



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ASSESSMENT

## PORTLAND PLAN CONDITIONS, TRENDS & ISSUES

Final Draft

For Public Review – June 3, 2008

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ASSESSMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

This report provides background information for the upcoming update of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The existing "Comp Plan," as it is commonly known, was adopted in 1980, and is the key long-term planning document that has helped bring us through the past few decades to where we are now.

This Assessment evaluates policies, gaps and limitations in the format of the existing Comp Plan. In answer to state requirements for "Periodic Review" of the Comprehensive Plan, the report identifies whether and in what ways the Plan may be out of date. Additionally, the report summarizes key conditions, trends, opportunities and challenges facing the city. It is not the final word on any issue or topic, but rather is a way of helping to inform the public discussion which will guide the creation of the new Comp Plan. The new Comp Plan will be one of several major planning efforts included in the overarching Portland Plan process (described further on later pages).

The project to update the Comp Plan is intended to be an inclusive, creative public dialogue and decision-making forum. It offers us Portlanders the opportunity to question our assumptions about what Portland is and what it should be as we look out over the next decades. The project will involve difficult decisions, as we come up with and prioritize specific actions that best match our vision and desires to the physical reality and resources of the city that we enjoy and treasure.

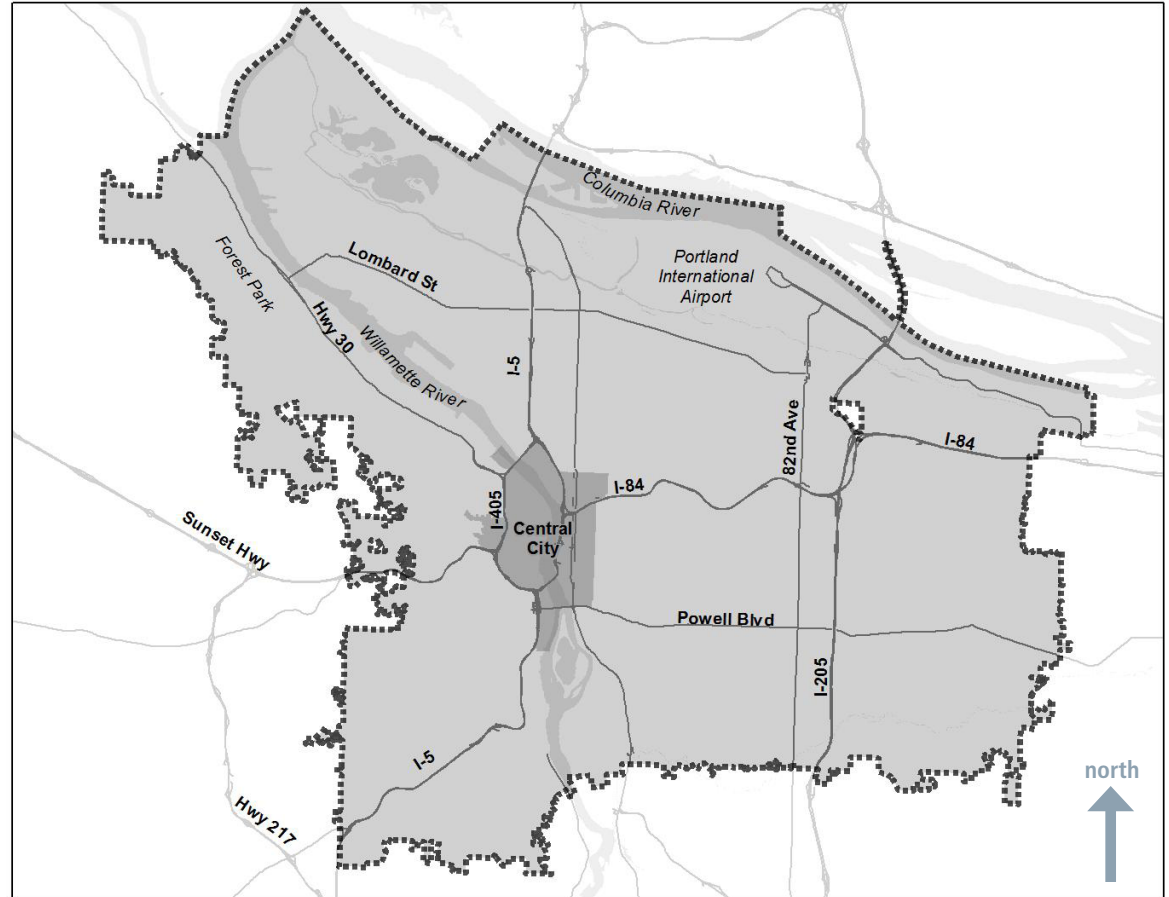


# THE PORTLAND PLAN

The Portland Plan is an inclusive, citywide planning effort which will guide the growth and development of Portland over the next 30 years.

The plan will address crucial aspects of city life – for instance, housing, jobs, transportation, sustainability, the natural environment and infrastructure – with a long-term and holistic perspective. It will cover the geography of the entire city and zoom in on particular areas and topics as needed. It will be a multi-year process and will unify several plans and projects with a consistent and coordinated approach.

Fulfilling state requirements to update the City's 1980 Comprehensive Plan is another reason for this planning effort to occur now. The Portland Plan will be the Comprehensive Plan for a new generation.



Portland's city boundaries are shown in the map above. The City provides services to a slightly larger area within what is called the Urban Services Boundary.

# BUILDING ON VISIONPDX

The City's new planning efforts will be informed by the findings of the **visionPDX project**. visionPDX ranged across the city and heard from more than 17,000 people, in written surveys and small group discussions, large events and one-on-one conversations, about what they envisioned for the future of Portland. All sorts of Portlanders weighed in with their dreams for our city's future, answering both specific and open-ended questions about what they value most about their community, their greater vision for Portland in 20 years and their thoughts on "How can we get there?"

The key findings in the two-year, citywide conversations were captured in the final vision document, *Portland 2030: A Vision for the Future*, which summarized the top three core values shared by Portlanders (see below). More detailed reporting on what we heard is available in the 300-page document *Voices from the Community*.

The visionPDX conversations revealed four additional top values shared by the people of Portland: accountability and leadership; inclusion and diversity; innovation and creativity; and safety. A significant accomplishment of visionPDX was to explore new methods of community engagement, as the project involved people across the city who had not participated previously in planning efforts. Those lessons learned are described in the "Community Engagement Report."



Kids in Woodlawn Park enjoy lemonade at a visionPDX event.

## SHARED VALUES

The top three core shared values of Portlanders can be summarized with quotes from the visionPDX summary document and from the questionnaires in which people expressed what they most value. These community values form the foundation for the Portland Plan.

### Community Connectedness & Distinctiveness

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

### Equity & Accessibility

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

### Sustainability

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

# FACING KEY CHALLENGES

Through the Portland Plan process we will tackle the questions of how to reconcile Portland’s core shared values with the major global and local challenges we face, today and in the future:

## Population growth

Metro regional government forecasts that about 650,000 new residents and about 500,000 new jobs will be coming into the three-county metropolitan region in the next 22 years. How we manage this growth – where and how new residents will live and work – will affect us, in particular because the City of Portland has limited vacant land into which it can expand.

How new development is distributed, configured and designed within the existing urban fabric will be a major challenge.

## Growing diversity

The make-up of Portland’s people – our ages, races, ethnicity and cultural traditions; the sizes and shapes of our families; whether we are deeply-rooted in Portland or newly arrived – will produce an increasingly mixed, diverse city. This increasing diversity prompts us all to investigate new ways of interacting to ensure inclusion and to see our commonalities. It also means we must consider new or specific needs and opportunities arising from this changing population. And at the same time, we want to better recognize and appreciate the area’s original inhabitants and the more recent history of our people and this place.

## Growing equity gap

The cost of living in Portland has become an ever more significant issue over the last decade. We’ve seen housing and transportation costs rise while incomes remain stagnant for many sectors of

the community, leading to a growing equity gap among Portland’s residents. Some people have left the city to find less expensive housing in outlying areas. A major challenge is how to alleviate social and economic inequities among groups within the city’s population.

## Growing community health needs

Demographic changes such as the rising number of older people in our population will result in a wider range of health needs. There is what some call an epidemic of obesity among both young and old, brought on by lifestyle choices and habits affected by our land use, transportation patterns and access to healthy foods. Meanwhile, the declining quality of the natural environment compromises our health as well. A deeper exploration of how the built environment impacts health is needed.





**Changing economy**

Economic globalization trends, especially since 1990, have put more pressure on regional economies to be adaptable and competitive to remain prosperous. While the regional economy has been on a long-term growth trajectory in recent decades, job growth in the City of Portland has been slower than that of the region overall.

At the same time, the accelerated pace of global and technological changes requires Portlanders to think strategically about how to continue to prosper and capitalize on our strengths. As we compete more and more on the “global economic playing field,” we will be challenged to find our niche.

**Changing fiscal conditions & governance**

Many worthy projects compete for dollars in the City’s budget. Maintaining or replacing aging infrastructure and making transportation improvements require large expenditures; beyond

such basic needs, funds are needed for the many other projects and programs that make this city a great place to live. Many traditional sources of funding have declined over the years; at the same time, there is more competition for existing federal funds. Funding models don’t match our goals, and the challenge to “do more with less” requires new partnerships and innovation. Trying to meet this challenge may shift the City’s approach to governing and prompt a more collaborative style of interaction.

**Climate change/natural systems under stress**

Temperatures globally and locally have been rising for decades. Average annual temperatures in the Pacific Northwest are 1.5° F higher now than they were in 1900. Many scientists expect warming to accelerate worldwide in this century. They expect that this climate change – perhaps 1° F per decade in the Pacific Northwest – could alter precipitation patterns and dry up sources of water.

Winters in the Northwest would be wetter and summers both hotter and drier; risks would increase for forest health and coastal flooding, as air temperature affects water temperature which affects the habitat of animals. A reduced snowpack would affect summer stream flows and temperatures, potentially jeopardizing the health of fish and other aquatic life.

We’re all connected in the ecosystem that is our world, and the actions we take affect our ecosystem. For instance, when we drive cars fueled by fossil fuels, we emit into the air carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases which warm the global climate. As a leading urban innovator, Portland faces the challenge of demonstrating how communities can thrive while minimizing carbon emissions.

**Decline in traditional energy sources**

Changes in the availability of affordable petroleum products may have significant impacts on transportation, housing, food and other life-essential products and services. The need to reduce dependence on oil and natural gas resources and replace these energy sources with secure and sustainable alternatives is vital to Portland’s future prosperity.

**changing economy (globalizing)**

**changing fiscal conditions & governance**

**changing climate (compromising natural systems)**

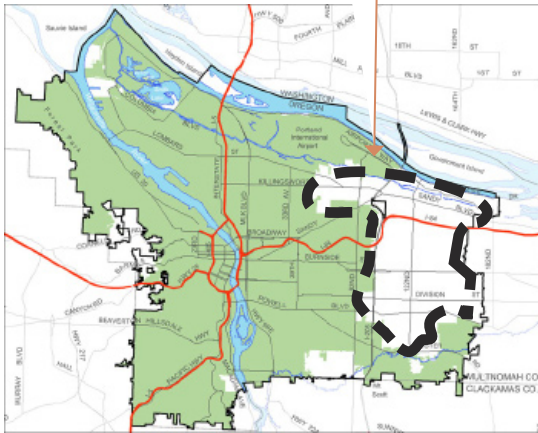
**changing energy sources (peak oil)**

# WE'VE GROWN A LOT

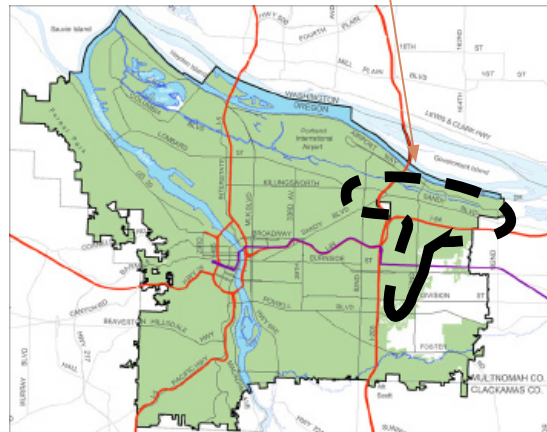
In 1980, when the original Comp Plan was adopted, the City of Portland covered just under 70,000 acres; now, the city is a third larger, totalling nearly 93,000 acres. This growth occurred mostly through annexations of areas east of the I-205/92nd Avenue vicinity, which were part of Multnomah County not incorporated into any city government. Decisions in the 1980s and 1990s made these approximately 23,000 acres part of the City of Portland, which now provides infrastructure and services such as water and sewer treatment to this area.

We have one-third more land area than we did in 1980.

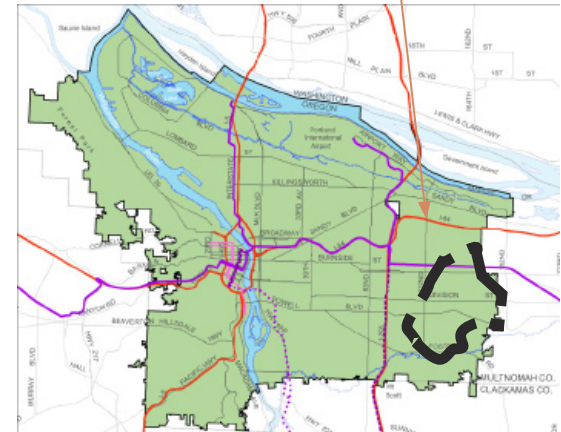
**PORTLAND DIDN'T INCLUDE THESE 23,000 ACRES IN 1980**



**THIS AREA WAS ADDED IN THE 1980s**



**...AND THIS AREA WAS ADDED IN THE 1990s**

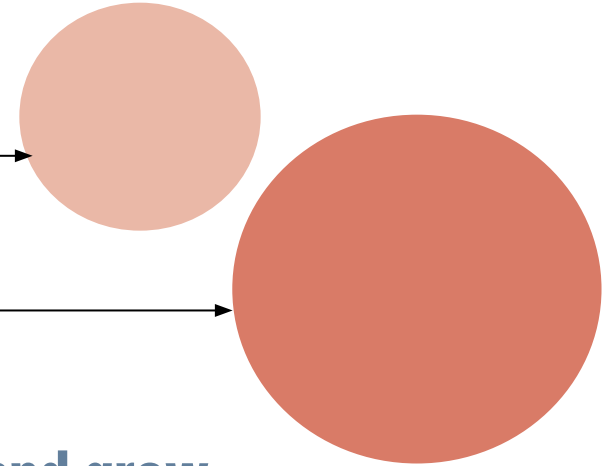


WE HAVE MORE PEOPLE & PLACES...

We have half again as many people as we had in 1980.

IN 1980, WE WERE **368,000** PEOPLE.

NOW, WE ARE **562,000** PEOPLE.



That’s a population increase of 53% in approximately 28 years. But 30 years ago, when Portlanders were creating three development scenarios for the original Comp Plan, they estimated city population would be between 397,000 and 440,000 in 2000. In fact, by 2000 Portland’s population hit 529,000 – more than double the largest increase planned for.

### How will Portland grow in the next 30 years?

The addition of land area to the city (see maps on the previous page) was only part of the reason for Portland’s population growth. Some of the newly added areas in East Portland were less densely populated than were the older neighborhoods that had been part of Portland for a hundred years or more. However, many of the newly annexed areas as well as other areas across the city have experienced a dramatic increase in population density in recent years. New Portland residents include children being born here as well as “in-migration” – people moving to the city from other parts of Oregon and from other states and countries.

