

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission,

My name is Ella Bogdanski. I live in Portland and go to school at the Arbor School of Arts and Sciences. I love Portland because it's a place where the citizens are free to express themselves. In eighth grade humanities class we are studying cities. Currently I am looking at Portland as a city. Portland's future matters to me because I want to grow up in a successful place. Portland has the potential to be the kind of city that I want to grow up in. Although Portland is a popular city, it still has lots of room for improvement. I believe that decreasing automobile traffic, creating jobs, and increasing access to healthy food are three things that should move to the top of your priority list.

Decreasing the amount of automobile traffic in Portland will increase citizen's satisfaction with the city. Due to rapid growth and construction in Portland, the traffic has become much worse. It makes it hard for many people to reach their destination by car. Traffic is not only frustrating, but it can be a safety hazard. Bikers and pedestrians have a difficult time safely crossing streets. It's become increasingly harder for drivers to see bikers in busy traffic lanes. It's even more dangerous to drive at night because it becomes trickier to see pedestrians. Right now 57% of Portlanders feel safe walking at night. Although some of this statistic relates to crime, it also relates to fear of automobile accidents. If 43% of Portlanders aren't walking at night they're most likely driving and adding to the growing cycle of traffic. We need to control the amount of traffic day and night in order to keep Portlanders safe and satisfied.

Without a job many Portlanders are stuck in the cycle of poverty. How can you be expected to take care of yourself if you can't find a job? Jobs enable someone to provide for themselves and their families through earning a fair wage. This is an opportunity that everyone deserves and needs. If you have a job you wake up knowing that if you work hard you will earn money. Jobs don't just give you money, they give you pride. At this point not everyone living in Portland has a job. Portland citizens want jobs but the city doesn't have enough to support them. Right now there are about 365,000 jobs in Portland and roughly 615,000 citizens. About 250,000 Portlanders are unemployed. About 255,000 Portlanders can't

support themselves. About 255,000 Portlanders aren't contributing to the economy in a positive way. If you put more efforts into creating more jobs you will be helping almost half of Portland's population. By creating more jobs in Portland we can help to break the cycle of poverty.

Forty percent of Portlanders live over a mile away from a sustainable grocery store. It's important for Portland's future that we improve access to healthy food. Imagine yourself a single parent. You live with your two kids in a two bedroom apartment. You don't make enough money to own a car or take public transportation, so you have to travel by foot. Your kids are hungry but there's no food in the house. Now it's thirty degrees outside and you're walking with your children for over a mile. When you finally arrive at the store you have \$370.00 to pay for an entire month of groceries. You buy the cheapest options to try and stretch the small budget. Most of the foods you purchase are not healthy but you don't have a choice. You pay for your groceries and carry three heavy bags out the door. The kids are tired of walking and your hands hurt so you have to stop and rest. Get the picture? This is a realistic scenario for many Portlanders. Do you want this to be your life? Access to healthy food is vital to a healthy community. Children should be taught at a young age the importance of healthy food choices. By educating today we can change tomorrow.

Portland is home to lots of wonderful and unique people. Many of whom could use some help. By decreasing traffic we can increase Portlanders satisfaction with the city. By providing access to healthy food, and creating more jobs we can help them. By putting effort into improving these three aspects of life, you can make Portland an even better place. I hope that as a young citizen of Portland I can see the city growing with me.

Sincerely, Ella Bogdanski.

Ella M. Bogdanski

Dear members of the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability:

Sixty one percent -- that's how many Portland public school students graduate on time. That means that thirty nine percent of students either leave the school or can't graduate because of lack of credits. But we can make a difference with even the simplest changes to the public school system.

My name is Miles Cohen and I go to the Arbor School of Arts and Sciences in Tualatin, but I live in Portland. Portland is a city I plan to live in for quite a lot of my life, but looking at various statistics, I can see that the city has several large issues which greatly need to be addressed. These issues could prove a problem for myself, or for anyone who wants to live in this beautiful city.

