

Chapter 2: Community Involvement

What is this chapter about?

The goals and policies in this chapter convey the City's intent to:

- Provide a wide range of opportunities for involvement in planning and investment decisions, with targeted access and inclusion in decision making for those who potentially will be adversely affected by the results of those decisions.
- Foster ongoing positive relationships between communities and the City to support accountability for improving community well-being and inclusion.
- Recognize that the City has a responsibility to plan for the needs of, and engage with, under-served and under-represented communities to achieve greater equity.
- Expand opportunities for meaningful community engagement in planning and investment processes, from issue identification and project scoping through implementation, monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and enforcement.
- Promote civic responsibility both within communities and at an individual level.
- Require transparent, well-designed, thoughtful, culturally-specific, relevant, representative, and responsive public processes for planning and investment decisions, implementation, and monitoring.
- Build community capacity to increase the community's meaningful participation and leadership in planning and investment decisions.
- Promote thoughtful consideration of and responses to public comment on planning and investment decisions.

Why is this important?

The results are better — more durable, equitable, and accountable — when a diversity of Portlanders are involved in the scoping, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of plans and investment projects. No one person, agency, organization, or business can provide all things Portland’s diverse communities need. Collaborative partnerships and inclusive community participation in planning and investment decision making are essential to creating and sustaining a prosperous, healthy, equitable, and resilient Portland.

Portland has a long history of community involvement that gained strength and power in the 1970s, which forms the foundation of today’s neighborhood system. As the city grows, diversifies, and works to advance equity, it is essential that all community members’ needs and concerns are considered. Particular efforts must be made to improve services for, and participation by, people of color, immigrant and refugee communities, people with disabilities, renters, low-income Portlanders, older adults, youth, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community.

It is the City’s responsibility to promote deep and inclusive community involvement in planning and investment decisions. A new paradigm of community involvement and engagement — one that supports intercultural organizing, recognizes that diversity is an advantage, and works to achieve equitable outcomes — must be embraced and paired with Portland’s neighborhood organizations to create a robust and inclusive community involvement system.

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Goals

Goal 2.A: Community involvement as a partnership

The City of Portland works together as a genuine partner with all Portland communities and interests. The City promotes, builds, and maintains relationships, and communicates with individuals, communities, neighborhoods, businesses, organizations, Neighborhood Associations, Business Associations, institutions, and other governments to ensure meaningful community involvement in planning and investment decisions. Partnerships with historically under-served and under-represented communities must be paired with the City's neighborhood organizations to create a robust and inclusive community involvement system.

Goal 2.B: Social justice and equity

The City of Portland seeks social justice by expanding choice and opportunity for all community members, recognizing a special responsibility to identify and engage, as genuine partners, under-served and under-represented communities in planning, investment, implementation, and enforcement processes, particularly those with potential to be adversely affected by the results of decisions. The City actively works to improve its planning and investment-related decisions to achieve equitable distribution of burdens and benefits and address past injustices.

Goal 2.C: Value community wisdom and participation

Portland values and encourages community and civic participation. The City seeks and considers community wisdom and diverse cultural perspectives, and integrates them with technical analysis, to strengthen land use decisions.

Goal 2.D: Transparency and accountability

City planning and investment decision-making processes are clear, open, and documented. Through these processes a diverse range of community interests are heard and balanced. The City makes it clear to the community who is responsible for making decisions and how community input is taken into account. Accountability includes monitoring and reporting outcomes.

Goal 2.E: Meaningful participation

Community members have meaningful opportunities to participate in and influence all stages of planning and decision making. Public processes engage the full diversity of affected community members, including under-served and under-represented individuals and communities. The City will seek and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by planning and decision making.

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Goal 2.F: Accessible and effective participation

City planning and investment decision-making processes are designed to be accessible and effective, and responsive to the needs of all communities and cultures. The City draws from acknowledged best practices and uses a wide variety of tools, including those developed and recommended by under-served and under-represented communities, to promote inclusive, collaborative, culturally-responsive, and robust community involvement.

Goal 2.G: Strong civic infrastructure

Civic institutions, organizations, and processes encourage active and meaningful community involvement and strengthen the capacity of individuals and communities to participate in planning processes and civic life.