With such dramatic increases in land area and population comes a need not only for more homes but also more jobs; population growth must be balanced by economic growth for the city to be vital and healthy. Job statistics for Multnomah County give us a benchmark for how the Portland economy has grown: from about 275,000 jobs in 1986 to 430,000 jobs in 2006 – an increase of 56% in the 20-year period.

**How many more jobs will we need?**

**How many more homes will we need?**

## ...TO PLAN FOR NOW

## Context: Why plan now?

# THE WORLD IS CHANGING

In many ways, the global and local challenges we face are new versions of continuing, never-ending challenges. For example, the “changing economy” is listed in this report as one of the key challenges Portland faces – and yet expansion of trade is not a new phenomenon of the past 30 years; people have been finding new places in which to sell their goods and services for centuries.

However, in recent years, new technologies (for instance, computers and the internet) and the global dominance of some not-as-new technologies (the automobile, container ships), have transformed mobility and trade on such a large scale that we face a new economic world which requires radically new thinking and effort on our part to come up with good solutions.

The world changes, and Portland changes with it, presenting us with new obstacles to overcome in order to satisfy our basic needs. Yet despite all the changes in the world, our basic needs are much the same now as they were in 1980:

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

**THE GLOBAL ECONOMY IS NEW IN PART BECAUSE OF ITS LARGER SCALE AND COMPLEXITY.**



# PLANNING WORKS

As we've grown over the years, Portland people have planned and deliberately directed this growth. The Comp Plan, the Central City Plan, numerous neighborhood and district plans – these many layers of efforts have helped produce a city that is generally given high marks for livability by its residents.

A key to why planning works in Portland is that it is collaborative and public-driven. By bringing together the community's best ideas for solving problems and realizing opportunities, and by making deliberate, well-informed, well-thought-out choices about how to direct resources and development in the future, we create the community we want.

One way that public voices are heard in planning is through the Planning Commission; they are a group of nine citizen volunteers who advise our elected City Commissioners on land use issues. The Commission began in 1918 as seven volunteers; the Bureau of Planning grew out of that Commission at first as a few paid staff hired to support their work.

Citizens have gained another forum through which to affect the planning of the city with the establishment of local neighborhood associations beginning in the 1960s. There are now 95 official neighborhood associations in Portland, most of them affiliated with one of seven local coalitions, such as the Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Program and the East Portland Neighborhood Office.

The way our city has developed is also deeply rooted in the time period in which it was settled and the dominant mode of transportation at that time. It is no coincidence that Portland began along the river, one of several small river towns. The first "Portland Plan" was the plat laid out in 1843 – small 200' x 200' blocks, nestled between the west hills and the river, and including land set aside for the Park Blocks; all of these we recognize today as the heart of the city, the historic downtown.

Early development grew around the first bridge, the Morrison, in 1887. (Crossing the bridge required a five-cent toll even for pedes-

trians; there, of course, were no cars.) Albina and East Portland were separate towns on the east side of the river, annexed into the City of Portland in 1891. These early parts of Portland date from the era when people got around mostly by foot, trolley, and horse-drawn carriages, and the small city blocks facilitated travel by these means. We see a different settlement pattern in the eastern portions of the city annexed some hundred years later; those areas were developed during the automobile era, and are more spread out, with larger lots and blocks.

One of the breakthroughs of planning for the 1980 Comp Plan was to recognize the connections between transportation and land use patterns, and deliberately link them through planning. Today a possible breakthrough is to link land use, transportation and natural systems, as we recognize the connections between how we use our land and the health of our natural environment.



**NOW** .....

## OREGON PLANNING

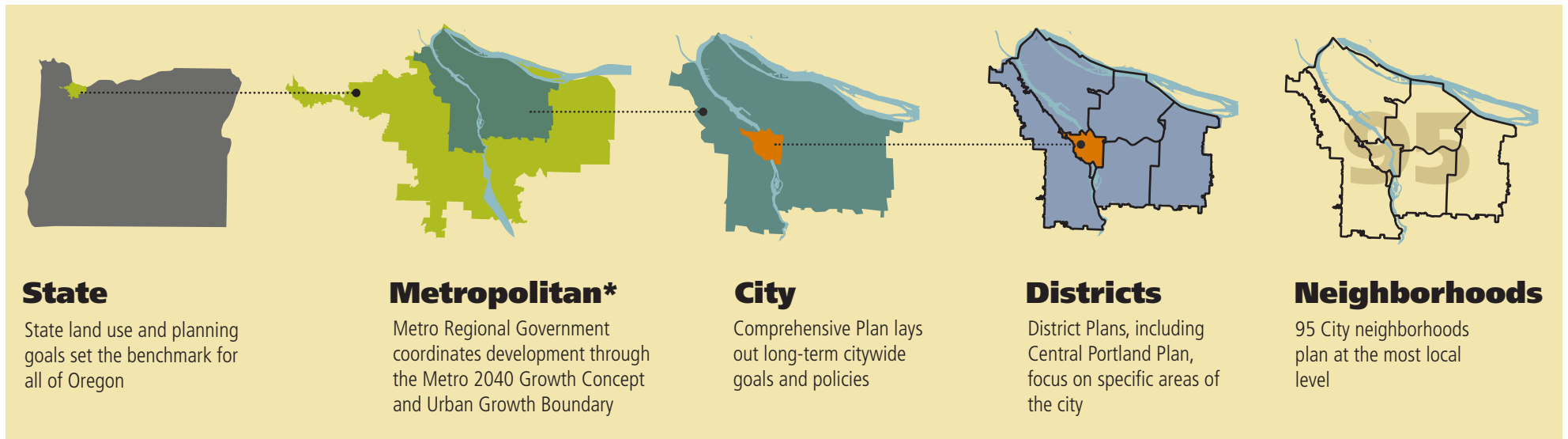
Oregon's statewide system of land use planning has been widely recognized as a national leader, and has helped to define and secure the state's quality of life. In 1973, the Oregon Legislature enacted Senate Bill 100 establishing Oregon's pioneering statewide land use system. Over the next several years, local governments and the state developed detailed goals and guidelines, rules, and comprehensive plans to implement this system. The new law provided:

- Strong provisions to preserve farm and forest land.
- Urban growth boundaries to guide new development.
- Policies for environmental protections and practices.
- Supportive plans for housing and transportation investment.

The state requires that local plans be in agreement with the 15 statewide planning goals. In addition, our regional government, Metro, has goals and policies that apply to Portland. This means that our City planning efforts are informed by both state and Metro goals and policies – they form the foundation for our planning efforts.

The Comp Plan focuses on the citywide level while other plans such as district or neighborhood plans detail more localized conditions and issues. These smaller area plans put into action the Comp Plan Goals and Policies. The graphic below illustrates these relationships.

These diagrams indicate the legal jurisdictions within which our laws and policies must operate. For example, the Metro regional government incorporates three counties in its jurisdiction. However, when we think regionally, it may make sense to expand our map north to Vancouver, Washington or even Vancouver, BC. Issues such as transportation and environmental health don't follow legal boundaries. We need to be developing a new shared vocabulary around some of these concepts. The Portland Plan will work to do that.



### State

State land use and planning goals set the benchmark for all of Oregon

### Metropolitan\*

Metro Regional Government coordinates development through the Metro 2040 Growth Concept and Urban Growth Boundary

### City

Comprehensive Plan lays out long-term citywide goals and policies

### Districts

District Plans, including Central Portland Plan, focus on specific areas of the city

### Neighborhoods

95 City neighborhoods plan at the most local level

\* See Metro map on next page.

Maps are for illustrative purposes only.

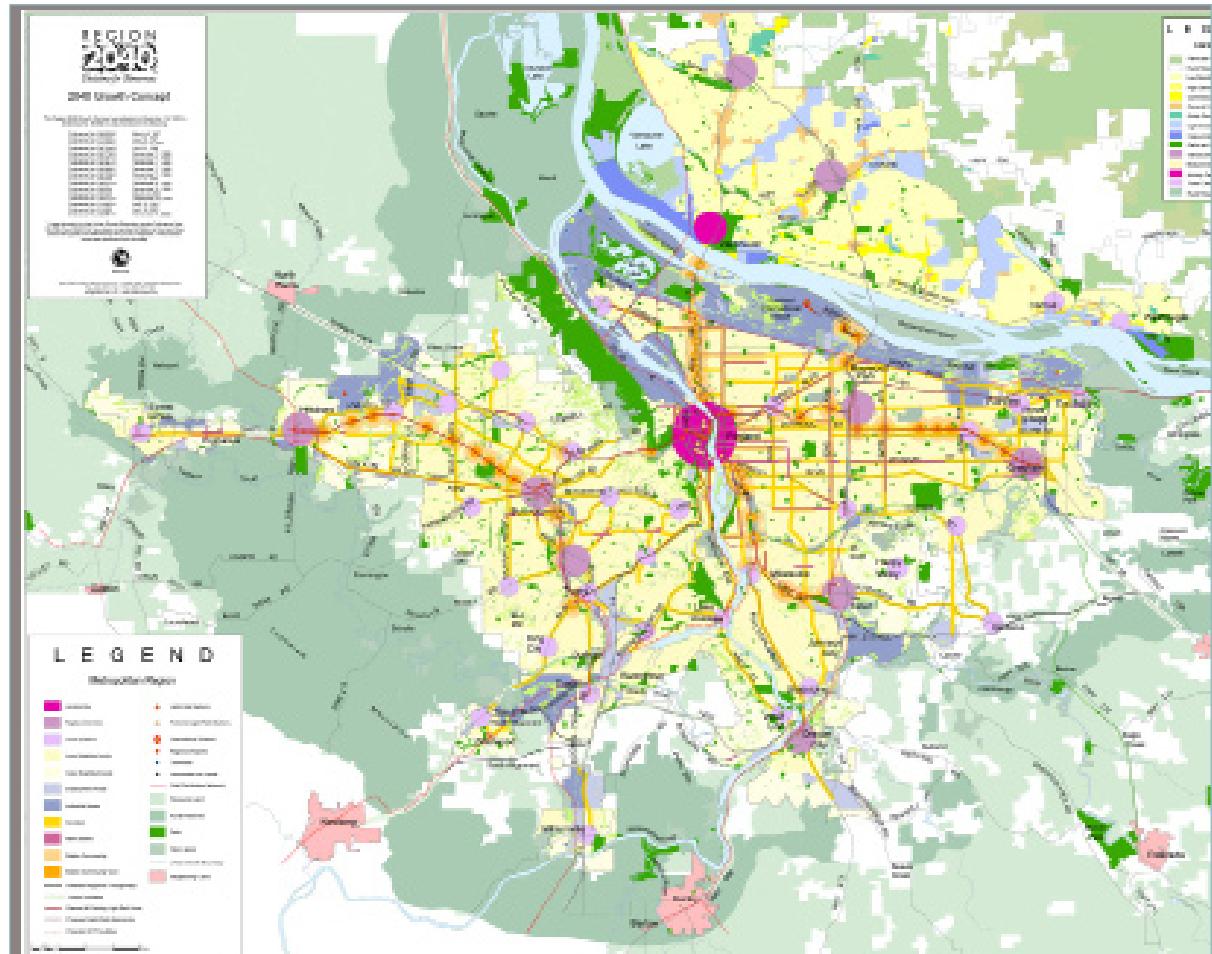
# THE METRO PICTURE

Whatever plans we come up with for the City of Portland, we know they will fit into long-term plans for the metro region as a whole, because planning is a regional effort here.

The Metro regional government coordinates actions and policies to direct projected population growth to certain geographic areas. The 2040 Growth Concept map is shown at right; it illustrates Metro regional policy, including these essential themes:

- **Urban Growth Boundary (UGB)**, which “separates urban land from rural land.”
- **Allocation of numbers of jobs and housing units** that are in the Metro regional forecast, to provide an overall balance within the UGB.
- **Emphasis on centers and corridors** for more density and intensity of land uses, with Portland’s Central City as the transportation hub and the most densely built-up part of the Portland metropolitan area (shown in the map as the dark pink circle in the center).
- **Location of a range of other community sizes and types**, for instance, regional centers such as Gateway, town centers, transit station communities, and main street areas. This variety offers choices, from single-family neighborhoods to commercialized urban areas with tall buildings.

The current Comp Plan predates the adoption of the 2040 Growth Concept in 1995, and as such is not fully consistent with the Metro Growth Concept. This lack of consistency is explained further in the section of this report titled “What is the Comp Plan Map?”



Portland and the region: we are all pieces of one big puzzle.

# THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## What is the comp plan?

The “Comp Plan” is the casual name by which people refer to Portland’s existing Comprehensive Plan. It provides direction for City decision-making on land use, transportation, parks, sewer and water systems, natural resources, and air and water quality management programs.

Guided by Portlanders, the City started writing its Comp Plan in 1978, in response to the statewide land use planning program described on previous pages. The original Comp Plan was adopted by the City Council in 1980. The Plan applies to the entire city and consists of three major components, listed below and explained further on later pages:

- **Goals & Policies**
- **Comprehensive Plan Map**
- **Public Facilities Plan**

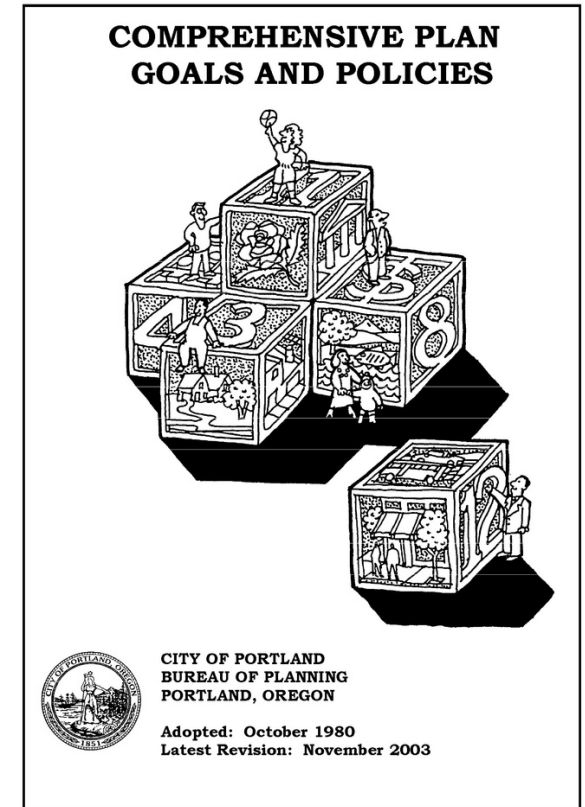
The scope of plans and policies encompassed by the Comp Plan is wider than just the three major components listed above, however; the plan is intended to be “comprehensive” in the true sense of the word. Thus several other adopted plans are also legally a part of the Comp Plan.

Other plans “nested” in the overall Comp Plan focus more specifically on either an individual topic (for instance, the Transportation Systems Plan) or geographic area (as in the 1988 Central City Plan and 45 smaller neighborhood plans). Over the last 28 years, the Comp Plan has been amended, repealed or added to 85 times, but has never been updated as a whole.

The current Comp Plan has many limitations. It was originally organized to mirror statewide planning goals; as such, it isolates topics and lacks the integrated thinking that is needed to solve problems today. At times it is overly-detailed, becoming unnecessarily complicated.

Another limitation of the existing Comp Plan is that it lacks an overall planning strategy or approach to planning, as well as a “tool-kit” of ideas that can be strategically used in more detailed district or neighborhood level plans and in the land use review process.

Finally, the Plan was built on information, ideas and assumptions that date from the time of its creation in the late 1970s. The intended timeframe or “plan horizon” was 20 years; 28 years have passed. The Plan has served us well, but it is time to check the assumptions against current conditions and challenges. This Assessment begins that necessary review.