As I mentioned before, only sixty one percent of Portland public school students graduate on time. In those schools, sixty six percent of people who are of Asian descent graduate on time, but that is only four hundred and thirty eight people in total. Meanwhile, sixty three percent of white children graduate on time. For perspective, that amounts to two thousand three hundred and ten white graduates -- more than five hundred percent more white graduates than Asian graduates. At the same time, only thirty nine percent of Native American students graduate on time. Yet that is only forty one people. The only district with a one hundred percent graduation rate is Riverdale. We should change the other districts to follow their example, so as to make diversity and graduation rates a priority. One hundred percent of Portland public school students should graduate on time, regardless of their background or ethnicity. The issue of graduation rates ties in with the larger issue of lack of diversity in Portland public schools and, more generally, in Portland neighborhoods. In neighborhoods around Portland, diversity has declined rapidly. We need to keep this city vibrant through rich culture exchanges.

If more people graduate from high school it also will improve self-sufficiency because if more people get a high school education, they will have greater earning potential for themselves and their family. In Portland, some people don't earn enough income to be considered what is known as "self-sufficient." Self-sufficient means that you can provide healthcare, food, housing, transportation and childcare. In Portland, from 1979 to 2005, there has been a fourteen percent decline in the amount people in this situation are paid on average. That means more people are being driven below the poverty line. These people can't even afford food to feed themselves or their family because of job loss, the inability to work, or the inability to find work because of lack of education. Luckily there are a lot of organizations that help people in this situation, such as Meals on Wheels and Soup Sac. I hope this city will support additional initiatives to help people who are not currently self-sufficient.

Another problem facing our city is that very few people have access to affordable, healthy food. Many families living in the outer edges of Portland can't get quality food because they don't own a car and carrying bags of food is hard, especially if you live a mile from the closest store that sells healthy food. Most people in the edges of Portland live at least a mile from the closest healthy store.

I think that Portland has the ability to improve itself for the generations to come, and to be a diverse city that can supply its residents with basic needs such as quality education and access to healthy, nutritional food for all.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

Miles A. Cohen

Dear PSC,
My name is Miah, and I live in the beautiful city of Portland, Oregon. I care about Portland because I think Portland has attributes that no other city has, and these attributes need to be preserved and improved upon. I want to be able to come back to Portland in the future, and see a city that has evolved technologically, but also one that has also kept its virtues intact.

Reliable and affordable housing for all is one thing Portland needs.

Housing costs for Portland rose 40% between 2000 and 2007. Many people in Portland are displaced or homeless, and many because they simply couldn't afford to pay the rent anymore. The number of households in Portland is projected to increase drastically in the next two decades, making housing all the more important.

Access to healthy, delicious food can improve quality of life a great deal, but unfortunately many low income families put food on the bottom of their list after more pressing problems.

I care about food personally; I think eating fast food every day would ultimately be detrimental to health and happiness. The distribution of

Dear Planning and Sustainability
Commission,

I am writing to you from Arbor School of Arts and Sciences, where I am an eighth grader. My name is Norris Meigs, and I have lived in Portland my entire life. I love Portland because of its beauty, kindness, and how accessible it is to nature and public spaces. Though there is much to love in Portland, there is still a lot that needs fixing.

Did you know that forty percent of all Portland residents live a mile and a half away from their nearest grocery store? Only two out of the twenty-four farmers markets are in the Outer South East area. This is a gigantic problem, not only because it's hard for people to get food, but it also limits the amount of food one can buy. If someone has to take public transportation to their nearest food source, it can restrict them from getting the amount they need. For example, a single mother must make a long trek to a bus stop, which she rides to a grocery store. She can only buy as much food as she can carry.

We, as a community, need to fix this. We need to demolish food deserts by building grocery stores that are in

a convenient location for everyone. If we fix this, we are one step closer to building a miraculous place.

