

City of Portland

Office of Community & Civic Life

Bureau Overview

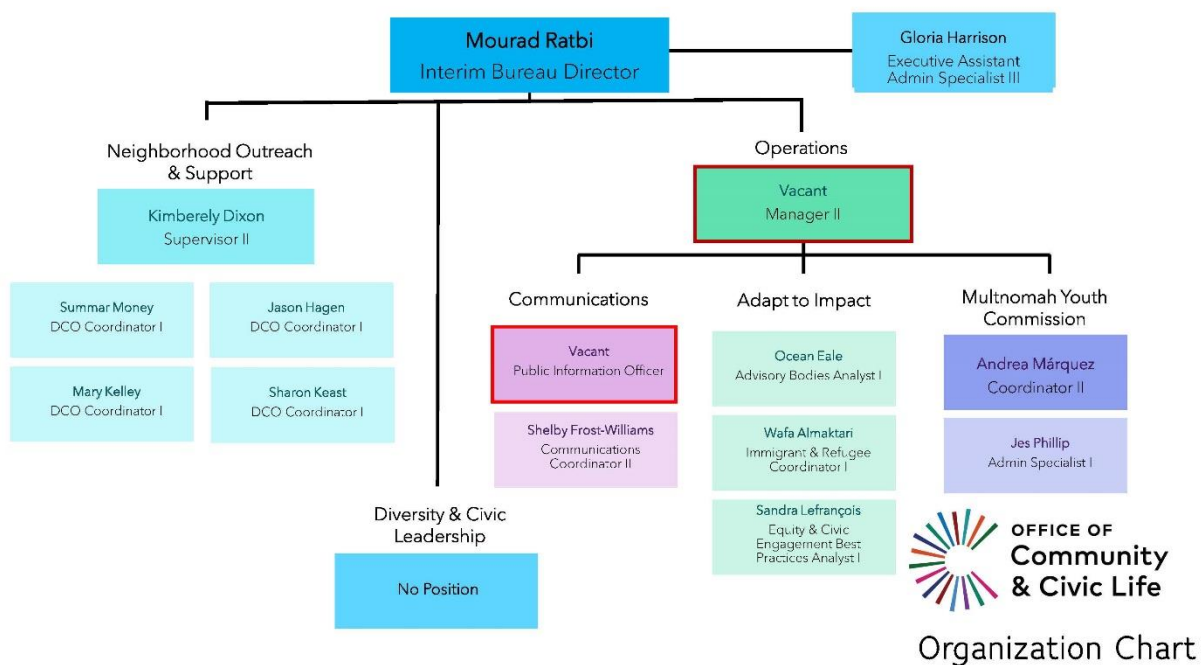
The Office of Community & Civic Life (Civic Life) connects Portlanders with city government to build inclusive, safe, and livable communities by:

- Providing resources for immigrant and refugee communities.
- Connecting neighborhood and community groups to resources and funding.
- Training diverse young leaders to engage in and lead on civic matters.
- Leading city-wide equitable engagement practices.

Bureau History

In 1974, the City established the Office of Neighborhood Associations to connect City government with neighborhoods' ideas, issues, and advocacy. The name was changed to Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) in 1998. The bureau has since evolved and broadened its programming to provide services to all Portlanders. In 2018, the name was changed to Office of Community & Civic Life to reflect our expanded services.

Organization Chart



Neighborhood Outreach & Support Program

Description

The Neighborhood Outreach & Support Program (Neighborhood Program) creates a framework by which Portlanders may effectively participate in civic affairs and work to improve the livability and character of their neighborhoods and the City. The program provides resources and technical expertise to neighborhood associations, community members, community-based organizations, and grassroots efforts.

Portland's 94 Neighborhood associations:

- Must follow a set of standards to be recognized.
- Are open to all residents who live, own property, or run a business within a neighborhood's boundaries.
- Are self-governed by bylaws defining boundaries, membership requirements, and procedures.

The program maintains a [comprehensive contact database](#) for neighborhood associations and district coalitions. This resource is available to all City employees to pull from for communications purposes.

