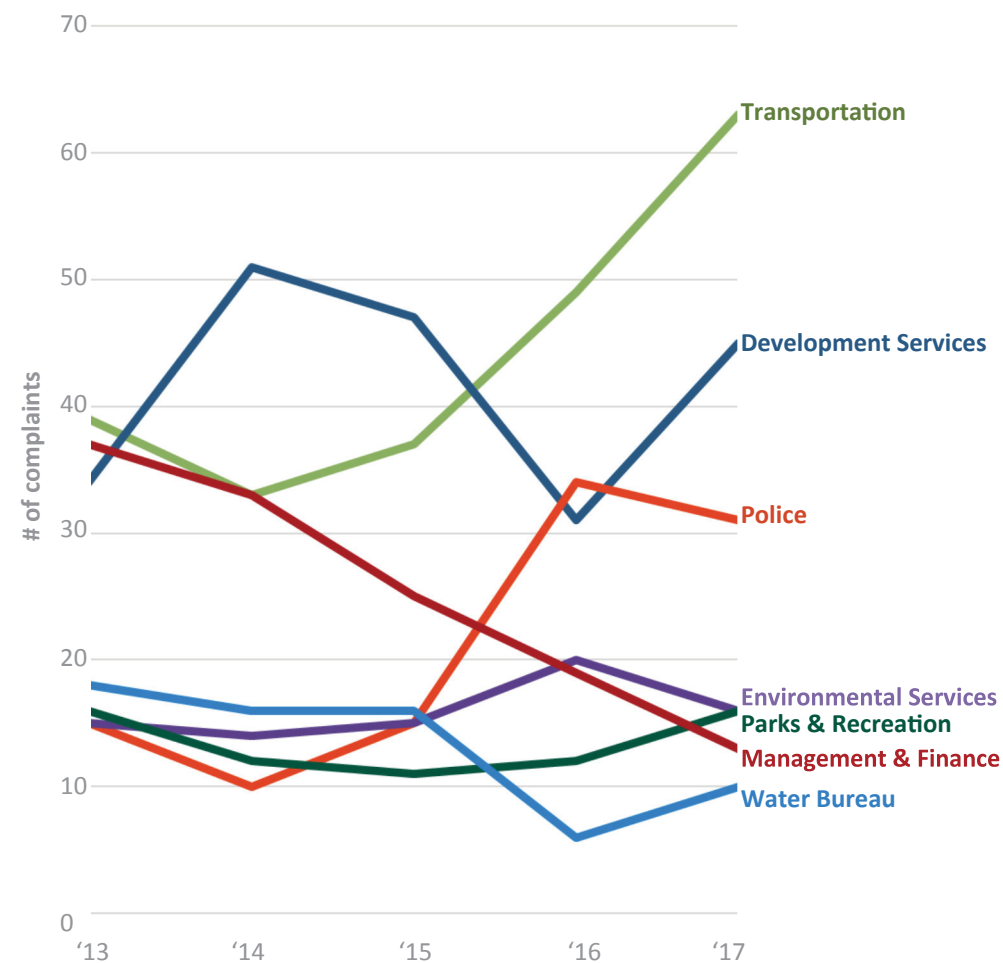
The Ombudsman received 566 requests for assistance in 2017. Of those, **248** involved City bureaus. That represents a nearly 20 percent increase over last year. The vast majority of jurisdictional complaints came from members of the public, and represented a broad geographic cross-section of Portland residents.



The remaining 318 requests for assistance were comprised of complaints outside our investigative authority, including complaints against elected officials and complaints handled by state ombudsman offices.

### Five-year complaint trends by bureau

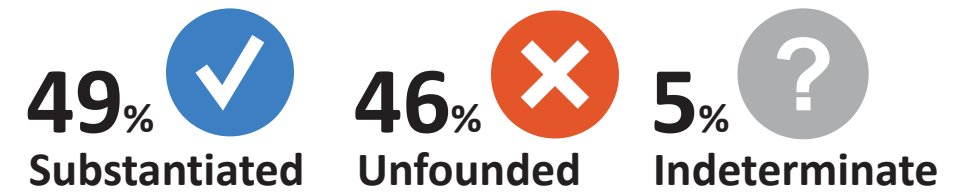
The Ombudsman receives complaints regarding nearly every City bureau. Higher numbers of complaints are expected for bureaus performing regulatory functions, but high numbers of complaints can reflect a systemic problem. Bureaus included in the graph below are those that were the subject of double-digit complaints in all or most years.



Transportation and Development Services are consistently the top subjects of the public's complaints. Police have seen a bump in recent years, in part due to complaints about public records access.

### Investigations

The Ombudsman's goal is to resolve complaints as informally as possible. Investigated complaints tend to be those that involve an important principle of good government or suggest a system-wide problem.



In 2017, the Ombudsman investigated 33 percent of complaints against City bureaus. For completed investigations, the Ombudsman partially or fully substantiated 49 percent of the complaints. Another 46 percent were determined to be unfounded. The remaining 5 percent had insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion.

### Bureaus generally accept recommendations

The Ombudsman works to resolve substantiated complaints through recommendations to the bureau. Recommendations may include asking the bureau to take corrective action or change policy.



City bureaus accepted nearly all of the Ombudsman's recommendations in 2017. In several cases, the Ombudsman recommended that the bureau reimburse or cancel charges that it erroneously or unfairly assessed against complainants. In 2017, financial savings to complainants topped \$373,000.

Most of the financial savings came from waivers of a transportation infrastructure charge. The Ombudsman determined the assessment of the charge to certain properties was either unfair or inequitable. City Council subsequently amended the underlying policy in an effort to mitigate inequitable impacts.