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## 2025-090

Report

### Accept the Government Transition Advisory Committee Final Report

Accepted

The Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC) Co-Chairs will present the Final Report of GTAC's service from March 2023 to March 2025.

The GTAC was tasked with ensuring effective and efficient implementation of charter reform, engaging the public, and providing strategic, research-informed advice to the City.

The GTAC previously provided an update to Council in October 2024.

The Final Report and the presentation are attached.

#### Exhibits and Attachments

- [Government Transition Advisory Committee Final Report](#) 1.53 MB
- [Presentation](#) 1.65 MB
- [Testimony](#) 70.43 KB

#### Impact Statement

##### Purpose of Proposed Legislation and Background Information

On November 8, 2022, voters approved Portland Measure 26-228, which amended the City's Charter to include establishment of a mayor-council form of government, creation of four new geographic districts with three councilors representing each district, and election of city officials using ranked choice voting.

To ensure implementation of these charter amendments was done effectively and efficiently in alignment with the City's core values, the City created the GTAC, along with rules governing the appointment of members to the committees and the purposes and practices of the committee.

The GTAC was responsible for:

#### Document number

2025-090

#### Introduced by

[Councilor Dan Ryan](#); [Council Vice President Tiffany Koyama Lane](#)

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#### Agenda Type

Regular

#### Date and Time Information

##### Meeting Date

March 19, 2025

##### Time Requested

90 minutes

- Ensuring implementation of November 2022 voter-approved charter amendments is done effectively and efficiently, following the City's core values of anti-racism, equity, communication, collaboration, transparency, and fiscal responsibility.
- Maintaining open and consistent communications and engagement with internal and external stakeholders throughout the transition, and ensure input is meaningfully integrated into the City's implantation of the November 2022 voter-approved charter amendments. Other than districting-specific input, serving as the primary solicitor and repository of public input related to the transition.
- Advising the City on the November 2022 voter-approved charter amendments transition plan and community education and engagement plan, including project schedule and project budget, resource allocation and funding strategy.

For the past two years and in more than 75 public meetings, GTAC members debated and deliberated how to ensure the City's transition is effective and efficient. The GTAC researched 20 peer cities to identify promising practices of good government elsewhere from which Portland might learn. And, most importantly, the GTAC served as the public engagement body for the transition.

Throughout the transition, the GTAC gave constructive informal and formal advice to City leaders in the transition.

The GTAC also leaves detailed recommendations for the new City leadership in the following areas: engagement with City government, budget and budget engagement, council and council committees, city administrator recruitment, and voter education.

Finally, the GTAC envisions the need for continuing commitment by both the executive and legislative branches to ongoing work in the following areas:

- Finding efficiencies in the new form of government during this budget cycle and ways to continue the transition work.
- Launching a citywide strategic planning process and schedule.
- Creating a citywide, systemic approach to community engagement.
- Refining procedures for the ongoing collaborative work between the legislative and executive branches.
- Developing a workplan to implement the GTAC recommendations.

This is the Final Report of the GTAC.

## Financial and Budgetary Impacts

There is no fiscal impact to the GTAC's report to Council.

Economic and Real Estate Development Impacts

Not applicable.

Community Impacts and Community Involvement

There is no community impact or involvement to the GTAC’s report to Council. However, the GTAC is made up of volunteers and served as the main public engagement body for the City’s transition to a new form of government and elections system.

The GTAC provided 141 presentations to community groups on the City’s transition including more than 50 neighborhood and business associations. Thirty-nine percent of the community presentations were in partnership with communities historically left out of City Hall decision-making. The GTAC also conducted focused engagement to inform its recommendations – including more than 600 survey responses, five community listening sessions, policy discussions with community-based organizations, and internal City briefings.

More information on the GTAC’s community engagement efforts can be found in Appendix A of the Final Report.

100% Renewable Goal

Not applicable.

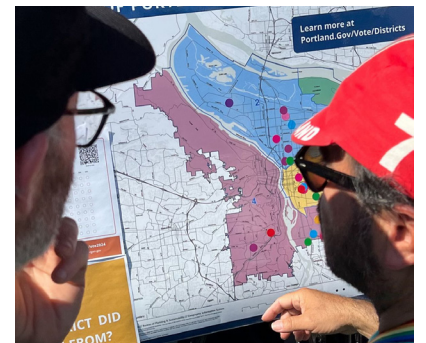
Document History

Document number: 2025-090

Agenda	Council action
<div><a href="#">March 19, 2025</a> Regular Agenda <div>City Council</div></div>	<div><b>Accepted</b> Motion to accept the report: Moved by Kanal and seconded by Smith.  <b>Aye (12):</b> Avalos, Dunphy, Smith, Kanal, Ryan, Koyama Lane, Morillo, Novick, Clark, Green, Zimmerman, Pirtle-Guiney</div>

# City of Portland

## Government Transition Advisory Committee Final Report



The Government Transition Advisory Committee's report of its service from March 2023 to March 2025

**March 2025**

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Voter approved. Community centered. City delivered.

 [www.portland.gov/transition/advisory](http://www.portland.gov/transition/advisory)

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## Forward

As the Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC) comes to its designated close in March 2025, it is clear that the transition to a new government has been remarkably successful. The signature features of the charter amendments — a ranked-choice voting election, new council districts, and the replacement of the commission form of government with a mayor, a city administrator and a legislative city council — have been implemented. Substantial additional work has been done from the physical renovations of City Hall to the collection of staffing, code, administrative and organizational changes made to support the new government.

Many detailed elements of the transition remain open questions as the new government gets underway. At this point, the GTAC leaves with deep appreciation for the work that has brought us so far, so successfully, and with some final suggestions and guidance for work that must continue.

The first concrete evidence that the transition was going well was the early success of the Salary Commission and Independent District Commission in setting up the basic parameters for the first ranked-choice voting election of the entire suite of elected officials. Then, the election itself became a major focus. The development of election rules and processes was, by all accounts, a remarkable collaboration across multiple jurisdictions and offices, in an incredibly narrow window of time, with the result being a technically flawless first-ever ranked-choice election in Portland. Meanwhile, the members of the GTAC, deployed as community educators in voter education efforts, saw first-hand the excitement and enthusiasm building in the weeks before the election, as a similarly collaborative first-ever charter-mandated voter education effort spread through communities.

By the first council meeting in January 2025, the transition had provided council with the basic tools necessary to start legislative work. And where pieces were not yet in place, the council followed many of the GTAC recommendations to organize further — by increasing funding for their staffing and creating and populating council committees. Meanwhile, in the executive branch, several budget reforms regarding community engagement were being implemented according to the GTAC recommendations, and a new engagement officer was hired to adopt a citywide approach to community engagement.

The complete reboot of Portland's government in the two short years since the vote on the charter amendments is a giant accomplishment. Above all, the GTAC recognizes and deeply appreciates the enormous amount of thoughtful and collaborative work to launch the new government. Because of this work, there seems to be a great deal of hopeful anticipation and renewed confidence across Portland that the new government will be the change that our city needed.



# Executive summary

## What is the Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC)?

The GTAC is made up of fifteen volunteers with diverse experiences and expertise, appointed by city council in March 2023 to serve until March 2025. Our task is to ensure effective and efficient implementation of charter reform, engage the public, and provide strategic, research-informed advice to the City.

To learn more about how GTAC members were selected and to get better acquainted with us, see [Appendix C](#) for the foundation and evolution of the GTAC.

The GTAC serves as the main public engagement body for the transition. We have reached thousands of Portlanders. We've provided 141 community presentations on the new form of government and new elections system, including to more than 50 neighborhood associations. Thirty-nine percent of our community presentations have been in partnership with communities historically left out of City Hall decision-making.

Throughout the transition, the GTAC has given constructive informal and formal advice to City leaders in the transition. In public meetings, we have given evaluations on the following topics: transition workplan, transition community engagement plan, Code 3.02 on council organization and procedure, voter education plan, transition budget, and transition project evaluation.

More formally, the GTAC issued recommendations to City transition leaders on the following subjects: [council staffing](#), [district offices](#), [community engagement](#), and [onboarding of new leaders I](#) and [II](#).

## Lessons learned

The GTAC's tenure highlighted significant challenges, including unclear committee objectives and insufficient time to fully utilize its diverse membership. The absence of a structured community engagement framework further limited the committee's outreach efforts, exposing a critical gap in the City's approach to public involvement.

Despite these obstacles, the GTAC fostered transparency and civic engagement, providing a platform for public dialogue and demonstrating the value of involving diverse, engaged residents in governance. To maximize the impact of future advisory efforts, it will be essential to address these systemic issues.

## Final recommendations to the new City leadership

The GTAC sent recommendations to the new City leadership on:

- Engagement with City government
- Budget and budget engagement
- Council and council committees
- City administrator recruitment

- Voter education

See [Appendix B](#) for a full description of the recommendations.

### **Guidance for the City going forward**

To realize the full potential of the charter reforms, the GTAC envisions the need for continuing commitment by both the executive and legislative branches to ongoing work in the following areas:

- Finding efficiencies in the new form of government during this budget cycle and ways to continue the transition work.
- Launching a citywide strategic planning process and schedule.
- Creating a citywide, systemic approach to community engagement.
- Refining procedures for the ongoing collaborative work between the legislative and executive branches.
- Developing a workplan to implement the GTAC recommendations.