Did you know that thirty percent of all outer South-East neighborhoods live in poverty? The medium income for people living east of 82 avenue is 10,000 to 25,000 less than the medium income in Portland's metro area. We need to raise the amount of money people in poverty make. So they can provide for themselves, and their family. I am going to high school next year, and I've already started thinking what I would like to do as a profession. We need to strengthen our capability to help those in need, so we can ensure that future generations can grow and thrive.

The last thing I will address in this letter is homelessness. Portland has many great shelters that provide food, and other necessary resources (Portland Pilot Project, Harmony Village). However, we can't think that this problem has been solved. There are still hundreds of people in need. Homelessness is unsafe and unhealthy, the majority of homeless people can't afford healthy food. So, how can we fix this? How can we ensure that people can provide for their families?

In this letter, I have only focused on things that need altering. Portland has too many amazing qualities to count. However, once we succeed in fixing these three problems, we will be that much closer to forming a beautiful and successful city.

Thank you for taking the time to read this,
Sincerely,
Norris

PRIORITIES FOR PORTLAND'S FUTURE

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission,

My name is Solomon Olshin, and I am a student at Arbor School in Tualatin, Oregon. I am in eighth grade and live in NW Portland. The future of Portland matters to me because I hope to raise a family and work here when I am older. I want to voice my opinions about how we should change the city so Portland can be an even more "rosy" city.

I believe we need to make public transit more accessible and increase the pedestrian and bike commuter population. Doing so will effect the environment by lowering our carbon footprint and benefit ~~benefit~~ the more far-flung citizens of Portland by bringing them closer to the city center. Imagine our hundreds of thousands of residents all commuting efficiently to our city's center to go about their daily business.

Increased emphasis on college education will help Portland by expanding the job market. College graduates will start their own companies in Portland which will decrease unemployment, poverty, and homelessness here and increase revenue for the city. Currently, only 60% of Portland's public high school students graduate on time. That number ought to be much higher. We must encourage higher education because it benefits both the people who receive it and the city as a whole.

We must also attract and grow industry. This will help the city by offering more skilled and unskilled jobs to the citizens of Portland. There are currently many smaller businesses - one of the things the "silicon forest" is known for, but I believe it would be a good idea to have even more industry in Portland. We have not fully taken advantage of our industrial sanctuary and this would be a great home for new industries to flourish.

Improving our city's public transit, emphasis on college education, and industry will help our city thrive for years to come. It will also invite people to Portland for work, play and to raise their families. All these priorities will vastly improve the quality of life for all people living in Portland.

Sincerely,



Solomon J Olshin

Dear P.S.C

My name is Sam Dickinson. I'm in 8th grade I chose to write about this because one of the topics is in my neighborhood. I really want to make this goal possible. When I'm doing this I think it will be a good idea to try to help with other problems.

Jobs are things they everyone needs to do anything in Portland.

One thing that matters for Portlands future is jobs. People need jobs to pay for things or feed themselves. Some people have jobs but they are not good enough to live off of. Everyone needs a job to have a life in Portland. There are ^{too} many homeless people on the streets, getting all if any resources from shelters.

Food is something that no one can live without.

Having food affects everyone in the world. Without ^{it} people will have no energy to do anything, work, go places, even get through the day. People need grocery stores by their homes so they can get good fast food places every day. This leads to sixty percent of Portlands population being obese or overweight. There may be people who one can afford one meal a day. We can help by putting in more grocery stores or even more food shelters. People need this, help them.

Some but not all people need sidewalks by their house.

I am one of those people who needs a sidewalk by my house. My neighborhood is a no side walk place, you can't walk any were without being on a major road. Those roads have no sidewalks every neighborhood needs a sidewalk let's make that possible.

Dear Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability,
I am Sam Seidel, a 13 year old boy living in Irvington with my mom and sister. I think this is a great city, but there is always room to improve. The future of Portland is very important to me, because I plan to grow up here and I want to grow up in the best possible environment.