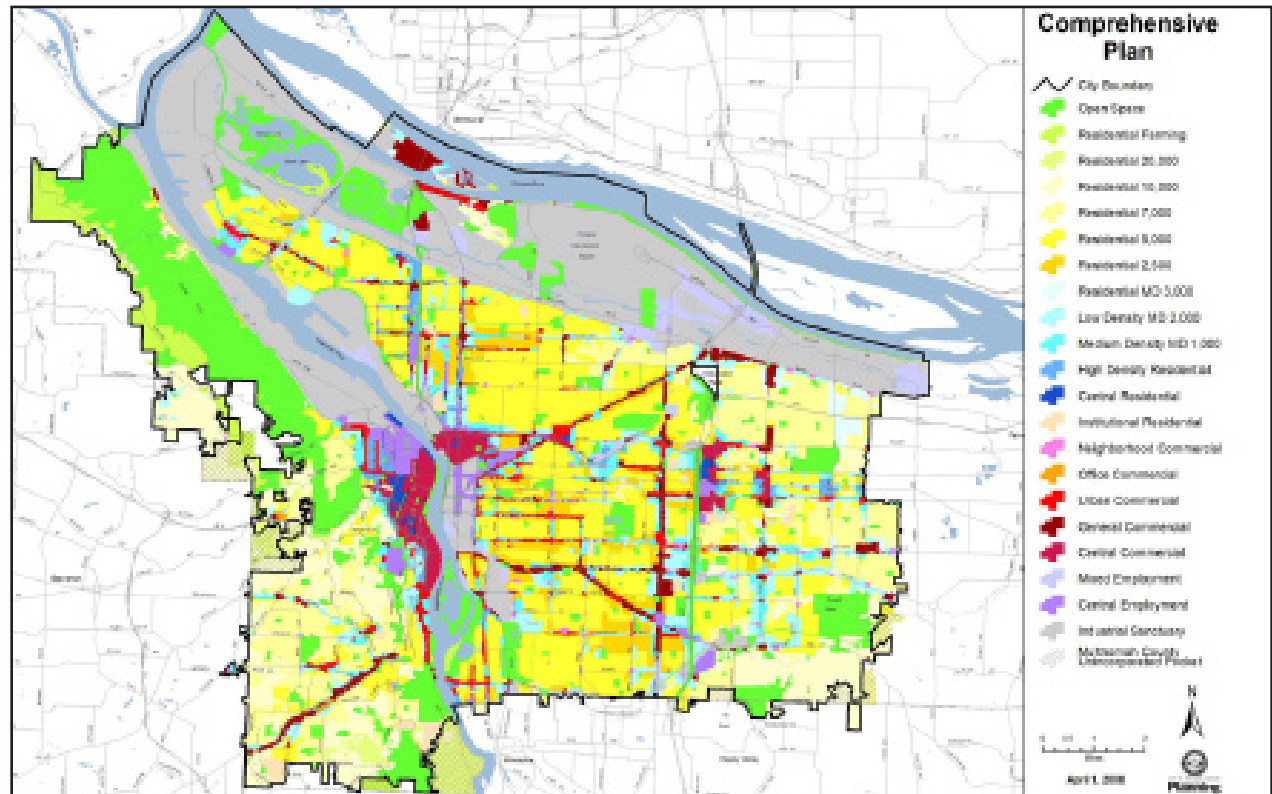


## What is the **Comp plan map**?

The existing **Comp Plan Map** shows the type, location and density of land development and redevelopment permitted in the City of Portland. It was developed by applying the Comp Plan Goals and Policies to all the land within the City. The Plan Map is the official description of allowable zoning, and is the basis for the zoning map.

The Comp Plan map has changed since its original incarnation. For instance, its boundaries have expanded with each annexation of land since 1980. Other changes have been applied in response to the creation of more focused plans for smaller parts of the city. Some of these map updates reflect the Metro 2040 Growth Concept, but the adoption of that regional plan in 1995 has not been addressed on a citywide basis in the map. Also, the current Comp Plan map does not reflect many other City policies, such as the “undevelopable land policy” (floodplain, environmental protection zones, etc.).

The Comp Plan Map provides less detail than the City’s Zoning Map, particularly regarding neighborhood zones. Most of the Zoning Map is consistent with the Comp Plan Map, with the majority of the inconsistencies applying to areas where City Council either determined that the infrastructure was not yet adequate to change the zoning designation, or, while recognizing the desire for long-term transition, did not wish to make the existing uses into non-conforming uses.



## What is the **Public Facilities Plan**?

The **Public Facilities Plan** guides how the City spends money each year to maintain and construct the physical facilities and public services which are necessary to support implementation of the Comp Plan Policies and Map.

Public facilities are expensive and must be laid out and constructed in a highly effective and efficient manner. No comprehensive plan can be effective unless the provision of these urban facilities and services is closely coordinated with the plan, which requires timely updates.

# Context: The Comprehensive Plan

## How is the Comp Plan organized?

The Comp Plan addresses a broad range of urban issues, which are organized into 12 goals, listed on the chart on this page.

Each of the 12 goals in Portland's existing Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies document essentially acts as a chapter of the overall plan. Each chapter begins with a goal statement followed by a section titled "Policies & Objectives" and, as needed, an additional section listing further actions to achieve the overall goal.

Each of the sections varies somewhat in length, complexity and formatting; they also vary in that some sections have been updated entirely (housing, transportation) and others partly or not at all. "Goal 6 – Transportation," the longest section, was amended in 2006 when the Transportation System Plan was updated. The section that has been amended the most is "Goal 8 – Environment," while only "Goal 9 – Citizen Involvement" has never been changed.

	Metropolitan Coordination	Urban Development	Neighborhoods	Housing	Economic Development	Transportation	Energy	Environment	Citizen Involvement	Plan Review & Administration	Public Facilities	Urban Design	
<b>COMP PLAN SECTION GOAL #</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>TOTAL # Goals</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9*</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>
<b># Policies</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>240</b>
<b># Objectives</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>801</b>

### Goals

**Clear statements about the desired future; the target for all our efforts. Being value-based, goals are the broadest expressions of a community's desires. They often describe ideal situations that would result if all plan purposes were fully realized.**

### Policies

**Directions we take to meet our goals. As broad, guiding statements, policies set preferred courses of action.**

### Objectives

**Specific actions we take to meet our goals. As more focused statements, objectives explain how to carry out a plan, and are measurable in how they are meeting the goals of a plan.**

## What topics & issues does the Comp Plan cover?

This report assesses topics which will be of particular relevance to city-wide planning for Portland's future in the update to the City's Comp Plan. As a starting point, the 12 goals of the existing Comp Plan Goals and Policies document have been considered (as described on the previous page and at right).

The state-mandated Periodic Review process requires that communities focus on five of the 19 statewide goals: urbanization, housing, economic development, transportation and public facilities. (They are the topics printed in the green boxes at right.) However, for Portland, state requirements are only a starting point. Other established goals and new ideas are part of the citywide conversation about Portland's future, and thus we are evaluating sustainability and the environment as well in this report.

Therefore, this Assessment focuses on seven major topics – Housing, Economic Development, Transportation, Sustainability, Environment, Public Facilities and Urban Form. In the pages that follow are the Bureau of Planning staff's evaluation of the Comp Plan's current coverage of these topics and suggestions for future planning.

Thought this document follows the existing Comp Plan structure, part of the Portland Plan process will be to determine the most appropriate structure for the new generation of the Comp Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan goals printed below in GREEN are being required by state Periodic Review to be updated. Goals in brown are not.

### 1 Metropolitan Coordination

Describes coordination with Metro, and state and federal laws. Deals with the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). Reflects on-going relationships.

### 2 Urban Development

Provides 27 policies relating to urban development – about annexation, infill, transit-supportive density, mixed-use and more.

### 3 Neighborhoods

Supports, among other things, neighborhood diversity, involvement and planning.

### 4 Housing

Addresses housing supply, safety and quality, opportunity and affordability. Completely updated in 1999.

### 5 Economic Development

Focuses on the City's role in fostering a strong and diverse economy.

### 6 Transportation

Sets forth nine major policy objectives for transportation, along with 236 specific actions. More technical transportation planning is in the City's Transportation Systems Plan – which was updated in 2007 and will be adjusted as needed.

### 7 Energy

Began the City's forward-thinking policies about energy efficiency and the connection between energy and land use. Likely to become part of City's conversation about sustainability.

### 8 Environment

Deals with a wide range of environmental issues including Air and Water Quality and Land Resources. Demonstrates Portlanders' deep commitment to the environment. For this reason, this goal was evaluated.

### 9 Citizen Involvement

"Sets the stage" for public involvement by giving general direction about the extent of and approach to engagement that planning projects need. Specific activities for a particular planning project are set up at the time of that project, tailored to its needs. Citizen involvement is at the heart of all planning in Portland.

### 10 Plan Review and Administration

Describes how the plan should be reviewed and amended over time. Also provides definitions for all the Comp Plan Map designations.

### 11 Public Facilities

Contains nine goals – one general and one each for the eight specific to public service categories: Public Rights-of-Way; Sanitary and Stormwater Facilities; Solid Waste; Water Service; Parks and Recreation; Public Safety: Fire; Public Safety: Police; and Schools. Provides direction on how to provide and maintain different services and facilities.

### 12 Urban Design

Promotes different ways to enhance Portland as a livable city. Includes topics such as Portland character, historic preservation, pedestrian provisions, promotion of the arts, neighborhood preservation, and design quality. Some of these topics are addressed in the Urban Form section of this Assessment.

## What you'll **find** in the pages ahead

### Topic Areas Evaluated:

#### 1. Economic Development

Economic development is concerned with the policies and goals around improving the performance and capacity of our economy to build a better economic future and quality of life.

***This topic focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 5: Economic Development***

#### 2. Environment

Environment refers to our natural systems; the services this green “infrastructure” provides for us; and the ways the built environment affects natural systems.

***This topic focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 8: Environment***

#### 3. Housing

Housing covers the policies and goals around making sure Portlanders have access to affordable, healthy dwellings.

***This topic focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 4: Housing***

#### 4. Infrastructure

Infrastructure addresses the systems supplying water, sewer, stormwater, transportation, parks and civic services. The City's infrastructure systems vary in service area, capacity to accommodate growth, replacement value and condition.

***This topic focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 11: Public Facilities***

#### 5. Sustainability

Sustainability includes a set of topics which together work to improve the environmental, social and economic health of Portland.

***This topic focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 4: Housing; Goal 5: Economic Development; Goal 6: Transportation; Goal 7: Energy; Goal 8: Environment; Goal 11: Public Facilities***

#### 6. Transportation

Transportation plays a major role in shaping the city. It is instrumental in maintaining our quality of life, affecting how we get around, how we move goods and do business, and how we treat the environment.

***This topic focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 6: Transportation***

#### 7. Urban Form

Urban form is the physical shape and structure of the city. Portland's urban form is shaped by natural topography and the economic, transportation, environmental, land use and aesthetic choices made by a city's residents – past and present.

***This topic focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 2: Urban Development; Goal 6: Transportation; Goal 12: Urban Design***

### Section Development

Over the past 6 months, City staff from multiple bureaus met to assess the existing Comprehensive Plan. The following sections reflect the work of these teams. The complete reports are available online at [www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan](http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan).

### Discussion of each topic area is organized as follows:

- 1. Introduction:** What are the main issues at play here?
- 2. Policy Context, Background & Gaps:** Given the policies, regulations, programs and guidelines that are in place, are there gaps or areas where revisions need to be made?
- 3. Current Conditions & Trends:** Where are we now in regard to this topic? Where might we expect conditions to be in the future?
- 4. Opportunities & Challenges:** What possibilities are there to build on, and what are the major obstacles to overcome? (Sometimes a situation can be both an opportunity and a challenge.)
- 5. Initial Questions:** What are some questions that help start conversation about the issue? What are some of the things we'll have to answer in order to develop suggested directions or solutions to some of the challenges and trends?
- 6. For More Information:** Where do I find more details?

**What are these boxes?** – Many of the technical terms used in this document are printed in *green italics* to indicate that the term is defined in the yellow box at the bottom right of the page.

# Economic Development

This section focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: *Goal 5: Economic Development*

## Introduction

Economic development is concerned with improving the performance and capacity of an area's business and commercial activities to build a better economic future and quality of life. It fosters a favorable investment environment, which in turn creates jobs and raises income levels by several means: strengthening the area's competitive advantages; building growth capacity (land, infrastructure, and workforce development); directly assisting businesses in strategic sectors; and other efforts.

The Portland Plan is an opportunity to clarify the City's role and priorities in how we might position Portland in the global, regional and metropolitan area economy while building on competitive strengths and core values.

The Planning Bureau will partner with the Portland Development Commission (PDC) to develop short- and long-range direction for economic development. PDC is spearheading an effort to create a five-year Economic Development Strategy which will reflect the policy direction established in the Portland Plan. State planning goals also require research and analysis on providing adequate land and infrastructure to support expected job growth over the next 20 years.

## Policy Context, Background & Gaps

An assessment of existing policies for economic development in Portland reveals the following gaps:

- **Lack of a common economic development goal:** Policy and strategic direction for economic development in Portland is provided in various plans, visions, and strategies, each with different core economic development goals centered on their respective implementation roles or specific geography.
- **Lack of focused direction within plans:** Current economic development plans are typically long, unfocused and provide detailed

direction that is presented without any clear link to core ideas and priorities for the planning period.

- **Lack of explicit performance measures or targets:** The Comp Plan and other strategies that set direction for economic development efforts in Portland typically do not specify how to measure progress. Measures of success would facilitate innovative, adaptive responses over time.
- **Lack of direction on how to position Portland within federal, state, Metro and county efforts:** Current policies do not clarify the City's economic development goals or roles in relation to its inter-jurisdictional partners. Current City policies and strategies also do not set out an explicit legislative or funding agenda to support the City's economic development objectives.
- **Lack of a goal for capturing Portland metropolitan area jobs:** As job centers in suburban locations develop and expand, the proportion of metropolitan area jobs located in Portland is falling. The Comp Plan provides no goals or strategies for capturing metropolitan area job growth.
- **Lack of policies on new and current topics:** The Comp Plan does not provide direction on issues that have become more pressing today than in 1980, including global and regional competitiveness; equity; sustainability; *brownfield* redevelopment; workforce development; and business climate.

## Current Conditions & Trends

**Economic growth:** The Portland metropolitan area economy shows strong long-term economic growth. The 6-county metropolitan economy (including Clark County, WA) has grown from \$38.7 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) in 1992 to \$95.6 billion in 2005, an average annual growth rate of 7.2%.

**Economic globalization:** Rapid expansion of technologies has facilitated international trade; for instance, we conduct business



The Fox Tower is a 600,000 SF, 27-story, high-rise commercial structure located on a full block in the heart of downtown Portland. The investment in this and surrounding structures exemplifies the significant role that downtown plays in the region.

*brownfield* – Vacant or underutilized land that has real or perceived environmental contamination from past use which is an obstacle to redevelopment.

worldwide over the internet and ship goods across the globe in containers on ever larger ships. Many business leaders in Portland's *traded sectors* have stated the need to reinvent their business products to stay competitive. Whether a business expands in Portland or elsewhere in the world has come to depend on competitive factors like the availability of trained labor, operating costs and access to infrastructure.

**Diversifying economic structure:** While Oregon's economic history is often described as a recent "transition" from a resource-based to high-tech economy, Portland's particular economic history is more diverse. The city has played many roles: in the 1800s as a regional commercial center and seaport; after World War I as a metals manufacturing center; and now also as a center for creative services.

**Changing mix of occupations:** The share of city residents working in management, professional, technical, and creative occupations is expanding, rising from 24 to 42% between 1970 and 2005. The manufacturing and service sectors also remain strong components of our economy.