Policies

Ongoing community involvement practices, procedures, and programs are a necessary foundation for project-specific community involvement efforts. Many of the policies in this chapter are intended to build on community wisdom, expand community knowledge, and improve City staff capacity to work effectively with an increasingly diverse and growing Portland population.

Partners in decision making

Portland benefits when community members are meaningfully involved in planning and investment decisions. By building and maintaining partnerships with individuals and a wide range of formal and informal organizations that represent a variety of interests, the City of Portland government will have a better understanding of various communities' diverse needs and concerns. These policies support building and maintaining strong and supportive relationships with an increasingly diverse and growing Portland population.

Policy 2.1 Partnerships and coordination. Maintain partnerships and coordinate land use engagement with:

2.1.a. Individual community members.

2.1.b. Communities of color (including those whose families have been in this area for generations such as Native Americans, African Americans, and descendants of immigrants), low-income populations, Limited English Proficient (LEP) communities, Native American communities, immigrants and refugees, and other under-served and under-represented communities.

2.1.c. District coalitions, Neighborhood Associations, watershed councils, and business district associations as local experts and communication channels for place-based projects.

2.1.d. Businesses, unions, employees, and related organizations that reflect Portland's diversity as the center of regional economic and cultural activity.

2.1.e. Community-based, faith-based, artistic and cultural, and interest-based non-profits, organizations, and groups.

2.1.f. People experiencing disabilities.

2.1.g. Institutions, governments, and tribal nations.

Policy 2.2 Broaden partnerships. Work with district coalitions, Neighborhood Associations, and business district associations to increase participation and to help them reflect the diversity of the people and institutions they serve. Facilitate greater communication and collaboration among district coalitions,

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Neighborhood Associations, business district associations, culturally-specific organizations, and community-based organizations.

Environmental justice

Environmental justice is the equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in public decision making, as it applies to the development, implementation, and enforcement of laws, regulations, and policies that govern the uses of air, water, and land; and therefore the effects of those laws, regulations, and policies on the health and quality of life where people live, work, learn, play, and practice spirituality.

Environmental justice supports the equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of decisions, considering historical injustice and context of local decision-making, and ensures that those most impacted from decisions have an opportunity to meaningfully participate.

Environmental justice is borne from the recognition that communities of color, low-income communities, Limited English Proficient (LEP) communities, and Sovereign tribes have been disproportionately impacted from public and private decision-making, including planning, development, monitoring and enforcement, while often being excluded from those decisions themselves.

Environmental justice serves to build capacity within overburdened communities to support greater political, socioeconomic, and cultural self-determination.

Policies throughout this chapter support environmental justice by providing a framework for meaningful involvement in public decisions.

Policy 2.3 **Extend benefits.** Ensure plans and investments promote environmental justice by extending the community benefits associated with environmental assets, land use, and public investments to communities of color, low-income populations, and other under-served or under-represented groups impacted by the decision. Maximize economic, cultural, political, and environmental benefits through ongoing partnerships.

Policy 2.4 **Eliminate burdens.** Ensure plans and investments eliminate associated disproportionate burdens (e.g. adverse environmental, economic, or community impacts) for communities of color, low-income populations, and other under-served or under-represented groups impacted by the decision.

2.4.a. Minimize or mitigate disproportionate burdens in cases where they cannot be eliminated.

2.4.b. Use plans and investments to address disproportionate burdens of previous decisions.

Invest in education and training

Both the community and City representatives must have the capacity to work together as effective partners. Ongoing investment in education and training leads to better informed community members who then have increased capacity to participate effectively. Community involvement-focused professional development training helps improve City staff’s ability to work with and learn from community members. These policies support both community and agency capacity building.

- Policy 2.5** **Community capacity building.** Enhance the ability of community members, particularly those in under-served and/or under-represented groups, to develop the relationships, knowledge, and skills to effectively participate in plan and investment processes.

- Policy 2.6** **Land use literacy.** Provide training and educational opportunities to build the public’s understanding of land use, transportation, housing, and related topics, and increase capacity for meaningful participation in planning and investment processes.

- Policy 2.7** **Agency capacity building.** Increase City staff’s capacity, tools, and skills to design and implement processes that engage a broad diversity of affected and interested communities, including under-served and under-represented communities, in meaningful and appropriate ways.