One major issue I know of is the food deserts. Food deserts are large areas where the inhabitants have little or no access to fresh produce. There is a large food desert in East Portland ^{where} ~~where~~ some of the locals are 15 miles from fresh produce. Food deserts are usually in low income areas ^{where} ~~where~~ many of the people cannot afford a car and thus cannot drive the long distance to the store. This is a very big issue for them. Studies have showed obesity rates skyrocketing, due to people not getting the fresh food needed to maintain a healthy weight.

Another thing we really need to focus on is neighborhood safety. People need to feel safe walking around the block and many people, mostly in poorer areas, don't. A 2011 poll showed that in some low income areas only 30% of residents felt safe walking around in their neighborhood and many people said they would not walk after dark even with several friends. This is a very serious problem, because it is very important for people to feel safe where they live.

My final issue is school related and effects many kids in portland public schools. There is a reason Riverdale has a near 100% four year graduation rate. Dunthorpe is the wealthiest school district and it shows. Many poorer school districts have near 50% graduation rates and studies show economically disadvantaged kids have an up to 30% less chance to graduate on time. To give you a better idea of why this is let me tell you a hypothetical story. Jim goes to a ^Portland public high school and comes from an economically disadvantaged family. Both of his parents have full time jobs but money is short. When in high school Jim feels obligated to get a job and thus has less time to study. Bob, however, comes from a wealthy family. He gets a sense that money is not an issue and does not get a high school job.

In conclusion this great city has many problems but not problems that cannot be solved. The people who usually get the short end of the stick are the poor ones. We need to take action and make things better for an essential part of our city and economy. About 17% of Portland's population is in poverty and they need help.

Dear Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability,
I am a sixth generation Oregonian.
My grandfather started one of the first successful investment advisory firms in Portland and now my family owns a local grocery store called Pasta works. My name is Lola de Garmo and I am an eighth grader at the Arbor School of Arts and Sciences.
Since my family has been here for so long, we really care about what happens to this city, especially me since I am the one growing up in the city at the moment. I have three main issues that I will discuss in this letter and I really hope that you will be able to address them.

The first issue that I think needs to be fixed to make Portland a better city is bike and pedestrian safety. Most times the people who are most affected by this issue are the bikers and pedestrians themselves. Twenty percent of all motor vehicle accidents are caused by bikes. One of the reasons that bikes cause so many accidents is because bikers wear most/all dark clothing at night and have no lights on their bike, it makes it nearly impossible to see the bike from a car. What the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

could do is put up lights over bike lanes so even if people do wear black clothing, it will be easier to see them from a car. Another reason is that a lot of times bike lanes are placed between two car lanes, so if a biker is in a car's blind spot when the car is trying to change lanes, it almost always ends in someone being injured.

My second issue is good public education. This issue most applies to families with low income since they can't send their kids to private schools. In 2009, the average on-time graduation rate in Portland was 53.42%. It is not only the teachers/educator's faults. Some kids just aren't motivated to learn. But the kids that are should be given their chance to succeed. Also if not enough people graduate from high school, then they have a lesser chance of getting a good job, and if you can't get a job, you can't gain income to support yourself so most likely you'll end up being homeless. And if that happens to too many people, the economy becomes unstable.

My third and final issue is Public transportation, and how to make people use it more so it reduces the pollution in our city. This affects more than 50%

of Portlanders, mostly teenagers and middle aged people who don't own a car. Portland residents spend more than \$1.6 billion a year on energy. More than 80% of that money goes towards gasoline and diesel for cars. Seventeen percent of Portlanders can't afford a car or maintain a car so public transportation such as buses and street cars are their only means of cheaper transport.