**Growing equity gap:** Economic distress for the most disadvantaged residents is aggravated by business cycles. National business cycles have generated somewhat wider swings in unemployment rates in the Portland metro area than in the nation as a whole over the last decade. Metro poverty rates climbed again with the 2001 recession, and in Multnomah County those rates have been substantially higher than in the region as a whole. The income benefits of economic growth since 1979 have been concentrated almost entirely in the top fifth of Oregon households (see chart at right). More people also seem to be taking second jobs and/or temporary jobs than in the past.

**Market potential for sustainable development:** Climate change and increasing energy costs have already begun to stimulate new

growth industries in alternative energy production, energy efficiency, and related fields. In Portland there has been significant new business growth related to solar power manufacturing, biofuels, wind energy, and green building design and engineering services.

## Opportunities

**Portland's industry clusters:** Portland has several *industry clusters* that currently or could in the future play a major role in the Portland metropolitan area economy. Promoting these clusters is the biggest and best opportunity to support and grow Portland's economy. Portland's target industry clusters are high tech, traditional manufacturing, creative services and design, and sustainability.

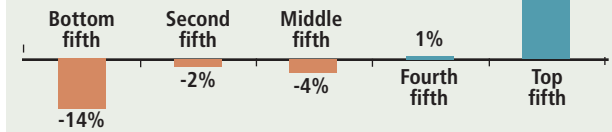
**Labor, land and infrastructure:** Industry leaders are clear that in order to be competitive, businesses need *productive capacity* – that is, access to high-quality land, labor and infrastructure. The public sector has opportunities to provide and build on our great universities, infrastructure and our strong central city and industrial sanctuaries to support economic development.

**Portland as a competitive model for innovation and attracting talent:** Distinctiveness and livability have made Portland competitive, bringing new highly-skilled workers to fuel our knowledge-based growth. Several recent indexes rank cities' economic competitiveness on such attractiveness criteria. The "City Vitals" report by CEOs for Cities and Joe Cortright (2007) is an example of one of those indexes, emphasizing talent, innovation, connections, and distinctiveness. Portland ranks relatively high among the 50 largest U.S. cities in many measures of these factors.

**Growth as regional commercial center and distribution hub:** In addition to its traded sectors, Portland has long been the core city to a growing Columbia Basin market. In this economic role, Portland

## An Oregon Economy for the Few . . .

From 1979 to 2005, the average real adjusted gross income grew 47% for the top fifth of Oregon households, but stagnated or dropped for all other income groups.



NOTE: "Households" here refers to tax filers with positive adjusted gross incomes. Excludes negative returns from bottom fifth. Adjusted for inflation using 2005 dollars with CPI-U. Source: OCPP analysis of Oregon Dept. of Revenue data.

**traded sectors** – Manufacturers and some service providers that compete in global markets. These companies typically export a majority of their goods and services outside the regional market area, thus bringing revenue into the region. These companies help fuel the local and regional economies.

**industry clusters** – groups of businesses and suppliers in industries that make up specializations of the region's economic base (traded sectors). Their grouping in the region lowers their production costs (agglomeration economies).

**productive capacity** – the maximum possible output of an economy or business. It includes the productive resources, entrepreneurial capabilities and production linkages needed to produce goods and services.

**zoning capacity** – the maximum amount of development allowed under current zoning in the City's zoning code; for example, a standard 5,000 sq. ft. residential lot zoned R1 has a zoning capacity of five living units.

offers a variety of regional services that generate substantial job growth and bring income into the metro area, including transportation, professional and business services, finance, utilities, health care, higher education and entertainment.

**Land for growth:** Many parts of the city have room for businesses to grow. Portland's industrial districts have considerable vacant land, particularly in the airport district. The Central City has surplus zoning capacity and thus could be built up more intensely under existing zoning regulations than it currently is. The Central Eastside and Gateway stand out as areas Metro has designated as having high long-term growth potential within the metro region. Similarly, **commercial corridors** offer strong market potential to share in Portland metropolitan area residential and commercial growth, while some neighborhoods appear underserved by commercial land. Finally, some large institutions have location-specific needs for campus growth.

**Distinctive and vibrant neighborhood business districts:** visionPDX highlights the extent to which Portlanders value the quality of neighborhood business districts. The city's commercial streets vary widely, from pedestrian-friendly mixtures of upscale, artful, locally-serving businesses to areas of mostly auto-oriented services. In addition, independent businesses, specialty shops and "slow food" (distinct from fast food) restaurants are quickly evolving, forming important commercial market niches. Market performance of the commercial corridors also varies widely; some are "soft" ("underperforming," with low sales), some "transitional" ("emerging" markets where business activity is increasing), and some "healthy" (strong, stable sales or newly revitalized business activity). These corridors offer great opportunities for job growth, quality of life improvements, infill and redevelopment and expansion of market niches.

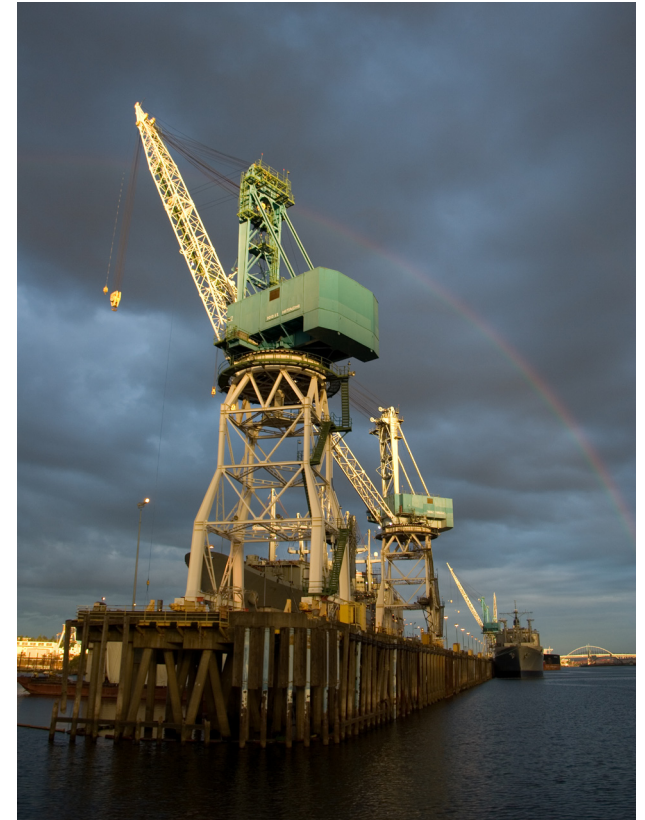
**Promoting sustainable development:** Accumulating expertise in green building development, solar energy, biofuels and related fields can help catalyze sustainable business development in the region and expand local economies of scale in the growing energy sector. Public and private investments in these technologies could transform the products and services available both locally and to a broader market while developing new job opportunities, benefiting the Portland metropolitan area economy and providing protection against price spikes in energy, food and building materials.

**Public-private partnerships and private incentives:** International trends toward public-private funding show promise, including highway toll roads, developer partnerships in large infrastructure projects, **real estate investment trusts**, and others. Incentives are also increasingly used to strategically leverage private sector investments.

## Challenges

**Site readiness challenges:** Traded sector businesses attracted to Oregon often list the City of Portland as their preferred location but then settle for a suburban or rural location in the metro area due to a lack of large, development-ready sites in Portland. Analysis of the city's industrial land supply indicates that almost one-third of the available unoccupied industrial land is brownfield property which will need to be "remediated," or cleaned of its environmental contaminants, before it can be redeveloped. Hundreds of potential commercial brownfields have also been identified in Portland.

**Infrastructure needs:** Portland has a growing maintenance backlog of aging infrastructure, and population growth will only strain that infrastructure further and increase capacity needs. Meanwhile, there is a wide gap between transportation projects being planned to meet that capacity and budgets to actually fund the projects.



The Swan Island Shipyard on the Willamette. Portland's working harbor is a West Coast trade gateway, Oregon's largest seaport and the region's largest heavy industrial area.

**commercial corridors** – Portland has identified 93 segments of commercial activity, like stores and offices, along the city's streets. Portland's commercial corridors have an average length of one mile.

**real estate investment trusts** – An organization similar to an investment company but concentrating its holdings in real estate investments.

**Workforce development:** Access to higher education in Oregon has not kept pace with global trends or competitive opportunities. Additionally, vocational training will be challenged to keep pace with retiring “baby boomers” and industrial growth. Training programs have a key role in matching workforce supply with demand. Workforce development programs have been criticized for not meeting the needs of lower-income populations with many barriers to employment.

**Underused place-based commercial revitalization tools:** A variety of commercial revitalization programs are widely used in U.S. cities, such as Main Street programs, business improvement districts (BIDs), and community development corporations focused on economic development and housing. Except for Portland’s urban renewal areas (which are limited to 15% of the area of the city) and two BIDs (Lloyd District and Central City), commercial revitalization tools have been sparsely used among Portland’s 93 commercial corridors.

- **Limitations of existing funding models:** Economic development in Portland has relied on a variety of public financing mechanisms including the use of local, state and federal tax revenues, **tax increment financing**, private funding and grants. Some of the primary funding models used today are not necessarily adequate or well suited to emerging needs:
- Urban renewal funding is a primary funding source for traded sector business development, but it is limited to bricks-and-mortar solutions and extends to only 15% of the city.
- Gas taxes, **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**, and higher education revenues have not kept pace with transportation, equity, and workforce development needs.
- Emerging, largely unfunded needs are becoming more important

to economic competitiveness, such as brownfield redevelopment and freight rail investments.

### Initial Questions

**The following questions provide a starting point for conversation on the future of economic development in Portland:**

1. How can we position Portland in the global and regional economy to remain a prosperous city, building on our competitive strengths and core values?
2. How can we increase economic activity, job growth and capital investments in target businesses and industries that strengthen our economic base?
3. Where should we locate projected employment growth and what infrastructure investments are needed to support it?
4. How do we leverage our investment in building energy efficiency, clean energy infrastructure, and distributed, clean energy technology, with associated economic impacts and job creation?
5. How can we expand economic opportunities in the city to reduce poverty and revitalize economically distressed areas?

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

A more fully detailed report on the economic development topic area is available at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>



Food carts are a part of the city’s economy, providing a low-cost way to start up a small business. This cart sits on an otherwise empty lot in North Portland, in the Mississippi neighborhood.

**tax increment financing (TIF)** – Under the TIF funding method, property tax revenues attributable to new development within an urban renewal area are reinvested back into that area to subsidize further improvements, rather than being distributed to the larger taxing district. The “increment” of increase from current tax rolls benefits the district only for a specified number of years.

**Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)** – Community Development Block Grants are funds provided to local and state governments from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development for community development, housing and economic development programs.



# Environment

This section focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 8: Environment

## Introduction

To describe what “environment” means in Portland is to speak of many things – not only the natural systems whose functions sustain fish and wildlife, but also the many services this green “infrastructure” provides for us by cleaning air and water, capturing and storing carbon, safeguarding us from hazards, contributing to a high quality of life and providing places to recreate and enjoy natural beauty. “Environment” also means the ways the built environment affects natural systems by increasing stormwater runoff, generating waste and heat and in some cases providing surrogate wildlife habitat.

Healthy natural systems are valued community assets that, without careful planning, face daunting challenges from population growth, climate change, and the cumulative effects of urban life. While the City has various environmental policies that address discrete aspects of these problems, up-to-date, cohesive policy guidance is needed to ensure ongoing environmental health for current and future generations.

## Policy Context, Background & Gaps

Many of the Comp Plan policies that relate to the environment are outdated and reflect neither “best practices,” current City policies, regulatory mandates nor the latest thinking about environmental processes. In addition, in the nearly 30 years since the original Comp Plan was adopted, many new environmental issues have come to light. For example, the Plan in 1980 did not anticipate global warming and threats to salmon species.

To fill in the policy gaps, more current environmental policies have been developed by various City bureaus to address specific environmental issues. Examples include the Portland Watershed Management Plan, Portland’s Sustainability Principles and the Urban Forestry Management Plan.

A more holistic, integrated set of environmental policies is needed in the Portland Plan to direct current and future City decision-making in a manner that recognizes the interrelated nature of the environmental challenges we face. New policies should use interdisciplinary approaches to promote environmental protection, restoration and enhancement and healthier, more vital communities. Some new policies could relate to:

- Growth and Development:** The City adopted its *environmental overlay zoning* program and accompanying natural resource management plans over the last couple of decades to protect significant natural resources from growth and development. In the late 1990s, the City made a commitment to recovery of fish listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. This prompted a reexamination of the zoning program, including an updated inventory of riparian and upland habitats, some of which are not currently protected. Other projects point to the need for an additional review of environmental zoning. In 2004, the City adopted River Renaissance objectives to simultaneously achieve cleaner rivers, revitalized riverfronts and a prosperous harbor. Currently, the City is updating its 20-year old Willamette Greenway Program through the River Plan project. And, in the next few years, the City must comply with Metro’s Nature in the Neighborhoods program, which is a region-wide mandate for protecting, conserving, and restoring significant natural resources.
- Natural systems:** The Portland Watershed Management Plan, adopted in 2005, provides a set of goals, objectives and strategies to restore the health of urban watersheds in a way that sustains and improves *hydrology*, water quality, habitat and biological communities. By planning at a watershed scale and by implementing strategies that meet both wildlife and human health objectives,



Community restoration work at Tideman Johnson Park during the Johnson Creek Watershed Council’s Annual Watershed-Wide Event. In 2008, about 400 volunteers participated in this event, planting over 6,000 plants. To date, BES has restored over 62 acres of Johnson Creek, its tributaries and its floodplain.

*environmental overlay zoning* – Environmental overlay zones protect resources and functional values that have been identified by the City as providing benefits to the public. The environmental regulations encourage flexibility and innovation in site planning and provide for development that is carefully designed to be sensitive to the site’s protected resources.

*hydrology* – the scientific study of the waters of the earth, dealing with the properties, distribution, and circulation of water on and below the earth’s surface and in the atmosphere

the document represents new ways of planning in Portland. Also, in the past few years, the City has increased attention on key terrestrial species and their habitats. Portland is also one of several cities to participate in the Urban Migratory Bird Conservation Treaty Act. In addition, Metro open space bond measure purchases, along with significant land acquisitions by the City, will improve connections between sensitive wildlife habitat areas.

- **Infrastructure:** The City is investing \$1.4 billion in a 20-year program to control *combined sewer overflows (CSOs)* to the Columbia Slough and the Willamette River. The City has also reconsidered how stormwater is handled, resulting in adoption of the Stormwater Management Manual, which calls for stormwater to be managed at or near the source whenever possible rather than automatically drained into pipes. These alternative approaches – including eco-roofs, green streets, swales and stormwater planters – benefit both human and environmental health. Recent City Council adoption of the Green Street Policy is another example of the City's commitment to strategies that treat stormwater as a resource, rather than a liability. The Urban Forestry Action Plan and the Invasive Species Strategy also demonstrate a new City direction in assessing and managing the urban forest as an asset of citywide importance.
- **Public health and safety:** The City has a number of programs aimed at improving water quality and reducing pollution, in part in response to the federal *Superfund* listing of Portland Harbor and to State of Oregon limits to total maximum daily loads of several pollutants in the Willamette and its tributaries. The City has also mobilized to help reduce local contributions to global warming; many of these strategies also address air quality.

### Current Conditions & Trends

While Portland has a wealth of natural resources, many have been degraded by development practices that treat natural conditions as problems to overcome rather than as the foundation for distinctive communities.