Community assessment

City staff must build and maintain their understanding of community demographics, trends, and needs. Community members should have opportunities to share how conditions and needs affect them. The following policies support effective two-way communication between City government and communities and encourage community-level data gathering and information sharing in planning and investment processes.

- Policy 2.8** **Channels of communication.** Maintain two-way channels of communication among City Council, the Planning Commission (PC), project advisory committees, City staff, and community members.

- Policy 2.9** **Community analysis.** Collect and evaluate data, including community-validated population data and information, to understand the needs, priorities, and trends and historical context affecting different communities in Portland.

- Policy 2.10** **Community participation in data collection.** Provide meaningful opportunities for individuals and communities to be involved in inventories, mapping, data analysis, and the development of alternatives.

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Policy 2.11 Open Data. Ensure planning and investment decisions are a collaboration among stakeholders, including those listed in Policy 2.1. Where appropriate, encourage publication, accessibility, and wide-spread sharing of data collected and generated by the City.

Transparency and accountability

The City is committed to improving transparency in community involvement processes related to planning and investment decisions. When community members have a better understanding of a process, they are better able to participate effectively. Improved transparency and communication allows the City to better understand community opinions and needs, resulting in improved decisions.

The following policies articulate how and when planning and investment decisions are made; the community's role in decision-making processes; and what the community can expect from the City of Portland.

Policy 2.12 Roles and responsibilities. Establish clear roles, rights, and responsibilities for participants and decision makers in planning and investment processes. Address roles of City bureaus, elected officials, and participants, including government agencies and tribal nations in addition to community and neighborhood leadership, business, organizations, and individuals.

Policy 2.13 Project scope. Establish clear expectations about land use project sponsorship, purpose, design, and how decision makers will use the process results.

Policy 2.14 Community influence. At each stage of the process, identify which elements of a planning and investment process can be influenced or changed through community involvement. Clarify the extent to which those elements can be influenced or changed.

Policy 2.15 Documentation and feedback. Provide clear documentation for the rationale supporting decisions in planning and investment processes. Communicate to participants about the issues raised in the community involvement process, how public input affected outcomes, and the rationale used to make decisions.

Community involvement program

Much has changed in Portland in the 35 years since the adoption of the 1980 Comprehensive Plan. Much more will likely change between the adoption of this Plan and the next one. The following policies challenge City staff and elected officials to assess current practices and develop new tools through ongoing process evaluation and

improvement, and direct the City to develop, maintain, and update a manual that details current best practices for community involvement.

Policy 2.16 Community Involvement Program. Maintain a Community Involvement Program that supports community involvement as an integral and meaningful part of the planning and investment decision-making process.

Policy 2.17 Community engagement manual. Create, maintain, and actively implement a community engagement manual that details how to conduct community involvement for planning and investment projects and decisions.

Policy 2.18 Best practices engagement methods. Utilize community engagement methods, tools, and technologies that are recognized as best practices.

Policy 2.19 Community Involvement Committee. The Community Involvement Committee (CIC), an independent advisory body, will evaluate and provide feedback to City staff on community involvement processes for individual planning and associated investment projects, before, during, and at the conclusion of these processes.

Policy 2.20 Review bodies. Maintain review bodies, such as the Planning Commission (PC), Design Commission, Historic Landmarks Commission, and Adjustment Committee, to provide an opportunity for community involvement and provide leadership and expertise for specialized topic areas.

Policy 2.21 Program evaluation. Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the Community Involvement Program and recommend and advocate for program and policy improvements. The Community Involvement Committee (CIC) will advise City staff regarding this evaluation.

Policy 2.22 Shared engagement methods. Coordinate and share methods, tools, and technologies that lead to successful engagement practices with both government and community partners and solicit engagement methods from the community.

Policy 2.23 Adequate funding and human resources. Provide a level of funding and human resources allocated to the Community Involvement Program sufficient to make community involvement an integral part of the planning, policy, investment and development process.

Process design and evaluation

The policies in this section guide the design of project-specific community involvement processes. They help ensure that community involvement processes for planning and

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investment projects fit the scope, character, and impact of the decision. These policies also promote full representation in planning and investment processes and actively involve under-served and under-represented communities. Representation can help ensure that City decisions do not further reinforce the disadvantaged position of under-served and under-represented groups and do not narrowly benefit privileged groups.