Having now read what I want to make Portland a better place to live, I hope you can consider addressing some of my ideas. Portland is my home and I want to see it change and grow into a better city, just as I will change and grow into a better person. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lola de Garmo

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission,

My name is Samuel Goldberg. I moved to Portland from Detroit, MI. when I was ten years old. Less than a year after that, I had to move again, this time to Beaverton. I consider myself extremely left wing and sympathetic to minorities and the working class. For this letter, I have decided to write about three topics all relating to education. These include making schools more accessible to native Spanish speakers, extending recess times, and minimizing the usage of standardized tests.

In Sweden, approximately 20% of elementary school students speak a language other than Swedish. However, in the United States, only 18% of the entire population can speak a language other than English. 9.4% of Portland's population are Latino/Hispanic, meaning that almost one in ten people living in Portland will be Latin American. With a percentage that high, it would be beneficial to everyone to start teaching English speaking students Spanish at the age of six, and Spanish speaking students English at the same age.

The average recess time of Portland public schools is fifteen to twenty minutes a day. Given that recess improves brain activity, problem solving skills, and memory, this is definitely not enough time. To name another Scandinavian country, Finland (which the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development has claimed has the best education system in the world) ~~the~~ offers their students an average recess time of 75 minutes each day. Giving our students more play time has been all but proven to help them do better in school, thus making it an obvious part of our education system to improve.

The Glossary of Education Reform defines "standardized test" as "any form of test that (1) requires all test takers to answer the same questions, or a selection of questions from common bank of questions, in the same way, and that (2) is scored in a 'standard' or consistent manner, which makes it possible to compare the relative performance of individual students or groups of students. While different types of tests and assessments may be 'standardized' in this way, the term is primarily associated with large-scale tests administered to sizeable populations of students, such as a multiple-

choice test given to all the eighth-grade public-school students in a particular state, for example.” Statistics show that countries that use less standardized tests (Finland and Sweden try to minimize the usage of them) have higher ranked education systems (OECD puts Finland in first, Sweden in sixth, and the United States in nineteenth). One reason among many to get rid of standardized tests is because studies have found that, on average, black and Latino students score lower than white students on tests such as the SATs. This is largely due to the fact that some questions are phrased in ways that are harder to understand for minorities. Some questions are even considered prejudiced against middle and lower class students.

In conclusion, Portland schools need to change how they work in at least three ways. There are probably more areas in which we could improve other than the ones I addressed in this letter, but these are the ones that matter the most to me. Thank you for reading,
Samuel Goldberg

November 24, 2014

Dear Planning and Sustainability Committee:

My name is Gideon Lerner, I am 14 years old and I live in northeast Portland. I have some ideas on how you could make Portland better. I have noticed over my fourteen years in Portland that there are some things we could do to make Portland better.

One thing you could do is have more parks. I read that trees stop flooding, and reduce heating and cooling costs. I know this sounds weird but think about it, trees provide shade and they also are wind breakers. If we had more parks people would not have to worry about heating and cooling costs as much. And did you know that trees take in 572 gallons of rain water a year?

One other thing I read about was carbon emissions and how they have only gone down 2% in Portland since 1990. One thing we could do to stop the carbon emissions from going higher is to have more local transportation. I think this because busses can have more people on them than a car. And we have to buy most of our fuel from out of state. This is bad because we send money out of Oregon so we have less.

^{13.2} One other thing you could do is help people in poverty. Did you know that ~~70%~~ of Portlanders do not have enough money to support them and their families? If we had more places for people to get support then maybe we could lower the percent. And on an OPB broadcast it said that one family got $\frac{1}{4}$ of their food from the school that their kids went to.

I hope that this letter shows you that there are some kids that are trying to help their city. So if you think your work is done think again. Because there are parks that need to be built and local transportation stops to be added and more places for people in poverty to go. So let's get to work.

Truly yours,

Gideon Lerner

12/1/14

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission,
Portland is almost perfect.