**Waterways and Habitat:** All of Portland's major water bodies (except Balch Creek) are currently on the state's water quality "limited" list because they do not meet water quality standards for bacteria, temperature, toxics and dissolved oxygen. Salmon species are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act and anchor habitats for terrestrial species are in degraded condition. Connections between stream and terrestrial habitat are being lost, further threatening sensitive species and undermining efforts at species recovery. However, policies and programs are now in place to address many of these problems. Guided by the Portland Watershed Management Plan, significant investment is being made to restore ecological functions in floodplains, streams, riparian areas, and upland habitat throughout the city.

**Urban Trees:** Portland's trees provide ecosystem services such as cleaning the air and reducing urban heat with an estimated value of \$27 million annually and a replacement value of nearly \$5 billion. However, the urban forest is unevenly distributed. Many older neighborhoods have landmark trees, while other areas have few street trees. Many trees have been lost to redevelopment and the replacement trees have yet to grow to a significant size. The Urban Forestry Management Plan concluded that people in lower-income areas often have fewer resources to care for trees. This often results in fewer street and yard trees or trees that are in poor condition.

**Air quality:** Over the past decade, Portland's air quality has improved, even as population has increased. However, there still are incidents when air quality does not meet National Ambient Air Quality Standards.



Peregrine Falcons nest on many of the Portland bridges that cross the Willamette River, including the St. Johns, Fremont and Marquam Bridges.



Inside the 14-foot diameter, 3.5 mile West Side Big Pipe, one of several City projects to control "combined sewer overflows" (CSOs).

**combined sewer overflows (CSOs)** – Release of untreated sewage and stormwater directly into marine waters, lakes and rivers during heavy rainfall, when the sewers have reached their capacity.

**Superfund** – Federal and state laws designed to clean up sites where improper disposal of hazardous substances caused soil and ground water contamination.

## Opportunities

Portland consistently serves as a national model for environmental planning and sustainability. Remaining natural resources, local expertise and an overall ethic of concern for the environment are important assets to build on in order to improve local conditions. Other opportunities relate to:

### Growth and Development

- Access to natural and recreational resources, parks and open spaces is one of the most important reasons people and businesses choose to locate in a particular place. Maintaining and expanding the quality of these resources has economic as well as ecological benefits.
- Developing land use plans that integrate and sustain the natural character of the land and functions of the natural systems will enhance community distinctiveness and reduce negative environmental impacts.
- Redeveloping brownfields (areas unused because of contamination) has the potential to increase the industrial land supply and improve environmental conditions.

### Natural systems

- There is increased expertise in accounting for ecosystem services, such as the economic analysis of Portland's trees described earlier.
- Watershed councils and stewardship groups play a critical role in inter-jurisdictional environmental coordination; they also conduct critical projects to remove invasive species and plant native vegetation while improving neighborhood pride.
- Metro and City acquisition efforts are securing important habitat sites in West Portland, the Columbia Slough and southeast buttes to help preserve habitat connectivity and other ecological functions.

- The City's established regulatory and non-regulatory environmental protection, conservation and restoration programs can be expanded and improved to conserve critical natural resources.

### Infrastructure

- New approaches to stormwater management are being developed that mimic ecological functions and contribute to high-quality urban design. Portland landscape designers have gained national recognition for their innovative designs using these new approaches.
- Portland's expanding Green Streets program is creating attractive streetscapes that enhance neighborhood livability and provide cost-effective stormwater infiltration.
- The Urban Forestry Action Plan provides a guide for increasing tree canopy cover to 33% (from the existing 26%), with a focus on planting in underutilized and non-traditional areas.

### Public health and safety

- Scientific and public acknowledgement that human activities are causing global warming can serve as an impetus for actions to reduce its impacts.
- There is a growing awareness of the connection between public health, mental health and access to the natural environment, including parks, natural areas and the urban forest.
- Local floodplain restoration efforts are reducing potential public safety risks related to flooding.
- Bicycle commuting is increasingly popular and funding for bicycle facilities has been increasing, promising benefits for air quality and public health. An expanding network of trails further promotes health-enhancing bicycle and pedestrian recreation.
- Community gardens, farmers markets and *community-supported agriculture* operations provide access to healthful, locally-grown food.



This street planter collects and treats stormwater onsite before filtering it back into the ground. Portland has 475 green streets to date, with 950 planned for the next five years.

## Challenges

Accommodating hundreds of thousands of additional people in the Metro region while striving to restore ecosystems will be a bracing challenge. In the event of more rapid population growth fueled by climate migration, the challenge will be even more daunting. Even now, piped streams, increased impervious areas, lost trees, spreading invasive species, soil erosion, and hardened riverbanks are breaking down ecological processes. The results include damaged floods and landslides; polluted air, water and land; declining fish and wildlife populations; and economic disinvestment in environmentally-challenged areas.

### Growth and Development

- Population growth is increasing pressure to develop environmentally-sensitive lands, including areas that Portland's environmental zoning program does not protect.

- Policies to increase density contribute to the loss of mature trees, making it difficult to increase or even retain tree cover. This affects neighborhood identity, access to nature, wildlife habitat and stormwater infiltration.

### Natural systems

- Climate change may result in widespread ecological change, including a higher water level in the Willamette River, increased stream flows during the winter, increased soil erosion, and lower stream flows and higher stream temperatures during the summer. All of these impacts can affect human health and safety and further threaten fish and wildlife species.
- Household, industrial and transportation-related chemicals are degrading water quality.
- Current preservation strategies do not adequately or holistically protect natural systems from the cumulative impacts of urban development.
- City policies and actions must comply with multiple Metro, state and federal regulations related to environmental quality, public health and species at risk.

### Infrastructure

- Many parts of the city lack sufficient ecological or built systems to handle stormwater runoff.
- The City's infrastructure approaches do not account for many benefits of natural systems, including cooling and cleaning the air and water. This affects the City's ability to appropriately plan for and manage these assets.

### Public health and safety

- Climate change and urban activities could increase peak energy demand, air conditioning costs, air pollution levels, and heat-related illness and mortality.

- Population growth and climate change create uncertainty about long-term water availability. Increased reliance on groundwater is possible as rainfall patterns change.
- Lower-income neighborhoods often have limited access to nature, including larger open spaces and urban street trees.
- Residents of low-income residential communities are more likely to suffer from health problems related to environmental problems.
- Food insecurity is a significant problem for low-income residents, and is related to such obstacles as the availability, accessibility, and affordability of healthful foods.

### Initial Questions

***The following questions provide a starting point for conversation on the future of the environment in Portland:***

1. How can we integrate watershed management strategies into the work of all City bureaus to most effectively achieve complementary goals for planning, implementing, and maintaining Portland's land resources and infrastructure?
2. How can we improve the health of our watersheds, while accommodating population growth, promoting job and economic growth, and creating compact urban communities?
3. How do we move from planning approaches that "balance" environmental goals against other goals, to approaches that recognize that healthy natural systems are the foundation for the city's long-term vitality?
4. How can development patterns accommodate growth without disproportionately exposing low-income residents to environmental hazards?
5. How can access to parks, open spaces, and natural areas be more equitably distributed throughout the city to ensure that all Portlanders, especially children, have ample opportunities to learn from and enjoy nature?



Peregrine Falcons nest on many of the Portland bridges that cross the Willamette River, including the St. Johns, Fremont and Marquam Bridges.

6. How can our communities be planned to promote the availability of healthful and affordable food?

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

A more fully detailed report on the environment topic area is available at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>

**Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA)** – A model of food production, sales, and distribution in which there is a direct link between the small farm and local community members. The farmer sells shares of subscriptions for the year's crops. Customers usually pay early in the year and then receive a weekly box of produce for a set number of weeks. The goal is to reduce the financial risks involved for the farmers.

# Housing

This section focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 4: Housing.

## Introduction

Portland's housing market is the largest in the metro area and continues to capture at least 20 percent of the region's growth in housing units. Certain areas have experienced particularly robust housing growth. For instance, in Central City the construction of thousands of new housing units is helping create new residential neighborhoods. This new construction has provided a wide variety of housing units to accommodate our increasing and changing population. However, more and more households than in the past are struggling with rising housing costs, especially if they seek housing close to good transit service and jobs.

## Policy Context, Background & Gaps

The City of Portland's ability to influence the housing market is limited. It can designate areas for housing development, provide incentives for desired housing types, ensure housing safety and quality through enforcement of City codes and engage in some site assembly for new residential and mixed-use development. In addition, the City can and does use its own funds as well as those from the federal and state governments to intervene in the market to meet the needs of Portland residents of limited means and the fewest housing choices.

Portland's Comprehensive Plan Goal 4, Housing, is the City's overall housing policy, guiding all the activities mentioned above. City Council adopted a complete update of this goal and all its policies and objectives, in 1999. The new policies incorporated the direction set by City and Metro plans since the adoption of the original Comp Plan in 1980, including community and neighborhood plans and Metro's 2040 Growth Concept.

Nearly ten years have passed since the update to the Comp Plan housing goal, and some of the trends that were present at the beginning

of this decade have accelerated. For instance, housing prices continue to rise faster than incomes. Different housing types like live/work units are now more in demand. The need for and interest in sustainable development—which includes providing housing near frequent service transit and reducing energy costs and resource consumption—has become greater, especially due to rapidly rising fuel costs and concern over global warming. Moreover, some new City initiatives have been adopted, such as the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.

Some possible new or revised policies for the housing goal might include the following:

- Consider transportation and housing costs together:** National studies show that, aside from the cost of housing, transportation costs are the single largest expenditure for low- and moderate-income households. Considering these two expenses together as the City plans for future affordable housing could reduce overall living expenses for residents. Locating affordable housing where access to frequent public transit is available or planned, and where streets and sidewalks allow for safe biking and walking, could lessen transportation costs in the future.
- Gentrification/displacement:** The popularity of Portland's close-in neighborhoods has spurred considerable rehabilitation and new construction of housing and commercial space in those areas. An unfortunate consequence of this new investment has been the displacement of low, moderate, and even middle income families due to rising housing prices and rents. In recent years, attention has been focused on gentrification of and resulting displacement of residents from those close-in, revitalizing areas. In the future, displacement and gentrification are likely to affect other areas of the City given its attractiveness as a place to live and expected



The Pearl District north of downtown has gone through a rapid transformation from an industrial area (as demonstrated by the business and older building in the foreground) to a dense, residential community (as seen in the taller residential buildings behind).

## Fast Facts about housing stock in Portland:

- Nearly 63% of the housing stock is single family units.
- Larger multi-family units (10 or more apartments) make up only 20% of the housing stock.
- About 34% of the housing stock in the City was built before 1939.

population growth. Strengthening objectives or adding new ones that call for creating mixed-income neighborhoods so that low, moderate and middle income households are not displaced due to market forces could be explored.

- **Close the minority homeownership gap:** In July 2004, the City Council accepted the report on Strategies to Increase Minority Homeownership Rates that called for closing gaps in homeownership rates between white and minority populations in the City by the year 2015. This objective has community support as well and should be incorporated into the Portland Plan.
- **Other new City initiatives:** Some plans and policies addressing housing have been adopted since 1999 and additions to the Portland Plan’s Housing Policy reflecting their content should be considered. For example, the City along with Multnomah County adopted the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness in 2004; and to address the possible loss of low income housing in the City’s core, City Council passed a resolution calling for “no net loss of affordable housing” in the Central City in 2001.
- **New approaches to affordable housing:** The need for housing affordable to low and moderate income households is growing, but public resources to address the need are not. New approaches are needed to increase the supply of affordable housing without requiring the use of limited public financial resources. Examples of new approaches might include *inclusionary housing policies* and programs to encourage employer-assisted housing.
- **Aging in place/visitability:** Housing constructed or retrofitted according to *universal design* standards serves the needs of people whose mobility is limited and will allow people who do not yet have limitations to “age in place.” One of these standards is *visitability*, which could include features like a “no-step”

entry to a home or wheelchair-accessible bathrooms, thus allowing people with limitations to visit easily. Cities such as Austin, Texas have created incentives for housing that is accessible and visitable.

- **Sustainable housing:** Our present concept of sustainability has grown significantly since the Comp Plan Housing Policy was adopted in 1999. Currently, greater attention is being paid to the possibility of incorporating sustainability principles into housing goals and practices. Potential policies could call for construction of residential buildings with no net energy consumption; installation of energy and heating systems that would cover entire neighborhoods to increase energy efficiency and reduce costs; and integration of new green building standards.
- **Growth share:** Portland currently has a goal of capturing 20% of the region’s population growth. The purpose of that goal, adopted

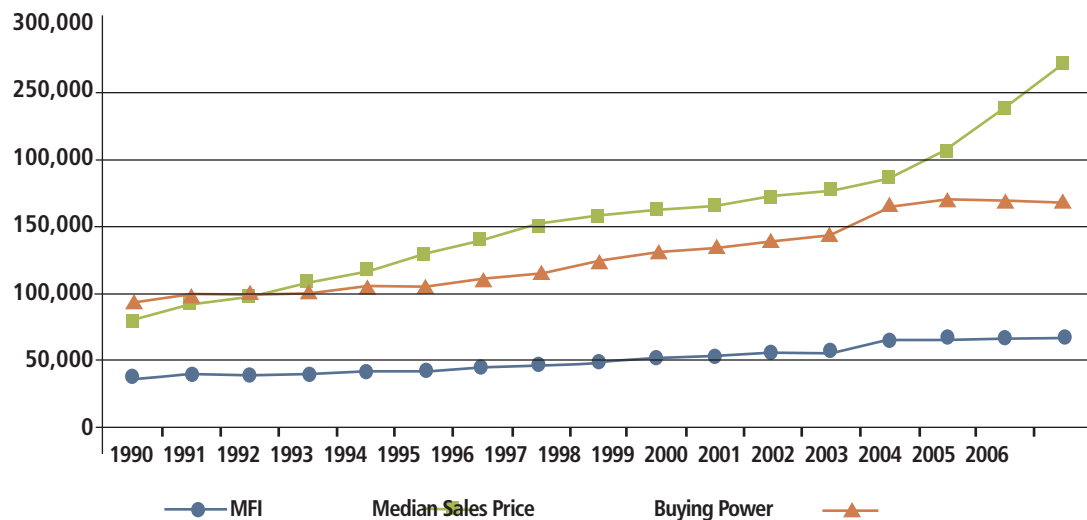
*inclusionary housing policies* – Policies that require that a certain portion of new construction be affordable to people with low to moderate incomes.

*visitability* – When a physically challenged person can visit a home because it was designed to ensure no-step entrances, wide doorways, and at least a half bathroom on the main floor.

*aging in place* – aging in place is not having to move from one’s present residence in order to secure necessary support services in response to changing needs.

*universal design* – When as many people as possible can visit or use the housing regardless of age, ability or circumstance.

Home Buying Power at Median Family Income in Relation to Median Sales Price



SOURCE: PDC. CHART NOTES: MFI-metro area median family income for a family of four. Home Buying Power (Bank Loan of 2.5 \* MFI) - For a family of four at 100% MFI.

in 1991, is to maintain the City's role as the residential, economic and cultural center of the region. Portland has exceeded this population growth share goal for the past decade when measured by new housing units. The City may wish to consider setting a more aggressive target for capturing a portion of the metro area population growth within Portland city limits.

### Current Conditions & Trends

**Homelessness:** On any given night many people are homeless in Portland. Homeless people can be adults, young people, couples or families with children. In January 2007, the City of Portland's Bureau of Housing and Community Development carried out an annual One Night Street Count to find the number of families and individuals who were homeless and slept outside on any given day. More than 1,600 persons were counted that night. The total included 28 families with children, 71 couples, 4 unaccompanied youth under 18 and 1235 single adults.