## Our work and the results

Throughout the transition, the GTAC advised and made formal recommendations to City leaders in the transition.

### **Advice and recommendations to City transition leadership**

The GTAC provided advice to City leaders throughout the transition. This advice was given primarily in public meetings, but without formal vote of the GTAC. Some key areas of advice included the following:

- Transition Workplan (May 2023)
- Community Engagement Plan for the Transition (May to July 2023)
- Code 3.02 - Council Organization & Procedure (June to August 2023)
- Voter Education Plan (November 2023 to January 2024)
- Fiscal year 2024-25 transition budget (December 2023 to February 2024)
- Transition project evaluation (April to May 2024)

Recordings/copies of these evaluations can be found below.

For the GTAC's evaluation of the transition workplan, see [Government Transition Advisory Committee Meeting April 25, 2023 Summary](#) and [Government Advisory Committee Meeting May 11, 2023 Summary](#).

For the GTAC's evaluation of the transition community engagement plan, see [Government Advisory Committee- Community Engagement Workgroup Meeting May 24, 2023 Summary](#), [Government Advisory Committee- Community Engagement Workgroup Meeting June 7, 2023 Summary](#), [Government Advisory Committee Meeting June 20, 2023 Summary](#), [Government Advisory Committee- Community Engagement Workgroup Meeting June 26, 2023 Summary](#), and [Government Advisory Committee Meeting July 10, 2023 Summary](#).

For the GTAC's evaluation of Code 3.02-Council Organization& Procedure, see [Government Advisory Committee Meeting June 6, 2023 Summary](#), [Government Advisory Committee Meeting June 20, 2023 Summary](#), and [Government Advisory Committee Meeting August 14, 2023 Summary](#).

For the GTAC's evaluation of the voter education plan, see [Government Advisory Committee Meeting November 29, 2023](#), [Government Advisory Committee Meeting December 5, 2023](#) and [Government Advisory Committee Meeting January 9, 2024 Summary](#).

For the GTAC's evaluation of the transition budget, see [Government Advisory Committee Meeting December 18, 2023 Summary](#), [Government Advisory](#)

[Committee- Districts + Council Subcommittee Meeting January 19, 2024 Summary](#), and [Government Advisory Committee Meeting February 6, 2024 Summary](#).

For the GTAC's evaluation of the transition project evaluation, see [Government Advisory Committee Meeting April 9, 2024 Summary](#), [Government Advisory Committee- Special Meeting May 10, 2024 Summary](#), and Government Advisory Committee Meeting February 11, 2025.

During its tenure, the GTAC sent formal recommendations to the executive and legislative branches on four topics:

1. Council staffing
2. District offices
3. Community engagement
4. Onboarding of new leaders

Below is the summary of the recommendations, and the latest responses from City leadership.

### **Council staffing: The GTAC recommended increasing number of employees**

In November 2023, council approved [Ordinance 191526](#), which set the appropriation levels for staffing for the offices of the council at one per councilor, one shared administrative staff per council district, and five shared council operations staff. One staff per councilor is half of that adopted by council in the organizational structure resolution of Nov. 1, 2023.

In February 2024, the GTAC sent [a letter](#) addressed to city council, the City Budget Office's director and deputy director, and the chief administrative officer that argued that the council budget allocation is insufficient to staff an effective legislative body. The GTAC recommended increased staffing for both individual councilors and shared council operations.

The GTAC testified before council in support of the recommendation for increased council staffing.

Council did not change its allocation in response to the GTAC's advice. The council [responded in writing](#) that the "future mayor and council will have the authority to identify or reprioritize funds for elected staff support in 2025."

Council adopted a budget note directing the interim city administrator to develop a scope of work for a third-party evaluation "to assess the organizational structure and staffing in the City Administrator's Office, the Deputy City Administrator Offices, the city council, and the mayor's office under the new form of government. The evaluation should focus on the service delivery and cost impacts of the organizational structure and possible efficiencies and include comparisons to highly performing cities of comparable size and governance structure. It should include an assessment of the

number of deputy city administrators, bureau directors, and council staff.” As of October 2024, there was a scope, but as of the date of this report, no study was ever done.

In October 2024, during council’s adoption of the Fiscal Year 2024-25 fall supplemental budget, council considered an amendment to reappropriate commissioners’ offices and the mayor’s office prior-year general fund underspending to the future city council and future mayor. The amendment failed.

In January 2025, the new council adopted a budget amendment that would allow for individual council offices to add staff. The GTAC members provided testimony consistent with the prior recommendations.

### **District offices: The GTAC sought support for more community engagement and temporary low-cost district offices**

At the end of November 2023, council unanimously adopted Resolution [37638](#) directing the following related to council in-district offices:

- (a) Scope of work: Facilities will identify in-district offices for twelve councilors and staff, in the four geographic districts for council approval;
- (b) Cost: the cost of obtaining the offices is unknown and will need to be approved by council as part of the FY 24-25 budget process;
- (c) Availability: In-district offices will be available no later than Jan. 1, 2025;
- (d) Updates to council: Facilities will update council in writing every 90 days on progress in obtaining in-district offices
- (e) Additional direction and common understanding: The in-district offices will provide room for eight staff total per district, each with a designated desk/workstation; room to meet with the general public on a routine basis; a welcoming and accessible environment; proximity to public transit; wireless connectivity; secured entry and egress; and the existence of or ability to install appropriate signage and wayfinding.

In March 2024, the GTAC sent [a letter](#) to city council, the chief administrative officer, and the manager of the Division of Asset Management recommending:

1. The final decision on permanent in-district offices should be left to the future city council;
2. There should be a robust community engagement process about programming in these offices prior to the permanent decision;
3. The City should continue ongoing facilities research and scoping of in-district office work to ensure responsiveness to direction of the future council; and
4. Temporary low-cost offices should be available in each district beginning Jan. 1, 2025.

The GTAC testified before council in support of its recommendations for a robust community engagement process and temporary low-cost offices.

In May 2024, council [responded](#) to the GTAC that it agreed with its first and second recommendations, but not the third and fourth. Council reversed course on its original resolution and, in July, amended Resolution 37638 to remove the requirement that Facilities identify and onboard temporary in-district offices by Jan.1, 2025.

Council also did not allocate funding for a robust community engagement process.

### **Community engagement: The GTAC encouraged improvements to community engagement, and an expedited process to hire the new citywide engagement officer**

On Nov. 2, 2023, city council approved a new organizational chart for City bureaus and programs. The chart established four new officer positions and citywide practices of engagement, communications, equity, and sustainability.

In response to the new practices, the GTAC sent [a letter](#) to city council and the Chief Administrative Officer recommending improvements to community engagement at the City. The GTAC recommended the City consider hiring the engagement officer as soon as possible, as well as a host of other improvements.

The GTAC testified before council in support of its recommendations for improving community engagement.

In May 2024, council [responded](#) to the GTAC that they share its eagerness to hire the engagement officer. They noted that the officer's role and responsibilities will likely include several elements highlighted by the GTAC as important to improve community engagement. The engagement officer began work on Jan. 31, 2025.

### **Onboarding of new leaders: The GTAC recommendations strengthened the onboarding process for new elected officials**

In March 2024, the GTAC sent a set of [onboarding recommendations](#) to the chief administrative officer. In June, the City shared its draft onboarding plan. The City committed \$500,000 to onboarding in the budget.

In August 2024, the GTAC sent a second set of [onboarding recommendations](#) to the interim city administrator, because they believed some key elements were missing from the City's draft onboarding plan: the seamless integration of four key parts of onboarding (formal requirements, how the government will work in practice, skills training, and introduction to City services and operations); engagement of an external consultant to help design and implement the process; and the addition of six specific elements.

The onboarding of new elected officials did implement several of the GTAC recommendations.

## Community education and engagement



*Figure 1. The GTAC served as the main public engagement body for the transition.*

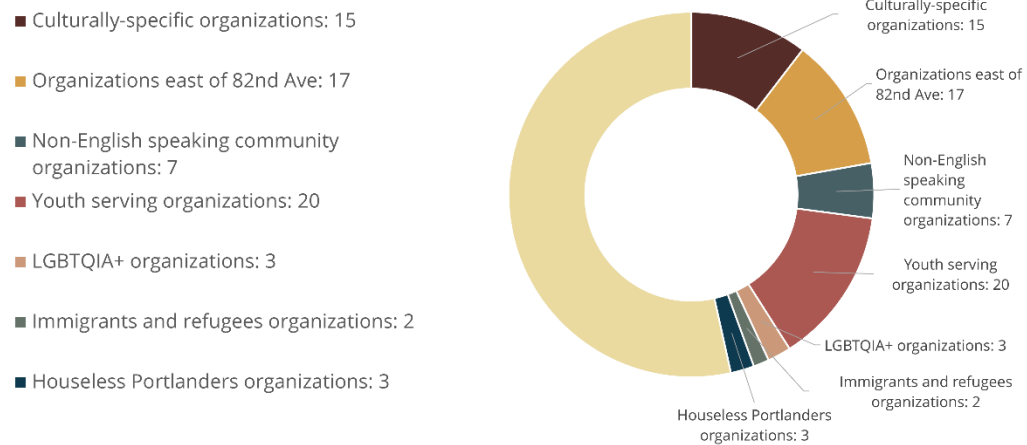
While the GTAC participated in and supported City-hosted education and engagement opportunities, the GTAC recognized that inviting people to City events is insufficient, particularly for hard-to-reach communities. The GTAC committed to go out into community and engage people where they are comfortable. These opportunities were generated from both the GTAC and the community. The GTAC periodically received engagement reports, was responsible for identifying gaps in who is being reached and proactively approached community to fill those gaps.