Program Evolution

In 2024, Civic Life changed the District Coalition Office (DCO) model to move from seven to four service areas supported by nonprofit-run offices. Civic Life aligned the boundaries with the adopted Independent District Commission map to ensure DCOs serve roughly equal populations with shared characteristics and interests. The new model took effect on July 1, 2024.

Civic Life's Neighborhood Program provides funding and support for the four DCOs. The district offices use the funding to strengthen neighborhood advocacy and activities by providing fiscal sponsorship, administrative services, and organizational support.

District offices serve the neighborhood associations and other community groups within their district boundaries:

- District 1 - 14 neighborhoods
- District 2 - 28 neighborhoods
- District 3 - 19 neighborhoods
- District 4 - 33 neighborhoods

Staffing Level - 5 FTE

- Supervisor II
- Coordinator I (four positions)

Budget

Proposed: \$3,788,699

Adopted: \$3,788,699

City Code and Governing Standards

ONI Standards: The ONI Standards created a framework by which the people of the City of Portland may effectively participate in civic affairs and work to improve the livability and character of their neighborhoods and the City.

portland.gov/civic/myneighborhood/documents/oni-standards/download

Strategic Partnerships

As part of the district model changes, Civic Life is working with the existing nonprofit DCOs to serve the new districts for the immediate future, with plans to begin an RFP process for long-term service in 2026 as the City continues to carry out the government transition. Civic Life held public meetings with the nonprofit DCO partners in early 2024 to earn input on this plan from community.

Nonprofit partners:

- District 1 – Central Northeast Neighbors
- District 2 – Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods
- District 3 – Southeast Uplift
- District 4 – District Four Coalition

Opportunities & Challenges

- Managing the newly aligned geographic district model will allow Civic Life to engage and serve Portland's 94 neighborhoods in a more equitable way. However, the team size and operating budget have been decreased to support the transition while engagement expectations from community members and community-based organizations have significantly increased with the announcement of the bureau's updated geographic model in the new government structure.
- Continued compliance with the ONI standards provision regarding insurance coverage by the City has ongoing budget impacts; currently this cost is covered in FY24-25 through a \$150,000 one-time decision package in the adopted budget.
- Small grants and community activity funds historically funded and administered by Civic Life have been leveraged to fund transition into new district model and to support citywide transition costs. These funds are expected by community members and organizations and Civic Life is looking for opportunities to make up for their loss.

Adapt to Impact (A2I) Programs

Description

Under the Operations arm of the office, the A2I portfolio includes the Advisory Bodies Program, the Immigrant & Refugee Program, and the Citywide Equitable Engagement Practices Program.

Staffing Level – 4 FTE

- Manager II - vacant
- Analyst I (two positions)
- Coordinator I

Budget

Proposed: \$421,011

Adopted: \$421,011

Advisory Bodies Program

Advisory bodies empower Portlanders to use their expertise and lived experience to provide valuable insights about the city's diverse community needs and interests and develop recommendations for the City. They also provide a space for City officials and communities to hear appeals and concerns, and plan future services; the Charter Commission and the Independent District Commission were advisory bodies that helped shape Portland's new form of government approved by voters in 2022.

The program runs recruitment for open positions, collects applications, collects demographic data about applicants, provides guidance and training resources to members, interprets City Code and advisory bodies bylaws, helps bureaus assemble new advisory bodies, and helps advisory bodies maintain compliance with standards, among other functions. In 2024, the Advisory Bodies Program managed 477 applications to fill 134 vacant positions.

Civic Life's Advisory Bodies Program provides technical support and training to 77 advisory bodies throughout the City, two of which are directly managed by Civic Life:

- Multnomah Youth Commission
- New Portlanders Policy Commission

In 2024, the program performed an inventory and current state analysis of the City's advisory bodies to be able to provide the most up-to-date and accurate information to the new Engagement Officer and the 12 new City Councilors. The report on this project can be found at portland.gov/civic/advisorygroups/advisory-bodies-inventory.

The program is currently testing a new process to make applying for an advisory body faster and easier.