About 27% of this population is in fact chronically homeless, having lived on the streets for many months or even years. People become homeless for a wide range of reasons like untreated mental illness, a physical disability, domestic violence, addiction or the loss of a job. Additionally, the steep decline in housing affordability has forced some people into homelessness and put some others "at-risk" of becoming homeless. It is noteworthy that there has been a 39% drop in the homeless count since 2005, but it is also likely that the city will continue to have a homeless population.

**Housing affordability:** Housing prices are rising faster than incomes in Portland, particularly since 2003. Although rents have not increased as much as prices of for-sale homes, cost burdens for renters are rising. In 2006, the majority of renters paid more than 30% of their income for housing; that year, almost a third spent over half their income on

housing. (By contrast, a rule of thumb is that no more than one-third of income should be needed to cover housing cost.) In addition, the rental housing supply has been depleted by both condo conversions and the sale of substantial numbers of single-family rental homes to homebuyers. Another source of affordable housing, manufactured home parks, is in danger of being depleted as the land these homes sit on grows in value and is being sold and redeveloped as more expensive housing. These losses of affordable housing could lead to the displacement of vulnerable residents who often are low income and/or elderly residents.

**Condition of housing units:** Housing units that are not in good condition now may either be lost in the future or need expensive rehabilitation. This would put a strain in the City's housing supply. Also, if the likely loss of manufactured home parks in the City is not offset, additional housing units (manufactured homes) may be lost regardless of their condition.

### Opportunities

**Housing demand:** Portland's projected population growth provides a market for denser infill development in urban centers and corridors as designated in Metro's 2040 Growth Concept. Nearly 400 acres of vacant or underutilized land exist in the Central City alone. Based on current zoning, between 50,000-60,000 new housing units could be developed there. Also, at least three Portland universities are expected to significantly expand in the future – creating a significant source of housing demand. Steady housing demand should protect Portland's real estate market from severe downturns.

**More sustainable development:** As car travel grows more expensive due to rising oil prices, demands for housing closer to jobs, transit, schools, and other basic services and stores will increase. This in turn will encourage more mixed-use, high density development opportuni-



The emphasis both the City and Metro have placed on focusing development and density along corridors has resulted in larger condo developments such as this one on SE Belmont.



Neighborhood infill is challenged to fit into or contribute to the fabric of the neighborhood, as these attached homes with welcoming front porches do in North Portland.

ties. At the same time, the market for larger homes that consume large amounts of natural resources and have high heating costs is likely to decrease.

**Workforce housing:** Rising interest in employer-assisted housing and live-work housing could lead to new housing opportunities that allow Portland residents to work close to or at home.

### Challenges

**Decreasing affordability:** Rising housing costs will make it more difficult for low and moderate income households to afford quality housing within the city. Rising prices could also lead to additional gentrification and displacement of the poor, and make initiatives like closing the minority homeownership gap more difficult.

**Increased housing and transportation costs:** Transportation costs will likely take up greater shares of people's budgets due to lack of affordable housing near employment centers and rising fuel prices. This will result in longer commutes for those unable to afford close-in housing.

**Limited resources:** Federal government programs that assist people with affordable housing (i.e., Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Section 8 Housing) are likely to be further strained due to trends of more people needing assistance and program funds being cut.

**Loss of low income housing in private ownership:** A significant portion of the City's low income housing supply is provided by owners who have entered into federal contracts to provide low income housing or have purchased Low Income Housing Tax Credits. These programs require owners to provide low income housing for a certain number of years in exchange for subsidies or tax credits.

After the required affordability periods expire, they are free to convert their project to market rate housing. In the next few decades, hundreds of low income units, some of which are reserved for the elderly or disabled, are at risk of being lost. Public efforts to acquire this housing will be a challenge as a number of these projects are located in the Central City and inner-city neighborhoods where there is a market for high-end condominiums and rentals.

### Initial Questions

***The following questions provide a starting point for conversation on the future of housing in Portland:***

1. How do we help low and moderate income households from being priced out of many Portland neighborhoods, particularly those areas that have good access to transportation, jobs and other opportunities?
2. Should the City try to attract and retain middle income/family households? Should the City try to attract and retain these households in the Central City? How should we do this?
3. What share of the region's population growth should Portland capture? How much of this share should be targeted for the Central City?
4. Are there City zoning and building code regulations that make the provision of affordable housing more expensive? For example, does the *design review* requirement for multifamily housing in some locations add to the cost of providing affordable rental units?
5. Should Portland build and strengthen a permanent supply of affordable housing units in the coming years? In what ways can the City keep rental and ownership units permanently affordable?



**At New Columbia in North Portland, new homes are a mix of types, for people of various household size and income.**

6. How do we want to address chronic homelessness and homeless prevention efforts when Portland's current 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness draws to a close?

**design review** – Process of evaluating development proposals in design overlay zones. The purpose of the review process is to ensure that infill development will be compatible with and enhance the neighborhood. Design review is also used in certain cases to review public and private projects to ensure that they are of a high design quality.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

A more fully detailed report on the housing topic area is available at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>



# Infrastructure

This section focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 11: Public Facilities

## Introduction

The City of Portland provides and maintains over \$21.5 billion worth of assets, most of which are infrastructure systems supplying water, sewer, stormwater, transportation, parks and civic services. The City's infrastructure systems vary in service area, capacity to accommodate growth, replacement value, and condition.

**Other service providers:** In providing services, the City of Portland partners with other service providers and districts, including state and county transportation departments and five school districts. Tri-Met operates the Portland metropolitan area transit system. Metro operates parks and natural areas, the zoo, solid waste disposal contracts and metro area planning services. The Port of Portland operates several marine terminals and four airports, including Portland International. Two railroad companies and Amtrak move goods and people, respectively. Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, and NW Natural provide electric and natural gas to Portland residents and businesses. The many companies in the telecommunications industry provide telephone and internet services to the Portland area.

## Policy Context, Background & Gaps

The Comp Plan addresses infrastructure in the form of the Public Facilities Plan which includes a list of major projects and a number of infrastructure goals and policies. In 1989, the City adopted its first Public Facilities Plan. The transportation element of that plan has been updated, but most of the other elements (and project lists) are outdated.

The Citywide Systems Plan (CSP) will update the 1989 Public Facilities Plan and serve as a new long-range guide to future public infrastructure investments. It will be a 20-year plan for the City's infrastructure systems and publicly-owned and/or -financed buildings and facilities. The CSP will improve coordination between infrastructure planning ef-

orts, consider the community's infrastructure priorities in a consistent fashion and meet or exceed state planning requirements. The CSP will address existing assets, regulatory mandates and new growth.

In reviewing the current Comp Plan, the infrastructure bureaus identified a number of key gaps and new policy areas that need to be addressed. The gaps and new areas represent shifts in thinking, community values and best practices. The City has developed policies related to many of these topics, yet none have been fully integrated into the Comp Plan. These areas will require further study and community consultation before final policies are recommended, but a preliminary summary is as follows:

- **Lack of an overarching infrastructure goal:** The current Comp Plan provides a variety of goals and policies related to infrastructure services. However, the Plan lacks an overarching policy direction to guide an integrated, citywide capital investment program that meets community objectives.
- **Asset and risk management:** The City is getting better at gathering data on the condition and performance of its infrastructure investments: from parks to sewer systems to roads and civic buildings. The City's infrastructure bureaus strive to evaluate the risk of asset failure and to identify the most cost-effective investments to deliver services. However, the existing Comp Plan does not recognize or guide these asset management practices. The City is also exploring development of a risk management policy for infrastructure assets.
- **Watershed planning:** Watershed planning encourages the management, restoration and protection of natural resources at a watershed scale to improve water and air quality, enhance wildlife habitat, sustain community livability, reduce the risk of natural hazards and manage stormwater runoff. The Comp Plan does not reflect the City's current watershed planning policies or practices,



The Citywide Systems Plan will be a coordinated 20-year plan for the City's transportation, water, sewer, stormwater, parks, and civic facilities and will build on the multitudes of research, planning, and public involvement completed by the City's infrastructure bureaus.

## Portland's Infrastructure System at a Glance



**Environmental Services:** The Bureau of Environmental Services provides sewage and stormwater collection and treatment services to 555,000 people, numerous commercial and industrial facilities, and six wholesale customers. The existing system consists of a 1,443 mile network of separated storm and sanitary sewers and 878 miles of combined sewer lines; one hundred pumping stations; two wastewater treatment plants; and green stormwater facilities, including 475 green street facilities and 6 acres of eco-roofs.



**Parks:** Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) manages over 7,000 acres of natural areas and over 3,200 acres of developed parks – about 10% of Portland's land base. There are 180 developed parks, 47 habitat parks, five golf courses, seven botanical gardens, an arboretum and a raceway. PP&R also manages over a million square feet of buildings including 13 swimming pools, 12 community centers, numerous shelters, restrooms and stadiums and one historic mansion. Recreation facilities include 177 miles of trails, 142 playgrounds, over 300 sports fields, 31 community gardens and more than 100 tennis courts.



**Transportation:** The City's transportation system, managed by the Office of Transportation (PDOT), is valued at approximately \$8.1 billion and includes 3,949 lane miles of roads, 157 bridges, 992 traffic signals, eight million square yards of sidewalks, 37,352 improved corners, and over 53,000 street lights. The City's transportation system does not include freeways, state highways (managed by the Oregon Department of Transportation), port facilities (Port of Portland) or the region's transit system (TriMet).



**Civic Facilities:** The City maintains a variety of civic facilities, including police, fire and emergency response buildings and major apparatus; technology and communication systems; office buildings; parking garages; and spectator facilities. These assets are valued at nearly \$1 billion.



**Water:** The City of Portland is the largest supplier of domestic water in Oregon, serving over 800,000 people and providing about 100 million gallons of water per day, or about 36 billion gallons per year. About 60% of the water is delivered to customers within City limits. The remaining 40% is sold to customers in 19 surrounding cities and special water districts. Water is supplied from the Bull Run watershed and the Columbia South Shore wellfield through over 2,000 miles of pipes. The water system is currently valued at about \$5.3 billion.



**Affordable Housing:** Currently, 241 affordable housing projects, ranging from single family homes to high rise apartments and supplying 9,120 units of housing, are provided through City affordability restrictions and financing. The City does not own these units, but has made significant public investment through the Portland Development Commission and the Bureau of Housing and Community Development to ensure these affordable units continue to be available to the community. By City policy, these affordable rental housing projects must remain affordable for a period of 60 years.

as detailed in Portland's Watershed Management Plan, Actions for Watershed Health.

- **Transportation options:** Safe and accessible transportation options, including walking, biking, and transit, can play a significant role in improving social equity, environmental quality and community health. The new Comp Plan should reflect community desires for transportation options in the City's overall transportation network, as well as current practices, policies and programs and the recommendations of modal plans, the Peak Oil Report and the Local Action Plan on Global Warming.
- **Green infrastructure:** Environmental challenges such as global climate change, pollution and habitat loss complicate the City of Portland's ability to provide traditional infrastructure services while maintaining environmental and community health. The Portland Plan should more explicitly and comprehensively consider the ecological and community contributions of green infrastructure (see sidebar), as well as current priorities, policies and practices.

### Current Conditions & Trends

There is a critical need to update the 1989 Public Facilities Plan as there have been significant changes in the city that impact infrastructure needs:

- The population of the City of Portland has grown by over 130,000 residents since 1989.
- The planning area for the City of Portland has changed with the annexation of Pleasant Valley and other areas.
- Metro completed the Region 2040 Growth Concept which provides long-term guidance for future growth and development in the Portland metropolitan area.
- City priorities have shifted and now include the need to address aging infrastructure; to incorporate sustainable development, protection of natural systems and green infrastructure; to focus

growth in centers and corridors; and to foster inter-bureau collaboration.

- Portland now faces new challenges and opportunities related to global warming, peak oil, increased diversity and a growing population.

Analytical tools and technology are vastly different today than when the current Public Facilities Plan was created in the 1980s. Metro now provides a centralized data resource; the City has a demographer on staff; GIS and other computer technologies allow analysis and exploration of data in new ways; and the City now tracks capital projects and budgets in a single database.

### Opportunities

**Complementing community goals:** Infrastructure can play a key role in fostering public and environmental health, economic prosperity, and community cohesion.

**Collaboration and holistic thinking:** Planning and decision-making across City bureaus and between City government and the Portland community can be more coordinated, organized and efficient.

**Advancing stewardship:** Smarter and more sustainable ways are possible to deliver desired public services.

**Asset management:** Asset management is a tool to identify the most cost-effective way to protect existing assets and provide infrastructure services to better inform strategic decision-making. The City is currently developing and improving its asset management practices.

**Setting appropriate service levels:** Meeting residents' needs and promoting accessibility and equity may mean adjusting service and design standards to better match community goals.

**Green infrastructure:** Offers an opportunity to protect environmen-

### What is Green Infrastructure?



Green infrastructure uses natural processes, systems, or features to provide traditional infrastructure services. It can include both natural components, such as natural areas, open space, and parks; trees and other natural systems; and engineered components, like green streets and other stormwater management facilities.



tal quality, reduce long term costs, improve services provision, enhance quality of life and advance sustainability.

### Challenges

**Effectively managing the City's infrastructure systems:** Investments are needed to maintain or replace aging assets, satisfy mandates and address growth needs. Some infrastructure costs have risen sharply (including fuel and materials) while some revenue sources have remained flat. To maintain a high level of infrastructure services, the City will need to identify strategic investments, consider full long-term costs, pursue innovative funding sources and partnerships and work with the community to make tough choices on funding priorities.

**Adapting to climate change and energy trends:** The potential short- and long-term impacts of global warming and *peak oil* necessitate a continued and dramatic shift away from oil- and natural gas-based products, which could have profound impacts on how the City plans, designs and builds infrastructure systems.

**Complying with regulatory mandates:** In addition to meeting maintenance and repair needs, the City must also comply with a variety of federal and state regulations, primarily related to service provision, public health and environmental quality. These regulations often mean involved and costly changes to the City's infrastructure but generally do not bring associated funding. This usually means that other maintenance, repair, and improvement projects must be put on hold or additional funding allocated.

**Responding to emerging community needs:** Over the next twenty years, Portland will continue to grow, become more ethnically and racially diverse and be composed of households of different ages, sizes and types. These shifts will bring changes to the types of transportation, water, stormwater and sewer, park and civic facilities needed and the ways people use and value these infrastructure services.

### Initial Questions

**The following questions provide a starting point for conversation on the future of infrastructure in Portland:**

1. How should the City strategically invest to resolve existing deficiencies, maintain its infrastructure systems and improve facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents?
2. How can the City address rising capital, operating, and maintenance costs?
3. How can infrastructure systems complement one another and larger community goals, including economic development, access to opportunity and sustainability?
4. How can the City's infrastructure systems adapt to changing conditions, including shifts in climate, energy sources, demographic patterns and the regulatory environment, to continue to meet community needs?
5. What would it mean to consider, account for and manage natural resources (including tree canopy, aquifers, open spaces, streams and wetlands) as part of the City's infrastructure?



Portland's infrastructure - the transportation and water systems, sanitary and stormwater sewers, parks, and civic facilities - are currently worth over \$21 billion. Keeping these systems working safely and efficiently requires continual investment. In 2007-08 alone, the City plans to spend \$350 million improving and repairing its infrastructure systems, through projects listed in the capital improvement program.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

A more fully detailed report on the infrastructure topic area is available at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>

*peak oil* – the point in time when the maximum rate of global petroleum production is reached, after which the rate of production will enter a decline and supplies will dwindle.