### **Almost 150 community organizations welcomed GTAC presentations**

As of Feb. 28, 2025, the GTAC provided 141 community briefings and presentations. See [Appendix E](#) for a list of organizations. Some organizations received more than one briefing or presentation.

Approximately 39% of presentations or a total of 55 presentations were provided in partnership with communities traditionally left out of City Hall and City decision-making.

**Approximately 39% of presentations were provided in partnership with communities traditionally left out of City Hall**



*Figure 2. Approximately 39% of presentations or a total of 55 presentations were provided in partnership with communities traditionally left out of City Hall and City decision-making.*

The GTAC also conducted specific engagement to inform its recommendations to the new City leaders through community surveys and listening sessions, policy discussions with community-based organizations, and internal City briefings. See [Appendix A](#) for a link to the engagement reports.

### **Voter/candidate education and outreach**

In September 2023, the GTAC voted to create the Voter / Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee. The subcommittee met monthly. At the first meeting, the subcommittee approved its [charter](#). The subcommittee led the GTAC's voter and candidate education as well as the outreach work described below.

- **Advise on the voter education strategy.** The subcommittee helped the voter education team identify and highlight potential gaps in the voter education plan, as well as refine and shape the broad voter education strategy.
- **Advise on voter education budget.** The subcommittee advised on the fiscal year 2024-2025 voter education budget, and helped the voter education team better communicate how voter education budget resources were invested.
- **Review, share, and utilize educational materials.** The subcommittee reviewed City educational materials and engagement strategies before they were finalized, including the City's voter education website, mock election platform, educational comic, paid media plan, and mailer.
- **Share and utilize voter education materials.** Two ideas are key to understanding the voter education efforts of the subcommittee: (1) the "bite, snack, meal" approach to voter education – "snack" or "meal" versions provide a more extensive



ranked-choice voting information, and the GTAC's different community presentations that aligned with the approach; and (2) distinguishing between pre-primary work focused on clear communications and outreach and post-primary work focused on intensive education efforts.

Subcommittee members provided direct voter education through community briefings and presentations, event tabling, and community town halls. The GTAC conducted 141 community presentations that included ranked-choice voting education.

- **Recommend approaches for candidate training.** The subcommittee helped the City plan for the handful of candidate learning sessions and participated in debriefing the sessions.
- **Report feedback from the public about ranked-choice voting.** Beginning in January 2024, every subcommittee meeting held time for members to share what they were hearing from community about ranked-choice voting.

## Lessons learned

Over nearly two years of dedicated service, the GTAC reflected on its journey, identifying both significant challenges and meaningful accomplishments. These insights offer valuable guidance for future efforts of a similar nature.

### Key challenges

- **Unclear Committee Objectives.** Early in the term, confusion arose regarding the scope of the GTAC's advisory role and how its input would be applied to the broader transition project. The previous council expressly limited the GTAC's scope to advise; GTAC was excluded from advising on the executive branch reorganization. This lack of clarity resulted in inefficiencies, protracted discussions, a member resignation, and no significant community involvement or oversight on a significant portion of the transition. Without well-defined objectives, members struggled to measure their impact, leaving some feeling dissatisfied with the time and effort invested.
- **Limited Time.** The GTAC convened six months after the charter amendments' approval, placing it in a reactive position relative to the transition team's progress. The committee was purposely composed of a diverse group of individuals with varied backgrounds and skill sets, bringing a wide range of inputs and perspectives to the table. While this diversity enriched the discussions, it also introduced the challenge of managing differing opinions and contributions. Members faced the dual challenge of catching up on complex work and addressing the substantial scope of the project, leaving limited time to fully engage or effectively utilize the wealth of input available. The GTAC formed subcommittees to better leverage its limited time.
- **Absence of Structured Community Engagement Framework.** Tasked with educating and engaging the public about the government transition, the GTAC faced significant challenges due to the city's lack of a structured or consistent outreach system. Operating within what could be described as an "ad hoc at best" framework, the committee and supporting staff were left to develop their own approach from scratch. While members made earnest efforts to connect with the community and received some positive feedback, the absence of established processes or infrastructure hindered their ability to engage effectively and consistently, underscoring a systemic gap in the City's approach to community involvement.

### Key wins

- **Transparency.** The GTAC's very existence enhanced transparency in the transition process. Its meetings provided a platform for open dialogue, enabling both the committee and the public to learn about key aspects of the transition. This

openness invited public scrutiny and ensured that decisions could withstand thorough questioning, fostering potentially greater trust in the process.

- **Civic Engagement.** Participation in the GTAC proved deeply rewarding for many members. Beyond gaining expertise in charter reform and city governance, members built meaningful connections with city leaders, fellow committee members, and the community. This collaboration fostered a stronger sense of civic duty and personal fulfillment, while highlighting the value of engaged, informed residents. These individuals, now equipped with deeper insights and relationships, have the potential to contribute to future civic initiatives and inspire broader community participation. Their involvement underscores the long-term benefits of empowering residents to take active roles in local governance.

# Recommendations to new City leadership

Throughout its service, the GTAC released recommendations: [recommendations to leaders of the new government](#) in September 2024, [city administrator recruitment recommendations](#) in December 2024, [voter education recommendations](#) in February 2025, and [supplemental recommendations](#) in February 2025. The recommendations are listed below.

See [Appendix B](#) for a full description of the recommendations that includes guidance for how to achieve them.

## Engagement with City Government

- Embed community engagement in our new government's culture.
- Review and reform the City's overall approach to advisory bodies in the context of the new form of government, district representation, and a renewed emphasis on system-wide community engagement.
- Improve constituent information and experience with elected leaders.
- Establish councilors' district-based engagement.
- Improve community participation in city council decision-making.

## Budget and Budget Engagement

- Find savings in the new form of government.
- Develop an Action Plan to implement findings and recommendations in the Budget and Finance Staffing and Budget Process Transition Report into the upcoming budget cycle.
- Start budget engagement earlier and diversify the methods for input.
- Communicate openly and honestly with the public and ensure feedback loops.
- Develop communication tools to help Portlanders understand the City's budget process.
- Host district budget town halls.
- Build and maintain relationships with community-based organizations with an additional focus on communities traditionally left out of City Hall and City decision-making.
- Dissolve bureau-specific budget advisory committees, create service area advisory committees, and assess and revisit the Citywide Community Budget Advisory Board.
- Centralize primary responsibility for design, coordination, and implementation of community engagement in the budget process in the City Administrator's Office.

## Council and Council Committees

- Increase staffing of councilors and council operations.
- Provide opportunities for council team building.
- Prioritize early development of a citywide strategic plan.
- Create council committee structure and procedures.

- Establish and compose council committees.
- Establish a code commission.

### **City Administrator Recruitment**

- Implement a robust, well-designed, timely, community-informed, transparent city administrator appointment process.

### **Voter Education**

- Begin planning now for the next election.
- Increase internal and external coordination and collaboration.
- Refine educational content with a focus on hard-to-reach communities.

In February 2025, the City released a [status update on many of the GTAC's recommendations](#). We hope that the City continues to engage with the recommendations and commits to the action items to fully implement the recommendations.

## Guidance for the City going forward

There are still many outstanding loose ends and open questions arising out of the transition, and it will be important for the City to follow through on resolving them. The GTAC believes that the promise of the charter amendments extends beyond simply setting up a new government. To realize the full potential of the charter reforms, the GTAC envisions the need for continuing commitment by both the executive and legislative branches to ongoing work in the following areas:

### **1. Finding efficiencies in the new form of government during this budget cycle and ways to continue the transition work**

The GTAC is very much aware of the severe budget constraints facing the City in the upcoming budget cycle. Understandably, the crisis has the potential to overwhelm the government's time and attention to other matters, including ongoing transition work and budget process reforms. However, continuing the deep work on the government transition will help inform the budget priorities and tradeoffs. Indeed, finding efficiencies in the de-siloed government, consolidating and restructuring areas of top-heavy management, and streamlining bloated processes are essential parts of necessary ongoing transition work. The constrained budget just makes the work more urgent.

### **2. Launching a citywide strategic planning process and schedule**

There is wide acknowledgement that the City needs to embark on a strategic planning process to guide priorities for policy making and budget decisions in the new government over a longer term. But there's no clear path to do so in a comprehensive way. Council committees are separately discussing priorities, and the constrained budget will force some urgent decision-making, but these are poor substitutes to planning broadly and comprehensively. A full transition to the new form of government cannot be considered complete until this planning process occurs. In its [response to GTAC's recommendations](#), the City informs the GTAC that "The City Leadership Team has discussed a high-level scope of work for this project and is actively working on assigning a project manager and start date for this work." Strategic planning needs to remain high on everyone's task list.