From the river to Forest Park, from OMSI to the Farmers Market, from the culture to the values to the weirdness that distinguishes us, Portland is almost perfect. Almost. But to secure this city a bright future and simply make it even better, there are some pressing issues I feel can't be ignored.

One of the things that I think could change is the public education system. Only 60% of Portland's teens graduate on time, which is a statistic I frankly find quite unsettling. A good education is elementary for success in the world these days, and without one it is much harder to get a job and provide for yourself and your children (if you have any). Then, because you didn't go to school, you may not prioritize it for your children, so they may not graduate high school, and the cycle just continues. School also teaches important things like health and exercise habits. School also requires certain vaccinations in children, urging parents to give their children shots to prevent deadly diseases.

If you were to look at a map of Portland's diversity, you would see large clusters of certain ethnic groups in certain parts of town, and almost no racial overlap. This is one of the things I also think must change. Racial integration and monetary equity would reduce discrimination, promote harmony, and reduce racial tension and crime caused by it. It would also just make Portland a more interesting place.

Without more jobs, Portland's future success is compromised. Portland is quite lacking in industry, which can be beneficial in some ways, reducing pollution mainly, but sustainable industry is increasingly also helpful but necessary for Portland to even have a future at all. Without jobs, people would leave here for jobs or even leave for the sake of them. If they stay, and there aren't any jobs, then they will sink into poverty. Industry also brings wealth to the city.

I understand that these issues don't have immediate solutions, and I understand that they don't have easy solutions either, but I have full confidence that you, the planning and sustainability commission, have the skill and expertise to make these changes possible.

Thank you,
Eric Hudson

November 23rd, 2014

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission,
My name is Elena Mindlin, I am fourteen years old, and an eighth grader at the Arbor School. I live in Northeast Portland. I have lived here my whole life, and I love this city. I do think that there some improvements to be made. On time high school graduation rates are too low, obesity rates are above national targets, and some Portland neighborhoods don't even have continuous sidewalks. I am writing to tell you my opinion on some of what I think are Portland's most important issues.

The public schools in Portland area school districts need to boost on-time graduation rates. According to a statistic put out by your bureau in 2007, 61% of Portland Public Schools' students graduated on time. According to the Oregon Education Department in 2011, the average rate between 2008 and 2010 was 53.42 percent. Either way it's too low. Out of six school districts, only one had an average rate above sixty percent for those years. This causes a ripple effect throughout someone's life. They are less likely to be accepted to colleges, it will be harder to find a job, and they may never be financially stable. A good education is critical in a person's life. I think that we should look for patterns and see if there is a specific age or year of high school that grades start to slip. It could also depend on a family's housing or financial situation, or what extra-curricular activities a student is involved in. I think that this is a pressing problem that needs to be addressed.

The personal health and fitness of Portlanders needs to be present in everyone's mind. The percentage of people that are overweight or obese in Portland is staggeringly large. Our city is already above national targets, and rates are rising. Although some people are a healthy weight, less than half of Portland residents exercise the

recommended amount. Being overweight puts people at much higher risk for heart problems, diabetes, chronic diseases, and cancer. It is also a matter of taking care of your own body; being healthy, fit, and able to get around. Half of Portland neighborhoods are more than half a mile from a developed park. I think that having more parks, sidewalks, and bike lanes will improve overall health. Having healthy, nutritious, and affordable food options is also crucial. Unhealthy, fast food options tend to be cheaper, so people will continue to eat them. I think that everyone should be concerned with their own personal health, and take care of themselves responsibly.

As I said in the last paragraph, accessibility to opportunities is a large part of fixing these issues. They are all interconnected, and just one thing won't fix them all. Public transportation, parks, sidewalks, bike lanes, and closer proximity to fresh food are all things that I think are essential. Being close to parks, sidewalks, bike lanes, and fresh food will all help improve Portlanders' health. Being close to public transportation will enable people that otherwise may not be able to get around, go where they need to go. It could let a highschooler whose family owns no car get to school and help him/her graduate on time. It would also reduce carbon emissions in the city.