# Sustainability

This section focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 4: Housing; Goal 5: Economic Development; Goal 6: Transportation; Goal 7: Energy; Goal 8: Environment; Goal 11: Public Facilities

## Introduction

The City of Portland has been on the forefront of integrating sustainability issues and concerns into government. In 1993, Portland was the first city in North America to adopt a Carbon Dioxide Reduction Strategy and in 2000 became the first to establish an Office of Sustainable Development (OSD). Multiple City bureaus work toward sustainability in their practices and projects, particularly on infrastructure projects. Portlanders support this focus, identifying sustainability as one of the top community values in the visionPDX process.

Many bureaus, policies and programs provide leadership and support practical solutions to improve the environmental, social and economic health of Portland.

## Policy Context, Background & Gaps

When the original Comp Plan was created in the 1970s, sustainability was not a commonly understood concept the way it is now. Most Comp Plan goals and policies that relate to what we now call sustainability have either been successfully implemented or are no longer relevant. The Peak Oil Task Force Report, the Green Building Policy (also currently being updated) and the Global Warming Action Plan (currently being updated) offer new policy recommendations and objectives. Meanwhile, a philosophy of sustainability is inherent in many existing City goals and policies not included in the current Comp Plan.

Some topics covered in the Comp Plan need a new approach, while other topics have never been addressed; this is especially true with the arrival of new technologies and practices. A good example is sustainable food systems. The connection between planning and access to healthful, locally grown food is increasingly clear.

The issue of sustainability is also the driver and organizing theme for many other topics that have not been directly or thoroughly addressed by the Comp Plan, such as:

- **Urban design that results in “20-minute neighborhoods”** where the goods and services people need (grocery store, library, park, school, restaurants) are located within a 20-minute walk of their homes. By incorporating many of the objectives and policy recommendations contained in the Peak Oil Task Force Report and the Local Action Plan on Global Warming (currently being updated), the new Comp Plan could further support the realization of the 20-minute neighborhood concept.
- **Sustainable site design:** Sustainable site development and stormwater management policies and objectives (e.g. Sustainable Stormwater Manual and the Green Streets Policy) are not meaningfully captured in the current Comp Plan and should be incorporated into the update.
- **Alternative transportation fuels:** Updates of “Goal 7- Energy” need to be consistent with existing policies (e.g. Local Renewable Fuel Standard and Residential Garbage Haulers’ required use of biodiesel), and more robustly provide objectives and strategies for increased use of alternative transportation fuels, including electricity.
- **Toxics in manufacturing, consumer products and homes:** Toxics relate to human health, air and water quality protection. Policies and objectives need to pursue the reduction of these more aggressively. Opportunities also exist to address potential toxics associated with the manufacture, use and disposal of many consumer products such as computers and prescription drugs. In addition, the Precautionary Principle should be considered for incorporation into the update of the Comp Plan, meaning that public



The new Village at the Headwaters, an affordable senior apartment community in Southwest Portland, designs within an environmental watershed context by “daylighting” an existing stream and incorporating swales and rain gardens for stormwater management. Such sustainable features create and enhance value for the property and its residents.

policy should exercise caution when there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental or public health damage, even if there is scientific uncertainty.

### Current Conditions & Trends

**Transportation and energy:** Portlanders strongly support alternative transportation. We travel fewer miles in our cars than the nation as a whole, commute by bicycle more than any other U.S. city and use transit as much as a city twice our size. However, the use of transportation options other than cars varies throughout the city, with areas where frequent transit service and/or bike paths are not as common (including Outer East and Southwest Portland) having lower use than areas closer in to the Central City.

Regarding energy, there are several key trends on both the supply and demand side. Prices for all sources of energy (natural gas, fuel oil, transportation fuels and electricity) have continued to climb. From 2000 to 2007 gasoline prices are up 102%, natural gas 91% and electricity 75%. Another key trend relates to the limited capacity of electricity transmission systems, and the need to expand that capacity in order to accommodate new power plants and renewable energy production.

On the demand side, many individual businesses and residents voluntarily choose renewable electricity through “green power” programs offered by the utilities. Oregonians lead the nation with one of the highest percentage participation levels by residential customers for both utilities. Our gas company, Northwest Natural, is the first gas utility in the US to offer carbon offsets to customers for their energy use.

**Food:** Today’s food system is both energy-intensive and inefficient. Growing, processing and delivering the food consumed by a family of four each year requires more than 930 gallons of gasoline or about the

same amount used to fuel the family’s cars. Other sustainability issues related to food are food safety and disease, obesity levels, equitable access to healthful food, and the importance of supporting urban agriculture and the local farm economy.

**Water:** Water is being used more efficiently: the average Portlander has gone from using 85 gallons per day in 1992 to 66 gallons per day in 2007 – likely because of updated appliances and low-flush toilets. There is evidence that non-residential water demand has also fallen in recent decades, due in part to code changes and the switch to consumption-based sewer billing. Despite these positive signs, summer water use increases sharply with landscape watering and outdoor recreation, while it is often challenging for our primary water source, the rain-fed Bull Run Watershed, to meet summer demand.

**Waste and recycling:** Recycling is increasing, but waste is too. The state estimates the total amount of waste we generate in Oregon has increased 44% since 1996. In Portland, 75% of the waste comes from the commercial sector, while the remaining 25% comes from residents. Currently, 62% of Portland’s waste stream is recycled or composted, but an additional 28% could be readily recycled or composted. Of the waste Portland businesses and residents send to the landfill, only one-quarter is non-recyclable.

**Climate change:** The changing climate may directly impact energy, transportation, food, green building and waste collection and re-use potential. OSD coordinates the City’s climate change response, and an update to the joint Portland/Multnomah 2001 Local Action Plan on Global Warming will set policy for the coming years with the goal of reducing local emissions by 80% below 1990 levels by 2050.



Recycling bins in SE Portland. Currently, 62% of Portland’s waste stream is recycled or composted, but an additional 28% could be readily recycled or composted.

## Opportunities

**Green businesses:** Portland is a leader in sustainable industries. The City should support the growth of businesses that offer sustainable products and services and the family-wage and professional-wage jobs that they bring (e.g. outdoor clothing and equipment, consulting, design and architecture, etc.). Sustainable industries are one of the City's target industries for business recruitment and expansion.

**Energy efficiency and renewables:** Reducing carbon emissions offers great economic promise. Portland residents and businesses spend about \$1.2 billion annually on oil, natural gas, and coal-fired electricity. By increasing energy efficiency and renewable energy, hundreds of millions of dollars can be redirected into the local economy. A number of programs and resources exist in Portland to help the community reduce energy use and greenhouse gas impacts, including energy audits and cash incentive programs through the Energy Trust of Oregon, the Oregon business and residential energy tax credit programs, and Federal energy tax credits.

**Green building and site design:** New areas of development in Portland (for example, South Waterfront and the Pearl District), as well as those undergoing redevelopment and renovation, provide opportunities for developing "green," with consideration paid to management of stormwater at the source, use of eco-roofs, sourcing materials locally and from environmentally responsible components, building in energy efficiency and more.

**Greywater use:** There is ever-increasing residential and commercial sector interest in greywater reuse (i.e., using dish, shower, laundry and sink water in a variety of applications, including irrigation and/or onsite treatment and reuse). Currently, Oregon regulations and codes significantly limit the reuse of greywater.

**Sustainable food systems:** Food consciousness and direct-market agriculture is on the rise. The number of farmers markets in Portland has doubled over the past three years to 14. Twenty-seven Community Supported Agriculture farms service Portland and support is strong for a permanent public market. More people are growing their own food and a focus on local food is a hallmark of many of Portland's restaurants, some of which are celebrated across the country.

## Challenges

**No more cheap oil:** The era of cheap energy is coming to an end. High energy costs could impact everything from our local economy, standard of living and ability to purchase energy for basic living and transportation needs to choosing where we live and what transportation choices we make.

**Climate change:** We will simultaneously need to work to reverse conditions leading to climate change and prepare for impacts of climate change. This is a key challenge facing our city.

**Maintaining the water system:** The City of Portland will need to effectively encourage residents and businesses to use less water while also maintaining the funding resources needed to manage, repair and upgrade the water distribution system.

**Environmental justice:** Even in our community, low-income and underserved populations are disproportionately exposed to toxic substances and pollution, and children bear greater risks of the potential resulting health effects.

**Affordable, green housing compliance:** In affordable housing projects, the green or sustainable features and techniques are often the first to be cut by the general contractor or individual subcontractors. This is in part attributable to a lack of compliance mechanisms in the City's green building policy. Threshold requirements are based on an honor system



Produce from Spring Hill Farm displayed at the Portland Farmers Market. Fourteen farmers markets serve Portland alone, with millions of dollars in sales. There are also 27 fully-booked community-supported agriculture operations that serve the Portland area.

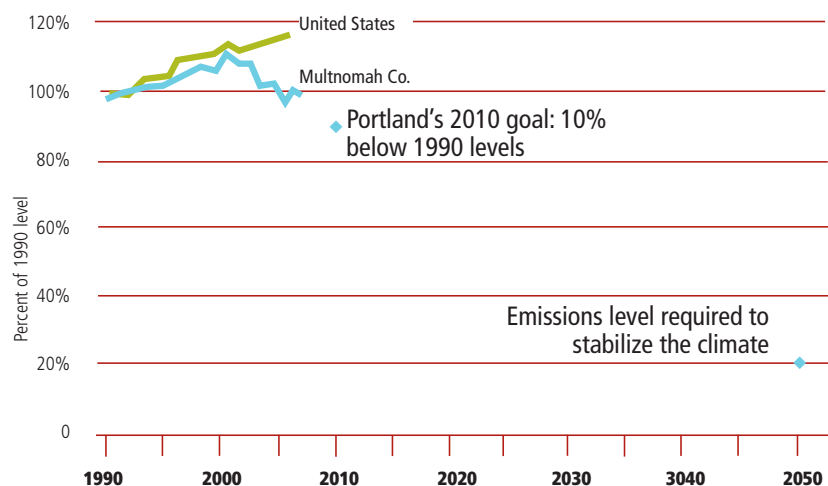
in which there is no third-party certification. The lack of a method for requiring compliance could compromise indoor air quality and increase tenants' costs of utilities.

### Initial Questions

**The following questions provide a starting point for conversation on the future of sustainability in Portland:**

1. What would be the ramifications of a 20-minute neighborhood for economic development, affordable housing, the transportation system and natural resources? Are there ways to simultaneously meet goals in these areas while providing ready access to household goods and services?
2. Land use, transportation and building infrastructure decisions that are made today will determine the energy required to run these systems for the next 50 to 100 years. Do policymakers have the information they need to take into consideration the impacts of the changing energy landscape?
3. How can we capitalize on the economic development opportunities presented by the growing expertise in the local market among architects, developers and contractors for high performance and energy efficient buildings?
4. How will the City manage urban density to take pressure off of rural agricultural lands and still encourage urban agriculture?
5. How should the City strategically utilize and promote alternative fuels while also maintaining the priorities of fuel efficiency, mass transit and alternative transportation to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels?
6. What new funding mechanisms could be developed to help subsidize the shift of affordable housing development toward healthier, more energy efficient standards?

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trend**



The most recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggest that global emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases need to be reduced by 80% in the next 50 years if we are to decrease the likelihood of catastrophic climate disruptions. Despite population growth, Portland has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels while overall U.S. emissions have continued to rise, but we still have a long way to go.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

A more fully detailed report on the sustainability topic area is available at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>



# Transportation

This section focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan: Goal 6: Transportation

## Introduction

Transportation plays a major role in shaping the city. It is instrumental in maintaining our quality of life; it affects how we get around, how we move goods and do business and how we treat the environment. How we plan for, enhance and expand the transportation network in the future will largely determine the success of other complementary land use planning, environmental and sustainability efforts.

Since maintaining the transportation network and building additional capacity is costly and must be planned on a very long-term timeframe, we must make strategic improvements now to ensure the transportation network provides access and mobility and promotes community goals in the future.

## Policy Context, Background & Gaps

The Transportation System Plan (TSP) is the citywide, long-range plan to guide transportation investments and policies for Portland. Portions of the TSP are incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan. The TSP must meet state and Metro planning requirements, as well as address local transportation needs for cost-effective street, transit, freight, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements.

Overarching themes in the current TSP implement the Metro 2040 Growth Concept, which calls for:

- Maintaining thriving communities and a healthy economy while containing urban sprawl.
- Providing stewardship of the transportation system by managing transportation assets in a fiscally responsible way.
- Promoting viable transportation choices as alternatives to driving.

- Deliberately identifying and implementing activities that are environmentally responsible and sustainable.
- Approaching projects comprehensively to ensure they are not single, unrelated activities addressing isolated problems, but rather are considered within a citywide and metropolitan context.

The TSP was first adopted in 2000. Since then, there have been three updates – 2002, 2004 and 2007; the TSP is the most up-to-date portion of the City's Comp Plan. Because of the recent updates, much of the language is still relevant. An initial review of Comp Plan transportation goals indicates a number of areas to review and discuss during this next update of the Comp Plan. These include, but are not limited to:

- Modifying or adding new policies that respond more strongly to environmental concerns including green streets and green infrastructure.
- Modifying or adding new *street classifications*, including the possibility that the Street Design classifications could be more prescriptive.
- Integrating new policies and objectives from the Bicycle and Streetcar Master Plans.
- Reviewing appropriateness of different standards for different parts of the city.
- Reviewing and possibly adding policies related to the role of transportation in place-making and development.
- Reconsidering current *level of service* standard to include other modes of travel besides automotive vehicles.



Bicycling is a popular form of transportation in Portland. The 1 1/2 mile East Bank Esplanade, completed in 2001, draws commuting cyclists and recreational riders, walkers and runners. It completes a Willamette River pedestrian/bicycle loop initially planned in the 1980s. The Esplanade links across the Steel Bridge to Tom McCall Waterfront Park, which reclaimed Harbor Drive, which was the westside state highway, into public parkland in 1978.

*street classifications* – the system of categorizing streets by their “function” in terms of priority users, vehicle type or “mode” of transportation, and amount of vehicular traffic. For example, pedestrian streets vs.

*level of service (LOS)* – in transportation, the term describes operational conditions in relation to such factors as speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, and safety; refers to these conditions in terms of automotive vehicles only, not pedestrian or bicycle travel.

**State and Metro Context:** Goal 12, the Transportation Goal, is one of 19 Oregon State Planning Goals. The state's Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) instructs jurisdictions how to meet Goal 12. One requirement in the TPR is the city have a TSP, the long-range transportation plan explained earlier. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the corresponding Transportation Plan for the Metro area. The City's TSP must be in conformance with the state and Metro plans, as well as work in concert with the City's Comp Plan.

**Current transportation planning efforts:** There are a number of current transportation projects that will impact the update of the TSP and possibly the Comp Plan. These include updates to the Bicycle Master Plan and the Central City Transportation Management Plan, and the new Streetcar System Plan and Airport Futures Plan.

There are a number of metropolitan transportation planning efforts and projects that will also impact the update of the TSP and possibly the Comp Plan. These include an update of the RTP, the Columbia River Crossing Project including the Hayden Island Plan, the Sellwood Bridge Replacement Project, Lake Oswego Streetcar Project and proposed light rail to the south, which could include a new Willamette River bridge crossing.

### Current Conditions & Trends

**Safety:** Safety is and will continue to be emphasized in the Office of Transportation's operations, policies, and priority projects.

**Green streets:** Implementing the Green Streets Policy and expanding the Green Streets Program will continue to create attractive streetscapes that enhance neighborhood livability while providing cost-effective stormwater infiltration.

**Growing funding gap:** The ability to maintain existing infrastructure and build new facilities has become increasingly difficult because of lack of adequate funding.

**Growing equity gap:** Household transportation costs – a key component of affordable living – have been increasing. Designing transportation systems and implementing projects that provide affordable access to work, school, shopping, parks, and other services can help promote affordable living for all Portland households.