### **3. Creating a citywide, systemic approach to community engagement**

With an expanded, district-based city council, reorganized neighborhood coalitions, and de-siloed bureaus, as well as a newly staffed engagement officer position, the time is ripe for an overhaul of weak and failed community engagement practices in Portland. The City needs to restore, deepen and maintain relationships with community groups, organizations, including neighborhood organizations, and the public. To rebuild trust, engagement processes need much more from City government in the way of transparency, accessibility, reliability, consistency, and clarity of purpose. The GTAC has issued several specific recommendations for community engagement, but the general guidance is this: A thoughtful, unified, and well-coordinated approach to rebuilding relationships with



community will be necessary, along with new approaches that emphasize trusted messengers and district-level delivery. The new government needs to take full advantage of the new government structures and take proactive care that it does not default to the bad habits and poor practices of the past.

#### **4. Refining procedures for the ongoing collaborative work between the legislative and executive branches**

The new expanded legislative city council still needs more robust rules and procedures and accountability mechanisms to district residents to bolster its ability to function in the new charter-reformed government. And although that process is underway, both the legislative branch and the executive branch will also need ways of working to maintain channels of communication and collaboration both within and across the new structures of government. As inevitable frictions evolve, formal and informal mechanisms to foster collaboration will be increasingly necessary, across districts, council committees, branches of government, and constituencies.

#### **5. Developing a workplan to implement the GTAC recommendations**

In recent [correspondence from the city administrator](#), the GTAC received a comprehensive response to recommendations made so far, noting that many of the recommendations were in the “implementing” stage, and others in the “planning” stage. As the GTAC sunsets, the city administrator should add the most recent GTAC recommendations to this punch list and continue to make progress toward completion on all of them. The Governance Committee of the council should insist on regular updates. Although the GTAC will no longer exist, individual members stand ready to assist as necessary.

## Appendices

Appendix A: Links to key documents

Appendix B: Full recommendations to new City leadership

Appendix C: Foundation and evolution of the GTAC

Appendix E: GTAC Members and staff

Appendix E: List of the GTAC's community briefings and presentations

## Appendix A: Links to key documents

[GTAC Workplan](#) (November 2023). This document outlines the goals, tasks and deliverables of the GTAC.

### **GTAC Recommendations to new City leadership**

[Additional Recommendations](#) (February 2025). This document includes the GTAC's supplemental recommendations.

[Voter Education Recommendations](#) (February 2025). This document includes the GTAC's recommendations for the City's future voter education efforts.

[City Administrator Recruitment Recommendations](#) (December 2024). This document includes the GTAC's recommendations for the process to recruit the first city administrator.

[Recommendations for City Leaders of the New Government](#) (September 2024). This document outlines the GTAC's primary recommendations for new City leaders: engaging with City government, setting up council in the new government, setting up council committees in the government, and participating in the City's budget process.

### **GTAC Recommendations to City transition leadership**

[Onboarding New Elected Officials II](#) (August 2024). This is a letter from the GTAC to the Interim City Administrator because the GTAC believed some key elements were missing from the City's draft onboarding plan.

[Community Engagement](#) (March 2024). This is a letter from the GTAC to city council and the Chief Administrative Officer recommending improvements to community engagement at the City.

[District Offices](#) (March 2024). This is a letter from the GTAC to city council, the Chief Administrative Officer, and the Manager of the Division of Asset Management recommending temporary low-cost district offices while the City conducts robust community engagement about what programming Portlanders want in districts.

[Onboarding New Elected Officials I](#) (March 2024). This is a letter from the GTAC to the Chief Administrative Officer with a set of onboarding recommendations.

[Council Staffing](#) (February 2024). This is a letter from the GTAC to city council, the City Budget Office Director and Deputy Director, and the Chief Administrative Officer arguing that the council budget allocation is insufficient to staff an effective legislative body.

### **Correspondences between City Leadership and the GTAC**

[City's Response on GTAC Recommendations](#) (February 2025). This document is the City's response to the GTAC's city administrator recruitment recommendations and recommendations for City leaders of the new government.

[City Council Response to GTAC's Recommendations](#) (May 2024). This is a letter from city council to the GTAC's recommendations on council staffing, community engagement, and in-district offices.

[GTAC Letter to Mayor](#) (September 2023). This is a letter from the GTAC to the mayor requesting an extension of the city organization public comment period.

[Council Letter to GTAC](#) (August 2023). This is a letter from city council to the GTAC clarifying council's expectations of the GTAC.

[GTAC Letter to Mayor](#) (August 2023). This is a letter from the GTAC to the mayor requesting clarification of the role of the GTAC due to a lack of shared understanding between GTAC, the mayor and council about the GTAC's role.

[Chief Administrative Officer Letter to GTAC](#) (May 2023). This is a letter from the City's chief administrative officer to the GTAC outlining where, when and how the GTAC can expect engage aspects of the transition project.

## **Engagement Reports**

[Engagement Report on the GTAC's Draft Recommendations to Our Future City Leaders](#) (August 2024). This report summarizes the internal and external input on the GTAC's draft recommendations.

[Future Districts and Council Operations Public Comment Report](#) (April 2024). This report summarizes the feedback received during a preliminary engagement period to inform GTAC's draft recommendations.

[Budget Workgroup Early Stakeholder Engagement Report](#) (April 2024). This report summarizes the results of a survey sent to City budget advisory committee members and staff to inform the GTAC's draft recommendations on how to improve community engagement in the City's new budget process.

## **Community Presentations**

[The New Form of Government Presentation](#) (January 2025). This presentation highlighted the new form of government, the new city leaders, the future of ranked choice voting and ways for communities to engage with the City.

[City Transition Presentation – Spanish](#). (July 2024). This Spanish presentation highlighted the new form of government and a short overview of ranked choice voting.

[City Transition Presentation- Version 1](#) (May 2024). This presentation highlighted the new form of government with a thorough summary of ranked choice voting.

[City Transition Presentation- Version 2](#) (October 2023). This presentation highlighted the new form of government with a short overview of ranked choice voting.

## Appendix B: Full recommendations to new City leadership

Throughout its service, the GTAC released the following recommendations: [recommendations to leaders of the new government](#) in September 2024, [city administrator recruitment recommendations](#) in December 2024, [voter education recommendations](#) in February 2025, and [supplemental recommendations](#) in February 2025. The recommendations are described below with guidance for how to achieve them.

### Engagement with City government

#### **Recommendation: Embed community engagement in our new government's culture<sup>1</sup>**

- Develop a Citywide Community Engagement Plan that is comprehensive and inclusive of all the engagement components, such as advisory bodies, district engagement, and resolution of community concerns.
- Assess the effectiveness of the community engagement function, by establishing clear measures of success; ensure implementation with lasting change, via legislative and policy actions.
- Consider community engagement as essential to ongoing transition-related topics, such as the Office of Community and Civic Life's work, the role of neighborhood district coalitions and district offices.
- Take advantage of Portland's wide range of community-based organizations and neighborhood groups when considering the initial framework for community engagement.
- Investigate the option of contracting with community-based organizations to coordinate geographic and non-geographic community engagement functions.
- Create a single webpage where Portlanders can find and participate in all the City's current opportunities to provide feedback on programs or projects.<sup>2</sup>
- Allocate appropriate funding for community engagement, considering the full extent and diversity of needs.
- Integrate the citywide community engagement practice with the citywide practices of communications, equity, and sustainability. Consistency, coordination, and integration among the four disciplines is essential.

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<sup>1</sup> The GTAC sent community engagement recommendations to City leaders in the transition. See Appendix A or online [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, San Antonio's [SASpeakUp](#).

## **Recommendation: Review and reform the City’s overall approach to advisory bodies in the context of the new form of government, district representation, and a renewed emphasis on system-wide community engagement**

The December 2024 report by the Office of Community & Civic Life, entitled “[Advisory Bodies Program](#),” analyzes the current state of advisory committees and concludes, “This work lays the foundation for addressing broader questions about the role and number of advisory bodies, ensuring they meet the community’s needs both now and in the future.” To support the City and further update the structure and role of advisory bodies, the GTAC makes this recommendation.

- Acknowledge advisory bodies are one of the main ways the City does community engagement. Portlanders have a wealth of knowledge, talent and experience that can help inform and improve city policy development and decision-making. Advisory bodies are a fundamental mechanism for inviting deep and meaningful participation of the public.
- Align the review and reform of advisory bodies to the development of a Citywide Community Engagement Plan.
- Reconfigure the current constellation of advisory bodies to more accurately, efficiently and effectively provide advice and engagement in the service areas in the new form of government. The City should sunset obsolete, redundant, inactive or ineffective bodies. Bureau-level budget advisory committees should be consolidated into year-around service-area-level budget and performance committees.
- Clarify the responsibilities for the overall management of advisory bodies by the City. In particular, define the roles and responsibilities of the following for the advisory body program: the Office of Community and Civic Life, the engagement officer, the city administrator and assistant city administrator, and the bureau(s) being advised.
- Consider centralization and standardization of recruitment, management, and administrative assistance tasks for advisory bodies. Consider standardization of staffing models, bylaws and governance, facilitation options, onboarding, training and technology.
- Consider standardization of proven and effective practices for advisory bodies, including but not limited to the following: clarity of purpose for each advisory body; meetings are open to the public; public input is taken; meetings are recorded and posted; agendas and minutes are posted; bodies provide written recommendations to the City and receive written responses.
- Improve recruitment and promotion processes. Consider a regular, open recruitment period to identify and engage interested community members. Also offer stipends and/or reimbursement for travel and expenses, consistent with citywide policies for advisory bodies. Improve overall representation on advisory bodies by emphasizing relevant experience, equity, diversity, and geographic representation in recruitment.