As I said I think that these are all important issues that need to be addressed, and quickly.

Cordially yours,
Elena
Mindlin

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission,

My name is Harrison Chandler. I am an 8th grader at Arbor school and we have been studying cities. I'm writing about the future of Portland. Some things that matter to me are the environment for visitors (when I say environment I mean a good place that people want to be for instance the people there should be friendly, the city shouldn't have too much pollution, the city should be family friendly, Etc.), a good place for the people living there, and having good communities for people.

I think that Portland having a good environment for its visitors is important because not having that will probably lower the amount of visitors Portland gets and that could bring down some people's businesses. Cities should be places people want to be. Some cities depend, at least a little bit, on their visitors. If visitors don't like a city then they are less likely to move there. If visitors don't like a city then it is likely that the people living there don't like it either.

A city should be a good place for the people living there. If people don't like where they are living they are most likely to leave. If citizens leave then the city could become uninhabited and the abandoned city will probably take up what could be green space. If the people leave they will go to another city which would cause those cities to get crowded and the extra people would take up more resources and space which could cause problems.

Cities should be diverse to help the city and people living in the city to be better citizens. This could affect the people whose culture/race is least common because they are probably discriminated against most because they're less common than other cultures/races. If there is a larger diversity cultures/races are less likely to be discriminated, for instance, if there was one person at a school wearing a uniform on a day they didn't need to because they forgot they didn't need to and no one else wore their uniform, that person might get discriminated and laughed at making them feel left out. Diversity can be just like that. If there is a large diversity there will probably be less discrimination and the citizens can be happier and make the city better.

Portland is a good place but can be improved and made better. Thank you for your time and consideration.

-Harrison at the Arbor school of arts and sciences.

Harrison
Chandler

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission,

Portland is a city that matters to me. I've lived here for most of my life and plan to live here until college. It is a wonderful place to live and is very unique. But, there are always things that could be improved. My name is Amelia Pressman and I am in eighth grade at Arbor School. We have been studying our city for the past few weeks. It has opened my eyes to some issues Portland has, such as, public transportation, access to parks, and homelessness.

Seventy point two percent of Portlanders drive to work in their own cars. Having this many cars makes for a lot of pollution. If more people used public transportation to get to work we would have less gas shooting into the air. Public transportation also provides jobs. If more people took the bus we would need more bus drivers. That would give a job opportunity to a lot of people. Using public transportation also helps more people get to work on time at once.

Living in a city can be fun, but you don't get a lot of access to parks. Parks are a wonderful way to be in nature without ~~having to drive long distances~~ having to drive long distances. With more parks we could get more people outside and moving around. With more parks there are more trees and trees are always a good thing. It could also help people get off electronics.

Did you know that ten percent of Portlanders live below the poverty line? When I go to the city I see a lot of homeless people. We need to get people off the streets and into homes. Imagine you lost everything you had. You lived on the streets and never had enough to eat. It would be terrible. People shouldn't have to live like this.

This is what matters to me. With enough work I think Portland can become the fun and safe city we all want it to be. Thank you for reading my letter and taking into account the issues that I am interested in.

Sincerely,

Amelia

Amelia Pressman

Dear Portland Bureau of sustainability,

My name is Seth Monahan, and I am a student at Arbor School in Tualatin. The reason I am sending you this letter is because I have some concerns for Portland. I am not saying Portland is bad (personally I love Portland) but there are certainly some things that need to be tweaked. Did you know that we spend 1.6 million dollars on energy and 80% of that is gas? That is just one situation of many that I think needs to be changed.

Imagine being a single parent with two kids. Being a single parent is hard enough but imagine having to walk a mile to get your groceries. I know that is very hard to even think of but it is a very real situation in a lot of households. You probably have heard this but 40% of Portlanders live a mile away from grocery stores. That is way too big of a percentage, and I think that needs to be changed fast. East of 82nd there are only two farmers markets and there are a lot of people that live past 82nd so where are these people getting fresh food from? The truth is they really aren't and this is what is going to lead me into my next concern.