- Policy 2.24 Representation.** Facilitate participation of a cross-section of the full diversity of affected Portlanders during planning and investment processes. This diversity includes individuals, stakeholders, and communities represented by race, color, national origin, English proficiency, gender, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, and source of income.
- Policy 2.25 Early involvement.** Improve opportunities for interested and affected community members to participate early in planning and investment processes, including identifying and prioritizing issues, needs, and opportunities; participating in process design; and recommending and prioritizing projects and/or other types of implementation.
- Policy 2.26 Verifying data.** Use data, including community-validated population data, to guide planning and investment processes and priority setting and to shape community involvement and decision-making efforts.
- Policy 2.27 Demographics.** Identify the demographics of potentially affected communities when initiating a planning or investment project.
- Policy 2.28 Historical understanding.** To better understand concerns and conditions when initiating a project, research the history, culture, past plans, and other needs of the affected community, particularly under-represented and under-served groups, and persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). Review preliminary findings with members of the community who have institutional and historical knowledge.
- Policy 2.29 Project-specific needs.** Customize community involvement processes to meet the needs of those potentially affected by the planning or investment project. Use community involvement techniques that fit the scope, character, and potential impact of the planning or investment decision under consideration.
- Policy 2.30 Culturally-appropriate processes.** Consult with communities to design culturally-appropriate processes to meet the needs of those affected by a planning or investment project. Evaluate, use, and document creative and culturally-appropriate methods, tools, technologies, and spaces to inform and engage people from under-served and under-represented groups about planning or investment projects.

- Policy 2.31 Innovative engagement methods.** Develop and document innovative methods, tools, and technologies for community involvement processes for plan and investment projects.
- Policy 2.32 Inclusive participation beyond Portland residents.** Design public processes for planning and investment projects to engage affected and interested people who may not live in Portland such as property owners, employees, employers, and students, among others, as practicable.
- Policy 2.33 Inclusive participation in Central City planning.** Design public processes for the Central City that recognize its unique role as the region’s center. Engage a wide range of stakeholders from the Central City and throughout the region including employees, employers, social service providers, students, and visitors, as well as regional tourism, institutional, recreation, transportation, and local/regional government representatives, as appropriate.
- Policy 2.34 Accessibility.** Ensure that community involvement processes for planning and investment projects are broadly accessible in terms of location, time, and language, and that they support the engagement of individuals with a variety of abilities and limitations on participation.
- Policy 2.35 Participation monitoring.** Evaluate and document participant demographics throughout planning and investment processes to assess whether participation reflects the demographics of affected communities. Adapt involvement practices and activities accordingly to increase effectiveness at reaching targeted audiences.
- Policy 2.36 Adaptability.** Adapt community involvement processes for planning and investment projects as appropriate to flexibly respond to changes in the scope and priority of the issues, needs, and other factors that may affect the process.
- Policy 2.37 Process evaluation.** Evaluate each community involvement process for planning or investment projects from both the City staff and participants’ perspectives, and consider feedback and lessons learned to enhance future involvement efforts.

Information design and notification

These policies will help improve notification procedures for administrative and quasi-judicial reviews, as well as legislative land use decisions and the community’s access to processes and technical information related to planning and investment decisions. The City of Portland’s Civil Rights Title VI Plan requires that information is available to the public, with assistance provided as requested to interpret and effectively use technical information.

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Additionally, the City of Portland must ensure that limited English proficient (LEP) individuals have meaningful access to City land use-related activities.

- Policy 2.38 Accommodation.** Ensure accommodations to let individuals with disabilities participate in administrative, quasi-judicial, and legislative land use decisions, consistent with or exceeding federal regulations.
- Policy 2.39 Notification.** Notify affected and interested community members and recognized organizations about administrative, quasi-judicial, and legislative land use decisions with enough lead time to enable effective participation. Consider notification to both property owners and renters.
- Policy 2.40 Tools for effective participation.** Provide clear and easy access to information about administrative, quasi-judicial, and legislative land use decisions in multiple formats and through technological advancements and other ways.
- Policy 2.41 Limited English Proficiency (LEP).** Ensure that limited English proficient (LEP) individuals are provided meaningful access to information about administrative, quasi-judicial, and legislative land use decisions, consistent with federal regulations.