- Consider assembling an ad hoc workgroup of experienced former and present members of advisory bodies, staffers, and bureau sponsors to assist in the review the advisory body system and develop standard best practices. (An “advisory committee on advisory committees.”)

### **Recommendation: Improve constituent information and experience with elected leaders**

- Create a blend of unified, regularly scheduled citywide, council-level, and district-level communications, plus the opportunities and encouragement of individual councilors to communicate.
- Improve the city council website. Ensure that community can easily follow council activities such as identifying where council is in the legislative process, upcoming decisions, and constituent issues and relations.<sup>3</sup>
- Improve the public’s experience in easily skimming council agendas, meeting summaries, and packet materials minimizing the task of multiple clicks or downloading documents. Utilize tools to identify and simplify watching sections of council meetings on agenda items of interest to the constituent.
- Set up elected offices with a centralized tracking system for questions, requests, or issues sent to the offices. An ideal system would assign each request a tracking number, capture a problem description, direct it to the right staff or elected official, and help to ensure issues are addressed through reporting opened/resolved issues. This is in addition to the citywide need to expand the PDX 311 system to assist and track Portlanders’ contact with bureaus.
- Allocate the appropriate funding to address technology needs.

### **Recommendation: Establish councilors’ district-based engagement<sup>4</sup>**

- Establish regularly scheduled, district-specific communication channels and councilor engagement of constituencies ongoing through platforms such as newsletters, social media, and websites.
- Prioritize funding for district engagement, such as regularly scheduled councilor office hours and town halls in district, and councilors attendance at community meetings.
- Conduct robust community engagement to determine what City programming, including district offices, Portlanders want in their district.
- Recognize that systemic barriers for representation and inclusion in Portland’s government are more profound in East Portland (District 1), due to traditionally low

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<sup>3</sup> Austin, for example, has a “City Council Meeting [Information Center](#)” similar to many other jurisdictions. Furthermore, Austin also has a [City Council Message Board](#) for up-to-date postings and correspondence by city council members and staff.

<sup>4</sup> The GTAC sent district office recommendations to City leaders in the transition. See Appendix A or online [here](#).

levels of City investment, and the physical and logistical distance from City Hall. This will require a more significant and holistic direction of resources and investments to establish more equitable access to City government in East Portland, that is re-enforced by community feedback.

- Encourage and facilitate opportunities for councilors to meet and engage with community using existing community and governmental spaces like schools, libraries, and community centers. Consider feasibility of rotating council meetings and council committee meetings in district locations. Allocate appropriate funding for staffing and technology needs.

### **Recommendation: Improve community participation in city council decision-making**

The recommendations below are in order of priority based on community feedback.

- Encourage, facilitate, and solicit diverse perspectives and lived experiences in decision-making processes and meaningfully include communities historically left out of City Hall decision-making.
- Solicit community input outside of council and council committee meetings through neighborhood meetings, town halls, office hours, surveys, and social media platforms.
- Report on and explicitly address public input to council during decision-making.
- Primarily receive formal public input on policies in council committee meetings versus full council meetings.<sup>5</sup> This doesn't prevent council from holding policy-related town halls, etc.
- Permit recorded audio and video testimony to increase the public's access and accommodation needs.<sup>6</sup>
- Maintain the general non-agenda-item public comment in full council sessions.<sup>7</sup> In addition, create more routes for non-agenda communications to council such as town halls; explore alternatives to first come-first serve; and exercise discretion to allow individual speakers to speak beyond the time allotted to accommodate needs, such as for translations or disabilities.

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<sup>5</sup> In cities with strong committee systems, public input on policies is given in council committee meetings. Based on research from seven cities: Austin, Baltimore, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Jose, Santa Fe, and Seattle.

<sup>6</sup> See [Montgomery County, Maryland](#) for example.

<sup>7</sup> In cities with strong committee systems, full council meetings have discrete controlled periods for public input and most cities do allow non-agenda-item public comment at full council meetings, but it's tightly controlled (like Portland's current council rules). Based on research from seven cities: Austin, Baltimore, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Jose, Santa Fe, and Seattle.

- Afford early and sufficient notice to the public of formal opportunities to provide input to city council. Current practices that give less than a week of advance notice are unacceptable except in extreme or emergency circumstances.
- Disfavor council practices and procedures that limit or eliminate public comment.

## Budget and budget engagement

### **Recommendation: Find savings in the new form of government**

Recognize that the transition to a de-siloed City administration provides opportunities to identify redundant services that can be consolidated, thereby eliminating unnecessary costs. The mayor, city administrator and council should actively – and publicly through public meetings and public involvement – identify those efficiencies and how they can be incorporated into the budget process. The GTAC appreciates that the City has already begun this endeavor, as evidenced by the Jan. 17, 2025, [Memo](#) from Michael Jordan and Jonas Biery to Portland City Councilors, and emphasizes its importance. The City's fiscal health necessitates finding and implementing efficiencies now and over time.

### **Recommendation: Develop an Action Plan to implement findings and recommendations in the Budget and Finance Staffing and Budget Process Transition Report into the upcoming budget cycle**

In earlier recommendations, the GTAC endorsed, generally, the [Report](#), its recommendations, and its suggested implementation timeline. Immediate, concrete, and coordinated steps need to be taken – in both the executive and legislative branches of government – to move the implementation along. Needed steps include but are not limited to:

- Commit to a citywide strategic planning process and schedule; and begin work.
- Commit to early and meaningful community engagement during the strategic planning process; and develop detailed work plans and timelines for engagement.
- Commit to the specific process reforms in the Report and implement them in the current cycle.
- Develop the capacity and methodology to track and report consolidated metrics relevant to goals and priorities to be identified in the strategic plan.
- Prioritize city council leadership and attention to the strategic planning process, and to passing a budget consistent with the plan.

### **Recommendation: Start budget engagement earlier and diversify the methods for input**

- Anticipate and accommodate changes to the budget's legislative process necessary for an expanded legislative council and use the new process to offer new and expanded engagement opportunities.

- Release an early “trial budget” in the fall as a baseline for early public engagement.<sup>8</sup> The trial budget should clarify the financial position of the City and highlight any tradeoffs to inform public input.

### **Recommendation: Communicate openly and honestly with the public about the budget and ensure feedback loops**

- Use the economic forecast, performance reports from the previous year for each service area and bureau, the strategic planning goals, and mayor’s budget guidance as opportunities to honestly communicate with the public and jumpstart community engagement.
- Frame the budget as a reflection of our shared values.
- Be honest about budget cuts and constraints.
- Be specific about what the City will act on and how it will close feedback loops with community.
- Provide written and verbal summaries of budget input throughout the budgeting process.
- Ask for, and report, feedback on the community engagement opportunities in the budget process.

### **Recommendation: Develop communication tools to help Portlanders understand the City’s budget process**

The below tools are presented in the order that community feedback suggests are most effective at improving Portlanders’ understanding of the budget. The City should prioritize the first few tools.

- Ensure budget information is available in languages other than English and written for an eighth grade reading level.
- Enhance the budget website: share data in a timely, updated, and public-friendly way, highlighting key information, and summarizing areas for public input.<sup>9</sup>
- Produce a one-page overview of the budget process with all engagement opportunities listed in a set schedule.
- Release a community or readers’ guide to the budget.
- Introduce the City budget process to community and staff through presentations, videos, in-person conversations, etc. provided year-round during community gatherings and events (Budget 101).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, early “Trial Budgets” in Phoenix and San Antonio.

<sup>9</sup> See good examples of dashboards, open checkbooks, open budgets, etc. in Baltimore, Denver, Seattle, Minneapolis, Detroit, Phoenix, and Austin.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Baltimore, Seattle, Minneapolis, and Detroit.

- Use gamified, interactive tools (e.g., Balancing Act) to educate the public and gather budget prioritization input.<sup>11</sup> These tools are particularly useful in guiding group conversations such as community meetings and focus groups.
- Provide a central, timely, public newsfeed for all city entities (working on the budget, or just generally) to distribute communications.<sup>12</sup>

### **Recommendation: Host district budget town halls**

- Host at least one budget town hall per district, early in the budget process, to inform councilor priorities for their districts.<sup>13</sup>
- Document community input received in the town halls and demonstrate how it informs council's decision-making.
- Conduct place-based outreach, e.g., through flyers and yard signs, and ensure events are communicated through multicultural channels.<sup>14</sup>
- Return to the districts after the proposed budget, to collect more detailed feedback with town hall locations rotating.

### **Recommendation: Build and maintain relationships with community-based organizations with an additional focus on communities traditionally left out of City Hall and City decision-making**

- Support community-based organizations, who understand and represent the communities they serve, to act as liaisons between the City and community members.
- House responsibility for building and maintaining these relationships in the City Administrator's Office, to ensure a coherent City approach that doesn't overwhelm under-resourced groups.
- Hold community-specific budget meetings in partnership with community-based organizations and, if appropriate, City advisory bodies.
- Conduct focus groups with community-based organizations so that the City Budget Office and Deputy City Administrators understand their interests and suggestions for how the City allocates its resources.

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Austin, Phoenix, and Seattle.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Seattle City Council Blog, and San Antonio's SASpeakUp.com.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, district-based town halls or hearings in Austin, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Detroit.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, San Antonio's efforts behind their in-district "Community Budget hearings."