Obesity is a real problem in the U.S. as a whole and in Portland. So I think the big steps that we need to take are getting more people to eat healthy and start exercising. Portland is already beyond the national average in obesity and diabetes. I don't know about you but that seems pretty bad. Even among people that do maintain a healthy weight, they still aren't exercising as much as you are supposed to.

I hope that you will take what I have said into consideration. I am not the only one who cares about these problems and thinks they are important. There are people in Portland that need help and you can give it to them.

Thanks for your consideration.

Best Regards,

Seth Monahan

Seth Monahan

Dear Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability,

14.5% Of Portland's people use the bike as an occasional commute vehicle while 5.4% have it as their primary. I have a few problems I would like to address to you. My name is Ian Flynn, I am 13 years old and I live in Tualatin, Oregon.


First off, I live on SW 65th Ave. which is a great way to get from Tualatin to Wilsonville in a short amount of time. There are also many houses along this street. The struggle is my street has no sidewalks or bike lanes. This makes traveling difficult because it means the people in the houses can't get to Tualatin or Wilsonville. Also drivers like this road because it's smooth and you can go pretty fast on it making it dangerous to go on the road in general. I think road safety can be a bit of a problem more for people in SW and NW Portland area and the more country area of Portland.

Second, I think we should try to improve our education system because Riverdale High School's graduation rate is 99% and the average for all the other schools are 60% Also 23% drop out and 12% are enrolled for a fifth year. Imagine if we kept the 60% graduation rate for every school, that means 40% of portland students don't go to college and get a job that requires you to go to college. That means more unemployed and fewer people that will be helping the people. This is pretty big so I think this problem shouldn't go unnoticed because this would affect every student in the Portland area.

I think there are some places where roads are needed and not needed. Recently my local K-Mart was replaced with a New Seasons, Home Goods, and a Cabella's. There seem to be quite a lot of traffic if having a Fred Meyer's Across the street wasn't enough. There are other ways to get into the parking lot (which is always full) but you have to go around the entire block and it would probably take just as much time to fight through the traffic. But it's not just getting in, just trying to get through the intersection to a different destination is still just as hard with everyone at one stopping light. I think this problem probably affects people in different areas depending on the places there.

I'd really hope for Portland to become the best it could be because I'm hoping to live here after college. There are many things you have to address so Portland is a better place for not just me, so thank you for reading this.

Ian Flynn



Dear Bureau of Planning and Sustainability,

My name is Harriet Milton. I am fourteen years old. I moved to Portland in the summer of 2004. I have loved Portland nearly all my life.

But even a three-year-old can't miss the throngs of homeless distributed liberally over Portland's downtown area.

There's usually a couple of dogs tied up outside the Hillsdale Library. They're usually nice dogs. I usually pet them. So when Bosco the corgi was tied up outside, it was no different. I petted him, and then moved on. I have a particular fondness for corgis, so I was actually rather happy to see Bosco again the next day.

But after seeing Bosco at the library every day for a week, I began to be worried.

One day, my mom met Bosco's owner.

He said he'd been fired, and was living with Bosco in his car.

Mom did a little research. It turned out that Bosco's owner, who I am going to call Jim for the purpose of this letter, had been an electrical engineer, or something of that nature.

My dad worked for an electrical company at the time, as did a friend of my mother's. She asked both of them to see if they could get Jim a job.

They tried, but further research proved that Jim had been fired because of alcohol abuse.

I think that Jim should have been provided with free rehabilitation services so that he could get a job as soon as possible. I am going to hazard a guess and say that a large percentage of Portland's homeless would disappear with astonishing rapidity if provided with free, state-funded rehabilitation services.

Sincerely,

Harriet Milton, age 14