TriMet ridership has outpaced population growth and daily vehicle miles traveled for more than a decade. The system carries more people than any other U.S. transit system its size.

## Opportunities

**Setting appropriate service level standards:** Meeting residents' needs and promoting accessibility and equity may mean adjusting street service and design standards to better match community goals and to respond to different neighborhood, topographical and environmental constraints. For example, providing accessible transportation options means improving pedestrian, bike, and transit services. However, many areas of the city, particularly in the Southwest and Outer East, lack complete sidewalk networks. Current standards require that sidewalk improvements include sidewalks on both sides of a street – an objective that is difficult to meet in all areas, particularly with current funding levels. Reassessing pedestrian access objectives and better aligning these goals with standards may allow the opportunity to improve pedestrian access in many areas of the city.

**The 20-minute neighborhood:** The 20-minute neighborhood envisions people living in communities in which essential needs and services are located within a 20-minute walk from their residences. Transportation policies and projects that support improvements such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and transit service and stops are critical to the success of a 20-minute neighborhood.

**Sustainability:** Explore the development and implementation of a number of management plans, LEED requirements, parking requirements, and other environmental and sustainable programs that will help decrease carbon projections and respond to climate change.

**Transit-oriented development:** Portland's transit system, including the proposed and expanded Streetcar System, provides an opportunity for additional high quality transit oriented development.

**Transportation Options and Alternative Modes:** Pedestrian, transit and bicycle infrastructure may become more critical in certain parts of Portland, as it becomes increasingly expensive to commute by car on a daily basis. In addition, expanded transportation options need to be available for an aging population and to address health concerns. Implementing the Platinum effort Bicycle Master Plan and the Streetcar System Plan will improve these choices. Increased emphasis on transportation system management strategies is also important.



Car sharing is growing in popularity, with more vehicles - trucks, vans, and cars, including gas-electric hybrids - available in more locations across the city. This Zipcar's "home base" is in North Portland at a Yellow Line light rail station stop that is also the location of a grocery store and is two blocks away from I-5 freeway access.

## Challenges

### **Maintaining the existing system and closing the funding gap:**

Portland has a growing maintenance backlog of aging infrastructure, and rising population will increase capacity needs. There is a wide gap between planned transportation projects and existing budgets. Maintaining the City's nearly \$8 billion transportation system remains a challenge. Delaying investment now can lead to even higher costs in the future as prices increase and facilities continue to deteriorate.

**Balancing different transportation modes:** There is a need to balance transit, bicycles, freight and other modes and our goals for each of these. There may be a need to explore policies regarding prioritizing one mode of transportation over another, especially where there are policy and physical conflicts.

**Service provision:** Although the City of Portland builds and maintains much of the city's transportation infrastructure, it is only one transportation service provider in the city and region. As just two examples: TriMet provides transit service; Multnomah County owns and maintains a majority of the Willamette River bridges. Transportation policies and projects reflect this, but it can be difficult to implement changes without full cooperation of transportation partners.

**Congestion:** Many local industries and businesses rely on reliable and efficient transportation systems, particularly for freight travel. Portland's transportation system is also critical to the regional economy, as it provides connections to major markets within the city, access to major rail and cargo routes, and a key link in the interstate highway system. Congestion can impede freight movement, cause delays to businesses and commuters and increase the cost of doing business in Portland.

## Initial Questions

### ***The following questions provide a starting point for conversation on the future of sustainability in Portland:***

1. What service or design standards should be reviewed to ensure they reflect community priorities?
2. How can transportation accommodate neighborhood-appropriate designs for all modes of travel that influence a 20-minute neighborhood, while still pursuing objectives such as increased shared-use roads, *connectivity* and green streets?
3. How can we move to a measure of the transportation system that prioritizes the current values of the community, responds to land use and sufficiently addresses ecologic sustainability, social equity and the use of alternative modes?
4. With increasingly limited funds for maintenance, enhancements and expansion of the transportation system, what are some viable alternatives for generating new revenue streams to pay for these needs?
5. With restricted rights of way and overlapping and sometimes conflicting goals, how do we balance the needs of transit, bicycles, freight and other modes and goals?
6. How can the transportation system absorb impacts from the rising costs and declining supply of fuel? How can transportation decrease and mitigate impacts to the changing climate at global and local levels?



The Eastside MAX Blue line was the first route of what is now a 44-mile metropolitan light rail system extending not only east but also west to Hillsboro, north to Expo Center, northeast to the Portland International Airport, and with routes in construction or planning stages extending south from Central Portland and north-south along the I-205 corridor.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Transportation issues are explored in a number of the assessment reports, including Sustainability, Infrastructure, Economic Development and Housing. All reports are available at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>

*connectivity* – The degree to which streets or areas are interconnected and easily accessible to one another.

# Urban Form

This section focuses on the following chapters of the existing Comp Plan:  
Goal 2: Urban Development; Goal 6: Transportation; Goal 12: Urban Design

## Introduction

Urban form is the physical shape and structure of the city. Natural topography and the economic, transportation, environmental, land use and aesthetic choices made by a city's residents – past and present – shape a city's urban form. This is true in Central Portland and in all the other districts and neighborhoods of the city.

While Portland's 1980 Comprehensive Plan, and subsequent updates, emphasized the importance of integrating land use and transportation, these efforts were largely organized around specific and distinct topics such as land use, environment, housing, urban design and so on.

Including urban form as a topic in this report and as part of the Portland Plan provides an opportunity to consider these separate topics in an integrated way and ask bigger questions about how our policies work together. It also means that the new Comp Plan may look different from our current Plan. Also, the process by which we develop an integrated plan will be different as we use analytical methods and tools that were unavailable to us 30 years ago.

Although many policies across multiple disciplines influence Portland's form, this section of the Comprehensive Plan Assessment is limited to an evaluation of the Comp Plan policies that relate to Portland's built environment and its design and spatial organization, including the relationship between natural systems and the built environment. Housing, economic development, infrastructure and other topics are addressed in other portions of this report.

## Policy Context, Background & Gaps

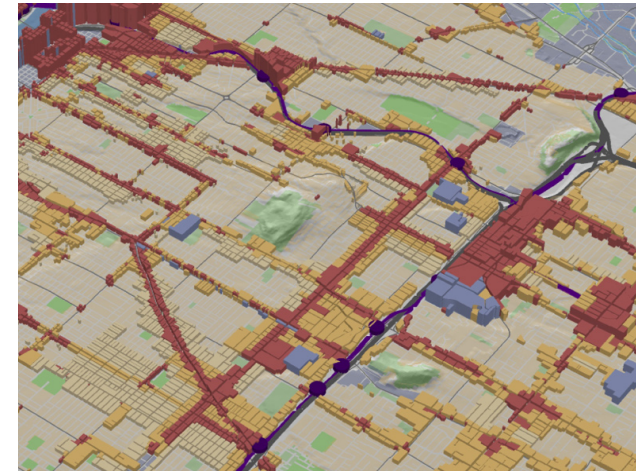
Since the 1980 adoption of Portland's Comp Plan, the City's planning program has emphasized the importance of integrating land use and transportation. Those policies are as sound and relevant today as they were when introduced.

Additional Comp Plan policies that continue to provide sound guidance include the following:

- Focus high-density development in or near mixed-use areas. These areas should provide a high-quality pedestrian environment and development should be oriented to streets and transit facilities.
- Preserve and enhance the distinct character of neighborhoods.
- In established residential areas, new development should be compatible with existing housing.
- Use linear features, such as parks, transit malls and creeks and other natural features as unifying design elements that link public attractions, destinations and open spaces.

Evaluation of the existing Comp Plan policies also revealed some significant gaps with respect to the built environment, design and spatial organization of the city. These gaps include:

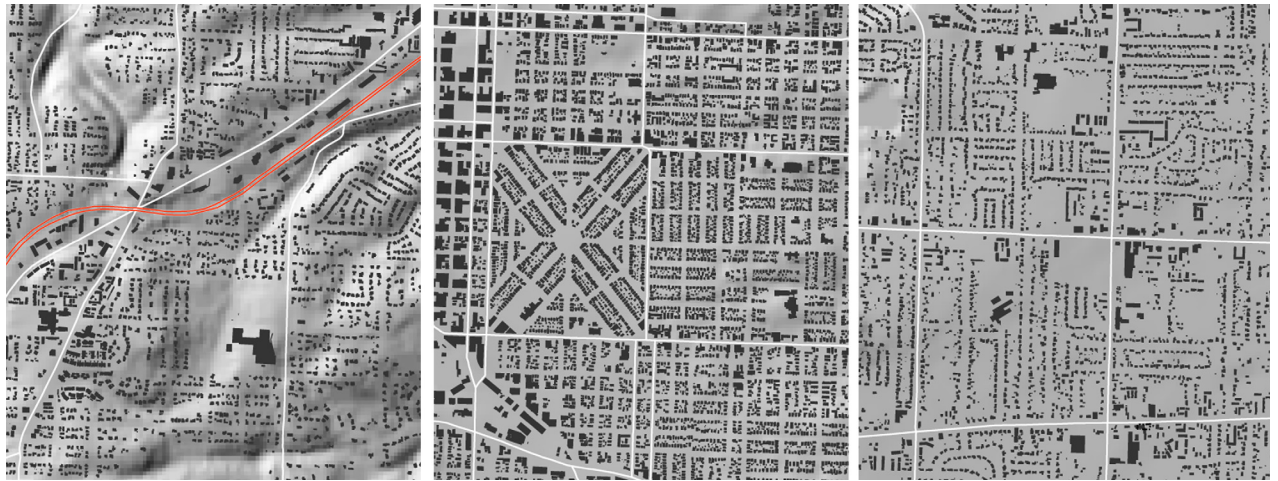
- **Overarching growth strategy:** The Metro regional government's 2040 Growth Concept provides the region with an overall growth strategy. Because the Comp Plan was written before the



This 3D drawing is a generalized diagram of relative development intensity currently allowed by regulation.

Growth Concept was adopted in 1995, it could not fully reflect the Metro framework. Policy language and maps do not clearly reflect the 2040 strategy – for instance, accommodating growth in centers and corridors is not emphasized. Furthermore, because Metro’s Growth Concept is at a metropolitan area scale, a more refined growth strategy is needed for Portland itself.

- **Neighborhood types:** The Metro Growth Concept designates all Portland neighborhoods outside Central City as “inner” neighborhoods, without differentiating them. Similarly, the Comp Plan lacks a policy that expresses the great value we place in neighborhoods having distinctive characteristics. There are no clear directives that define what physical aspects of neighborhoods are worth preserving and enhancing. For instance, the City’s regulatory structure imposes the same regulations on most neighborhoods, despite inherent differences in their existing patterns.
- **Areas of change:** As mentioned earlier, the Comp Plan was completed before the Metro 2040 Concept emphasizing growth in centers and corridors was put forth; as such, the Comp Plan’s policies and maps are unclear about where change is expected and encouraged. Thus while the direction from Metro is to grow in centers and corridors, residential areas are also experiencing substantial changes. These changes come in the form of density (more houses), form (height and bulk of new buildings or additions), or the effects of being located near mixed-use areas.
- **Urban design concept diagram:** The Comp Plan lacks an overall framework for approaching design in the city and fails to identify the best opportunities for place-making.



The diagrams above illustrate three predominant development patterns – western, inner and eastern – which were shaped by the natural environment as well as by the eras in which they evolved.

- **Natural Systems:** The integration of natural systems with the land use-transportation-based policies is missing from our current Comp Plan. Historically, planning and development practices have treated natural conditions as problems to overcome rather than as a foundation for designing distinctive and healthy communities. A future plan should consider integrated approaches that protect and restore the overall health and function of the natural systems in our watersheds.

### Fast Facts about how land is used in Portland

- 25% of the city’s land base is occupied by streets and freeways
- 11% by parks
- 53% by private property
- 11% is either river or publicly-owned non-park land

### Current Conditions & Trends

The most obvious trend that impacts urban form is the increased population projected for our region. In the most basic sense, this means that more housing will be needed. But it will also mean an increase in the need for jobs, open space, school capacity, transportation systems and in pressure on our natural resources.

In the past decade, far more housing units have been built in neighborhoods outside the Central City district than inside. While a significant portion of this new housing outside of Central Portland has been built in mixed-use areas to which policies direct growth, over half has been infill development in neighborhood residential areas. Eastern neighborhoods have received the largest portion of this infill development.

Another trend is that detached houses now constitute a minority of new housing units, with multifamily units, rowhouses, and other higher-density housing types now accounting for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of new housing units.

Recent changes in regulations have allowed greater flexibility in housing types in residential neighborhoods. Along with this flexibility comes a greater level of uncertainty regarding what a new development proposal will look like and, on larger sites, what, if any, new streets will be built. In other words, the built form for some areas of the city is unpredictable.

Likewise in commercial areas, development is sometimes unpredictable as residential development is built in commercial areas. While an entirely residential building is often acceptable, even desirable, in a mixed-use area, if developed in an area with few commercial opportunities, the area forgoes the opportunity to create a vibrant neighborhood center.

Generally, Portland residents report a high rate of satisfaction with the city's livability. Almost 80% rank the livability of the city as a whole as "good" or "very good." While residents' assessment of the built environment is not their only criteria for measuring livability, undoubtedly it plays a role in their perceptions of the city and sense of well being. And yet, in ranking quality of City land use planning services, residents of East Portland neighborhoods in particular had the lowest percentages in the city – mostly 25% or below – in rating the planning services as "good" or "very good." Other areas of the city rated land use planning much more positively.



This public space in Central Portland attracts many different city residents.

## Opportunities & Challenges

The conditions and trends discussed above lead to various opportunities and challenges that we face. These are summarized below; some are seen as opportunities, some as challenges, and some as both.

### Both opportunity and challenge

- The greatest opportunity is that our community is interested, educated and invested in Portland's built environment. But getting everyone to agree on a specific desired form will be a challenge.
- Lack of infrastructure improvements and the amount of land being subdivided is both a challenge and an opportunity. Streets are one of the primary elements of city building. They create the blocks that determine future patterns of development. New development offers opportunities to create new street connections and gradually expand the street network, but it also places a greater burden on existing facilities.
- Expansion of light rail is a tremendous opportunity to accommodate growth in new areas and create new centers. However, along the I-205 corridor it will be a challenge to create transit-oriented developments given the existing freeway and development patterns.
- New development resulting from population and economic growth can present challenges to the preservation of existing community character, but can also be guided to contribute to creating a desired future built environment.

### Opportunities

- The Portland Plan is an opportunity to integrate natural systems planning into our land use-transportation-based planning methods.

- Technological advances (3-D modeling and internet-based mapping) provide us with the opportunity to gather and analyze more information and present choices more clearly than before.

### Challenge

- The transition from one pattern of development to another over time is a challenge. This is the case for much of eastern Portland, where an auto-dominated, suburban style of development is the existing pattern, but current policies call for transit-oriented development.

### Initial Questions:

***The following questions provide a starting point for conversation on the future of urban form in Portland:***

1. How can we design a city that protects and preserves the quality of our neighborhoods as we accommodate growth?
2. Where and how do we want to accommodate our growing and changing population?
3. Where should we promote economic development?
4. How can we physically and spatially become more energy-efficient and more energy-independent?
5. How can we identify areas and leverage public dollars to create unique and livable places?
6. How can neighborhoods transition from one form to another?
7. How can land use and transportation planning be informed and guided by the characteristics of natural systems, including watersheds, slopes, streams, groundwater, habitat areas and floodplains?



New development often takes the shape of medium-density infill, such as pictured above in East Portland.

### For More Information

A more fully detailed report on the urban form topic area is available at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>.

More information on the urban form of Central Portland is available in the Portland Plan: Conditions, Trends & Issues – Central Portland Assessment at <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan>.