### **Recommendation: Dissolve bureau-specific budget advisory committees, create service area advisory committees, and assess and revisit the Citywide Community Budget Advisory Board**

- Conclude bureau-specific budget advisory committees. To our knowledge, only five bureau-specific budget advisory committees still operate and our early stakeholder engagement with members and staff of these committees consistently found the committees ineffective due to lack of training, information, time to do their work, and authority.
- Create advisory committees that aren't strictly budget-specific but rather include budget and performance monitoring and program oversight for each of the new service areas. Promising practices for these advisory bodies include
  - Meet year-round;
  - Be open to the public – beyond public meetings law (notice and minutes), record meetings and take public input;
  - Provide written recommendations to the City and receive written responses;
  - Improve recruitment and promotion processes and consider a regular, open recruitment period to identify and engage interested community members;
  - Have committed cooperation from the City Budget Office (we recognize this means budget advisory bodies must be limited in number); and
  - Offer member stipends consistent with citywide policies on equity and engagement for advisory bodies.
- Assess and revisit the Citywide Community Budget Advisory Board. This body is currently required by City resolution and while the resolution creating the Board needs to be revisited, the Board's work can be improved in the meantime. See the recommendations above for any advisory body on the budget.

### **Recommendation: Centralize primary responsibility for design, coordination, and implementation of community engagement in the budget process in the City Administrator's Office**

- Create a centralized resource that establishes best practices for engagement and coordinates training for staff and community.<sup>15</sup>
- Place leadership of the City's budget process engagement and responsibility to listen to and integrate public input in the City Administrator's Office, working closely with the City Budget Office.
- Hire the Engagement Officer as soon as possible to support centralized community engagement.
- Explore the potential of increasing community engagement via participatory budgeting.

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, budget engagement efforts in San Antonio, Phoenix, and Austin.

## Council and council committees

### **Recommendation: Increase staffing of councilors and council operations<sup>16</sup>**

- Ensure individual councilors have sufficient staffing for their administrative, legislative, and constituent service needs.
- Ensure the council president has sufficient staffing for the additional legislative policy and procedural duties as the council's presiding officer, to include, for example, a legislative director.
- Ensure that full council is afforded sufficient shared research, drafting, legal, administrative and operations staffing for committees, and committee chairs, and legislative needs of individual councilors.

### **Recommendation: Provide opportunities for council team building<sup>17</sup>**

- Develop a road map with a short list of council priorities for 2025 (as distinguished from the City's priorities), including specific measurable objectives for themselves as a team.
- Provide the new council the opportunity, as early as possible, to share councilors' values, aspirations, philosophies, and expectations; develop a common understanding of their current situation, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges; and forge their own identity as a team with the support of a contracted and independent facilitator.

### **Recommendation: Prioritize early development of a citywide strategic plan**

- Direct executive branch staff to scope, and assess the funding needed for, a citywide strategic planning process.
- Dedicate funding for strategic planning in the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget.
- Begin strategic planning after the new mayor and council are seated.
- Set the City's priorities, through a collaboration between the legislative and executive branches, which will then guide Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget development.

### **Recommendation: Create council committee structure and procedures**

- Utilize a common legislative model. Most cities use such a model, in which bills (ordinances or resolutions) are (a) introduced, (b) referred to a committee, (c) public comment and work sessions are held by committee, (d) the committee reports back

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<sup>16</sup> The GTAC sent council staffing recommendations to City leaders in the transition. See Appendix A or online [here](#).

<sup>17</sup> The GTAC sent onboarding recommendations to City leaders in the transition. See Appendix A or online [here](#) and [here](#) respectively.

to council, (e) council acts on the reported legislation with or without more public input, and (f) council acts on final passage with or without more public input. This flow can usually be altered by a majority or supermajority, and typically separate procedures occur for ceremonial or emergency actions.<sup>18</sup>

- Establish a relatively strong committee system. All council items go to the relevant committees (with some rare exceptions). Many cities have strong committee systems in which legislation referral to committee is either automatic or mandatory. Committees are the primary venue for agency and expert involvement, detailed amendment, and deliberation and most - if not all - public processes.<sup>19</sup>
- Include - in a proactive and organized way - community voices, including communities historically left out of City Hall decision-making, to inform and advise on legislation discussed in council committees and how committees' internal policies are developed.
- Implement rules, outreach, and engagement to educate, encourage and guide public legislative involvement in the new committee system.
- Regularly schedule some city council meetings and council committees in the evenings and in council districts to increase constituent attendance.
- Appropriately resource council committees to proactively include subject-matter experts and those directly impacted by the issues.

### **Recommendation: Establish and compose council committees**

- Set the number and composition of standing council committees to distribute power and workload as equally as possible across the council districts and membership. For example, committees include councilors from each district, a similar number of committees per councilor, and similar leadership roles as committee chairs and vice-chairs.
  - Peer cities average around five councilors per committee with different levels of participation among committee members.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Based on research from 20 cities: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Detroit, Fresno, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Fe, Seattle, Tacoma, and Washington DC.

<sup>19</sup> Based on research from seven cities: Austin, Baltimore, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Jose, Santa Fe, and Seattle.

<sup>20</sup> Based on research from 20 cities: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Detroit, Fresno, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Fe, Seattle, Tacoma, and Washington DC.



- o Peer cities have five to eight standing council committees.<sup>21</sup> And based on peer city research<sup>22</sup>, Portland could consider committee topics such as: Committee of the Whole; Government Performance & Finance; Public Health & Public Safety; Transportation & Infrastructure; Community Development; Sustainability & Climate; Housing & Homelessness; and Community Engagement, Equity, and Communications.
- Establish ad hoc council committees.
- Provide sufficient funding and staffing for council committees.<sup>23</sup> According to City staff, current budget allocations for staffing the future council will support only four council committees.
- Set the topic areas of standing committees to reflect legislative priorities, as distinct from executive functions, and align them to strategic priorities.
  - o While there are some pros and cons to aligning topics to the initial service areas identified by council, maintaining committee topical areas distinct from pre-existing service areas will allow council more latitude with the City's priorities holistically and help mitigate the silos among bureaus that remain from the commission form of government.
  - o This structure will support the new council's legislative policy duties beyond budgeting and the oversight of service areas, especially as the new form of government evolves over time.

### **Recommendation: Establish a code commission**

Consider creation in calendar year 2025 of a permanent Commission on the City Code. The Commission would be responsible for recommending to the council necessary code changes to review, organize, reorganize, update, and maintain a modern and accurate city code and associated administrative regulations. The role and purpose of the Commission would be to be sure that the extremely detailed but low priority work of code hygiene and maintenance actually gets done, without bogging down the council's higher priority policy work.

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<sup>21</sup> Based on research from 20 cities: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Detroit, Fresno, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Fe, Seattle, Tacoma, and Washington DC.

<sup>22</sup> Based on research from 20 cities: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Detroit, Fresno, Indianapolis, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Antonio, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Fe, Seattle, Tacoma, and Washington DC, common council committees in other cities include Committee of the Whole, Governance, Public Health and Safety, Transportation and Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability, Community Development, Education, Arts and Culture, Housing and Homelessness.

<sup>23</sup> The GTAC sent council staffing recommendations to City leaders in the transition. See Appendix A or online [here](#).

The Commission should consist of legal and legislative scholars, practitioners, and individuals experienced in drafting, administering, or applying legal codes. Ex-officio members of the Commission should include the city auditor or designee, the city attorney or designee, representatives from relevant bureaus as needed, and a council liaison.

## City administrator recruitment

### **Recommendation: Implement a robust, well-designed, timely, community-informed, transparent city administrator appointment process**

- Acknowledge the overarching purpose of the recruitment is to appoint a city administrator on the basis of executive and administrative qualifications, as directed by the charter.
- Receive a briefing on the recruitment efforts as soon as possible.
- Recognize Motus Recruiting's recommended recruitment plan as a good example to follow for the initial appointment.
- Use Motus Recruiting's recommended recruitment plan as a model for subsequent city administrator appointments.
- Encourage a recruitment that is nationwide in scope.
- Ensure the process, at minimum, engages community, such as listening sessions and a series of interview panels composed of City and community leaders to vet qualified candidates.
- Consider whether the recommended timeline can be accelerated, and a city administrator appointed before June 2025, without sacrificing strategies to engage community.
- Early on, establish and communicate to the public your general support for a formal recruitment process and ensure appointment is neither delayed nor pressured to occur outside of an open and transparent process.

## Voter education

In February 2025, the GTAC approved three recommendations for future voter education efforts. The primary message is to invest in what worked in 2024 and address identified areas of improvement for voters of color and voters in District 1. Most of these recommendations are for the City Elections Division within the Auditor's Office that will lead future voter education efforts.

### **Recommendation: Begin planning now for the next election**

- Develop a workplan that includes district-specific plans and specific measurable targets.
- Ensure key partners are included from the outset – seek their input in recognition

that the City doesn't have all the answers and collaborate to create the plan.

- Reevaluate the hard-to-reach voter contract program to improve coordination and collaboration and establish measurable outcomes.
- Organize educational opportunities, e.g., ranked-choice voting workshops and candidate forums, far enough in advance to communicate specific dates and times earlier and more broadly.
- Increase capacity for the program, by writing grants to support community outreach and communications and – if communications staff is hired – then prioritize graphic design expertise.

### **Recommendation: Increase internal and external coordination and collaboration**

- Maintain and strengthen the partnership with PDX 311.
- Build a partnership between the City Elections Division and the engagement and communications officers and integrate voter education into a comprehensive citywide community engagement plan and communications plan.
- Work with council to define its role with a focus on councilors from lower voter turnout districts.
- Continue some form of contracting for hard-to-reach voter education with similar restrictions as year one and have City staff lead the project.
- Create a pool of civically engaged volunteers and leverage existing City partners, e.g., educational institutions, to provide ongoing education.
- Bring together a time-limited team of people outside the City to review educational materials.

### **Recommendation: Refine educational content with a focus on hard-to-reach communities**

- Prioritize investment in educational materials that had a large impact, e.g., one-page ballot inserts, instructions on the ballot and envelop, voters' pamphlet, mailer, and paid media.
- Continue the "bite, snack, meal" approach to voter education – "snack" and "meal" educational presentations provide a deeper dive into RCV – to meet different audience needs.
- Promote more candidate forums and ways for the public to learn about candidates that is accessible.
- Build trust with hard-to-reach communities by maintaining contacts between election cycles.
- Focus on civics education especially in lower turnout districts, e.g., why someone

should vote, between election cycles, and focus on voter education in the months after the primary.

- Expand the Multnomah County Elections Building tour to hard-to-reach voter contractors because of the lack of trust in those communities and to instill confidence in the security of our elections.

## Appendix C: Foundation and evolution of the GTAC

### Establishment of the GTAC

The Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC) was appointed in March 2023 – marking an important milestone in the implementation of charter reform. The committee is comprised of fifteen community members who live, work, play, go to school, or worship in the City of Portland. The advisory committee served as the main public engagement body for implementation of the voter-approved charter amendments. The fifteen-member body was appointed by the mayor and approved by city council.

The role of the GTAC is to advise city council, the chief administrative officer, and the City's transition team on the development and implementation of the transition plan and the engagement plan. Their role also is to maintain open and consistent communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders throughout the transition, and ensure input is meaningfully integrated into the City's implementation of the voter-approved charter amendments.

In response to an open application, the City received 70 applications for the GTAC. Applicants were evaluated on selection criteria that included:

- Skills, knowledge, and lived experience that will inform how the GTAC does its work.
- Commitment to the City's core values.
- Interest and experience in the elements of the government transition.
- Experience working on issues that impact Black, Indigenous and other people of color, as well as other communities historically left out of City Hall decision-making.
- Ability to support the community engagement efforts of the committee.
- Comfort being a member of a highly visible advisory body.
- Ability to commit the time.

The appointment included alternates and reserve alternates for two reasons:

1. The short timeline of the transition: having alternates who are participating in the committee and can fill a vacancy ensures that the work will not be delayed.
2. As the main public engagement body for the transition, having additional voices around the table with lived experiences and connections to Portland's communities is incredibly useful.

See [Appendix D](#) for a list of members and staff.

The GTAC began meeting the month after its appointment – in April 2023. All GTAC meetings were recorded and are available on the transition website at <http://www.portland.gov/transition>.

By July 2023, the GTAC deliberated and agreed to a set of foundational documents:

- Bylaws – structural roles about how the GTAC must work

- Working agreements – shared understanding of how the GTAC will work together
- Values – state of principles guiding how the GTAC will work
- Community Engagement Framework – approach for grounding the GTAC work in community

## Clarity of role

In April 2023, the Portland's transition project sponsor, the City's Chief Administrative Officer, and project manager met with the GTAC. As a follow-up, the Chief Administrator Officer/transition project sponsor sent [a letter](#) to the GTAC offering more information about where, when and how the GTAC can expect to engage aspects of the transition.

In August 2023, the GTAC sent [a letter](#) to the mayor about discrepancies in understanding between the GTAC members, the mayor and city council about the role of the GTAC. The letter identified instances that eroded the GTAC's confidence in application of its role:

- City organization. The GTAC was informed it would NOT provide advice to council on city organization. This had never been communicated and surprised the GTAC.
- Charter reform proposals and work session. GTAC members learned through media outlets that two city commissioners were exploring three potential proposals to alter the charter amendments approved by voters based, in part, because of community feedback. As the primary solicitor and repository of public input related to the transition, the GTAC felt it should be outreached to and have had the opportunity to review and comment.

Later that month, council sent a written [response](#) to the GTAC's letter noting that the GTAC was intended neither to operate as an oversight body over the entire transition process nor advise on potential future charter reforms, but rather should provide oversight only over voter-approved charter amendments.

The conflict unfortunately delayed the GTAC's work, caused a member to resign, and left members frustrated and feeling they lacked authority and ability to impact City leaders.

## Workplan and structure

In November 2023, the GTAC approved its [workplan](#). Areas of work included the following:

- Community education and engagement.
- Employee engagement and change management.
- Governance: expansion of council, districts, and council operations.
- Mayor/city administrator and city service delivery.
- Voter and candidate education and outreach, including ranked-choice voting.
- City budgeting.
- Measuring the success of the transition.

To advance its work, the GTAC formed the following groups:

- Districts + Council Operations Subcommittee (November 2023 to August 2024)

- Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee (November 2023 to February 2025)
- Budget Workgroup (February 2024 to August 2024)

The work of the Districts + Council Operations Subcommittee and Budget Workgroup is described below. The work of the Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee is described in the report itself.

In September 2023, the GTAC voted to create the Districts and Council Operations Subcommittee. The subcommittee met monthly. At the first meeting, the subcommittee approved its [charter](#).

Major tasks for the subcommittee were defined in the [GTAC's workplan](#):

1. Develop recommendations on future council and district operations. Early on, the subcommittee conducted research of councils in 20 peer cities and concluded that the City's current council budget allocation is insufficient to staff an effective legislative body. The subcommittee also made recommendations on council committees, and community engagement with the council at council meetings.
2. Develop recommendations on future council districts and offices. The subcommittee researched and deliberated about the need for, equity, use, cost and security of district offices.
3. Develop recommendations on onboarding of new council members. The subcommittee developed two sets of recommendations for onboarding new City leaders.

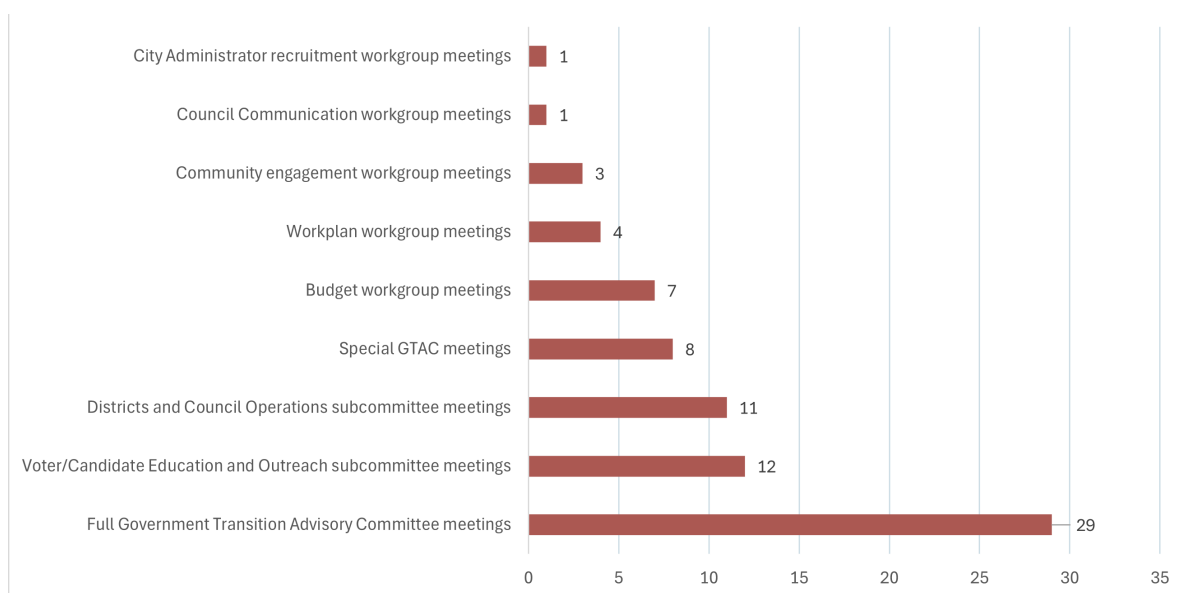
In November 2023, the GTAC voted to create the Budget Workgroup. The Workgroup met seven times. At the first meeting, the Workgroup approved its [charter](#).

Major tasks for the Workgroup were defined in the [GTAC's workplan](#):

- Recommend tools or additional resources to improve engagement around the budget to City Budget Office (e.g., informational resources that are understandable to the public). The Workgroup developed a set of recommendations to improve engagement in the City's budget process. The recommendations are included in the section below.

## Public meetings and public comment

The GTAC held 76 public meetings. All were recorded and are available at [Portland.gov/transition/events](https://portland.gov/transition/events).



*Figure 3. The Government Transition Advisory Committee held 76 public meetings. All recordings are available at [Portland.Gov/Transition/Events](https://portland.gov/transition/events).*

There were a variety of ways people could submit public comment during the transition: sending an email to the transition team, submitting an online public comment form, calling 3-1-1 to reach the City's PDX 311 information service, or providing verbal public comment to a public body such as city council, the Independent District Commission, the Salary Commission, and the GTAC.

At its full committee meetings, the GTAC held time for public comment. Rarely did it receive public comment during its meetings.

## Assessments

The GTAC periodically assessed itself – in November 2023, May 2024, and November 2024.

**November 2023 assessment.** GTAC members expressed gratitude for the efforts and cooperation of the committee members, the leadership of the committee co-chairs, and the work of the transition team. Members expressed excitement for upcoming engagement and presentation opportunities, and the work of the two subcommittees.

Frustration resulted from the late launch of this committee and how that made the first few months of the committee's work challenging. Concerns were raised regarding how to change culture in the city's organization – particularly around increased community participation -- how to lead the narratives regarding this work in the community rather than be reactive, and the next council lacking the tools to be succeed.



**May 2024 assessment.** Members identified what's working with the GTAC: its community education and engagement efforts; staff support; rapport between members; and the process of writing recommendations to current City leaders. Members also identified a set of challenges: lack of authority and impact; mission creep; members running at their own paces; burnout; frustration with meeting outcomes; role confusion; transition staff frustration with the committee and expectations of the GTAC to accommodate that; and inefficient communications.

To address those challenges, members identified new practices to try moving forward: set time expectations and individualize work, improve meeting practices, streamline communications, and clarify roles. The GTAC agreed to focus future work on where it can have impact and identified priorities for its remaining time: continue to advise and support the transition team; until the November election, prioritize community education and engagement; post-election, prioritize education and advocacy for its recommendations.

**November 2024 assessment.** Members shared appreciation for the group's commitment, the staff, the co-chairs, and the work of the subcommittees to produce written recommendations. Members appreciated the opportunity to learn and be part of the transition's brain trust, as well as educating and engaging the community about the transition. Members also shared that they are tired. Members expressed frustration that the jurisdiction of the committee was limited from the beginning, that there were no formal community partnerships to base the engagement work, that the GTAC's advice and public input wasn't listened to, and that the committee had limited impact on the outcomes of the City's work.

## Appendix D: GTAC members and staff

### Government Transition Advisory Committee Members

The GTAC was appointed in March 2023 to two-year terms ending March 2025. Envisioned as a 15-member committee, city council initially appointed 15 members, four alternates, and two reserve alternates. Below is a list of people who served on the GTAC that includes their service as chairs.

#### **Brian Belica**

Appointed as a reserve alternate March 2023. Promoted to member in May 2024.

#### **Leah Benson**

Appointed as an alternate member March 2023. Promoted to member in July 2023.

Co-Chair, GTAC (September to December 2023).

Co-Chair, Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee (November 2023 to January 2024).

#### **David Burnell**

Appointed as a member March 2023. Resigned May 2024. Vacancy filled by William Kinsey.

Co-Chair, GTAC (June to August 2023).

#### **Jane DeMarco**

Appointed as an alternate member March 2023. Promoted to member in August 2023.

Co-Chair, Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee (February 2024 to February 2025).

#### **Bill Farver**

Appointed as a member March 2023. Resigned August 2023. Vacancy filled by Jane DeMarco.

#### **Jose Gamero-Georgeson**

Appointed as an alternate member March 2023. Promoted to member in July 2023.

Co-Chair, GTAC (September to December 2023, and December 2024 to March 2025).

Co-Chair, Districts + Council Operations Subcommittee (January to May 2024).

#### **Manie Grewal**

Appointed as a member March 2023. Resigned June 2024. Vacancy not filled.

#### **Terry Harris**

Appointed as an alternate member March 2023. Promoted to member in February 2024.

Co-Chair, Districts + Council Operations Subcommittee (June to August 2024).

Chair, Budget Workgroup (April to May 2024).

**Lory Hefe**

Appointed as a member March 2023.

Co-Chair, GTAC (June to August 2023).

**Joe Hertzberg**

Appointed as a member March 2023.

Resigned December 2024. Vacancy not filled.

**Juliet Hyams**

Appointed as a member March 2023.

Co-Chair, GTAC (May to September 2024).

Co-Chair, Districts + Council Operations Subcommittee (January to May 2024).

**Zach Kearn**

Appointed as a member March 2023.

Co-Chair, GTAC (January to April 2024).

Co-Chair, Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee (October 2024 to February 2025).

**William Kinsey**

Appointed as reserve alternate in March 2023. Promoted to member in May 2024.

Co-Chair, GTAC (October to December 2024).

Co-Chair, Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee (November 2023 to September 2024).

**Destiny Magaña-Pablo**

Appointed as a member March 2023.

Co-Chair, GTAC (January to April 2024, and October to November 2024).

Co-Chair, Districts + Council Operations Subcommittee (June to August 2024)

**Elizabeth Mazara**

Appointed as a member March 2023. Resigned July 2023. Vacancy filled by Leah Benson.

**Maabi Muñoz**

Appointed as member March 2023. Resigned February 2024. Vacancy filled by Terry Harris.

**Fred Neal**

Appointed as a member March 2023.

Co-Chair, GTAC (January to March 2025).

**Terrence Paschal**

Appointed as a member March 2023. Resigned July 2023. Vacancy filled by Jose Gamero-Georgeson.

**Amy Randel**

Appointed as a member March 2023.

Co-Chair, GTAC (May to September 2024).

**Juanita Santana**

Appointed as a member March 2023.

**Amy Wood**

Appointed as a member March 2023. Resigned May 2024, Vacancy filled by Brian Belica.

**Government Transition Advisory Committee Staff**

The GTAC was initially housed in the Office of Management & Finance. After the shift to the new organizational structure, the GTAC moved to the City Administrator's Office. The following City of Portland employees were dedicated staff:

- Julia Meier, Engagement and Community Participation Manager for the transition
- June Reyes, Community Engagement Coordinator
- Guillermo Rebolledo Salgado, Community Engagement Coordinator

## Appendix E: List of the GTAC's community briefings and presentations

AARP

Allen Temple CME Church and Albina Ministerial Alliance

Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon

Benson High School

Bike Portland

Cascadia Partners

Center for Positive Aging

Coalition of Communities of Color

David Douglas High School

Dignity Village

Division Midway Alliance

Dress for Success

East Portland Action Plan

Eastside Village

El Program Hispano Catolico

Eritrean Community Center

Friendly House

Guerreras Latina

Holladay Park Residents

Ida B. Wells High School

Impact NW

The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization

Japanese Ancestral Society of Portland

LACE Oregon

Latino Network

League of Women Voters of Portland

Lewis & Clark College

Meriwether Condominiums

Mississippi Acupuncture  
Multnomah County Democrats  
Multnomah Youth Commission  
Muslim Educational Trust  
Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)  
Northeast Village PDX  
Northwest Place  
OnPoint Credit Union  
Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education  
Oregon Pride in Business  
Portland Community College - Senior Studies Institute  
Parkrose High School  
Portland For All Community Conversation  
Portland State University  
Rehab's Sisters  
Roosevelt High School  
Rosewood Initiative  
Street Books  
Terwilliger Plaza Residents  
Thrive East PDX  
Working Waterfront Coalition

### **Neighborhood and Business District Associations, and District Coalitions**

Alameda Neighborhood Association  
Beaumont Wilshire Neighborhood Association  
Boise Neighborhood Association  
Brentwood-Darlington Neighborhood Association  
Bridlemile Neighborhood Association  
Bridgeton Neighborhood Association  
Brooklyn Neighborhood Association  
Buckman Community Association

Centennial Community Association  
Central Northeast Neighbors (District 1 Coalition)  
Creston-Kenilworth Neighborhood Association  
Eastmoreland Neighborhood Association  
Far Southwest Neighborhood Association  
Forest Park Neighborhood Association  
Foster-Powell Neighborhood Association  
Hayden Island Neighborhood Association  
Hayhurst Neighborhood Association  
Hollywood Neighborhood Association  
Hosford-Abernethy Neighborhood  
Kenton Neighborhood Association  
Laurelhurst Neighborhood Association  
Lents Neighborhood Association  
Marshall Neighborhood Association  
Mill Park Neighborhood Association  
Montavilla Neighborhood Association  
Mt Tabor Neighborhood Association  
Mt. Scott-Arleta Neighborhood Association  
Neighbors West-Northwest (District 4 Coalition)  
North Tabor Neighborhood Association  
Northwest District Association  
Northwest Industrial Business Association  
Northwest Portland Neighborhood Service Board  
Old Town Chinatown Community Association  
Parkrose Neighborhood  
Pearl District Neighborhood Association  
Piedmont Neighborhood Association  
Portsmouth Neighborhood Association  
Powellhurst-Gilbert Neighborhood Association

Reed Neighborhood Association  
Richmond Neighborhood Association  
Rose City Park Neighborhood Association  
Russell Neighborhood Association  
Sabin Community Association  
Southeast Uplift (District 3 Coalition)  
Southwest Land Use & Transportation Forum  
South Burlingame Neighborhood Association  
South Tabor Neighborhood Association  
Sumner Association of Neighbors  
Sunnyside Neighborhood Association  
Vernon Neighborhood Association  
Wilkes Community Group  
Woodstock Neighborhood Association