City Code and Governing Standards

Resolution 37328: This 2017 resolution created the Advisory Bodies Program in order to standardize advisory bodies process and functions; this included the creation of resources like standardized applications and the program analyst role to manage the program.

efiles.portlandoregon.gov/record/11388584/

Citywide Equitable Engagement Practices Program

The goal of this program is to promote a Citywide culture of collaboration in reaching and involving all Portlanders in the decisions that affect their lives.

This program hosts monthly meetings for City employees to explore and share City programs, projects, and services that strengthen community engagement. The program evolves community engagement practices working in concert with City practitioners and performs analyses of community engagement data from strategic planning efforts to inform and support the next iteration of citywide equitable engagement strategies for improving good governance.

The program manages an online community engagement best practices resource library and updates the bureau racial equity plan. The program previously supported the bureau Budget Advisory Committee for the FY 24-25 budget. Ongoing, the program leads the new City Budget Office and Civic Life collaboration for community engagement in the City budget process.

Strategic Partnerships

Civic Life partnered with the Centre for Public Impact (CPI) to create the Citywide Equitable Engagement Cohort. The cohort was made up of 25 City community engagement practitioners who applied to participate. They worked together to reimagine equitable engagement practices. Over three months, CPI led discussions and shared tools to earn government legitimacy, create cross-bureau relationships, and share methods of equitable engagement that build community trust. The cohort project culminated in an online publication of a case study specifically to share the important insights and lessons learned

from City practitioner capstones. These findings were also integrated into the Portland Engagement Project report helping to inform the new Engagement Officer role and responsibilities survey and recommendations.

Immigrant & Refugee Program

The Immigrant & Refugee Program works to strengthen our partnerships with the immigrant and refugee communities to bring immigrant and refugee voices into the City of Portland's policies and decision-making. The program has partnered with PCC Legal Resource Center to offer free legal aid to address disparities in access to legal support and empower individuals to obtain and maintain legal status. The program also organizes Portland's annual Welcoming Week celebration and supports the New Portlanders Policy Commission. NPPC members are immigrants, refugees, and community advocates.

Budget

Proposed: \$301,757

Adopted: \$301,757

Strategic Partnerships

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services:

Civic Life partnered with USCIS to hold a Naturalization Ceremony at the Portland Building on Sept. 17, 2024, as part of our annual Welcoming Week celebrations. This ceremony saw 30 immigrants sworn in as U.S. citizens. The event was attended by 71 people and included voter registration efforts to ensure new citizens could fully participate in the democratic process. The ceremony was featured in a news segment on KOIN.

PCC Legal Clinic:

Civic Life's Immigrant & Refugee Program and PCC Clear Clinic [launched the City's first legal clinic](#) to offer free help on DACA renewal work permit applications, immigration legal screening and advance parole services. Over the last few years, Portland has welcomed thousands of immigrants and refugees from areas facing war and other conflicts.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Alignment under the City Administrator service area provides a unique opportunity to fill longstanding community engagement programmatic gaps such as Senior, Veteran, LGBTQIA+, and Labor, while consolidating the Immigrant & Refugee, Advisory Bodies, Neighborhoods, and Youth portfolios.
- With all time low trust between residents and governments, Civic Life is supporting our Citywide Equitable Engagement Practitioners group, made up of City employees from over 27 bureaus and offices, to meet this challenge with the best models from around the world.

Youth Program

Description

The Youth Program supports the Multnomah Youth Commission (MYC) is the official youth policy body for the City of Portland and Multnomah County, bringing youth voices and perspectives to local leaders and policymakers. Members work to impact policy and foster positive public perception of teens and young adults. MYC is both a policy body and a youth development program, working to support youth in their adolescent and leadership development to become lifelong civically engaged community members.

Staffing Level – 1.9 FTE

- Coordinator II
- Administrative Specialist I

Budget

Proposed: \$354,088

Adopted: \$354,088

City Code and Governing Standards

Ordinance 181290: This ordinance authorized an Intergovernmental Agreement with Multnomah County to designate the Multnomah Youth Commission as an official youth advisory body to the City of Portland and Portland City Council.

portlandoregon.gov/record/2965495/

Strategic Partnerships**KGW Straight Talk with Laurel Porter**

MYC members, Oregon Rep. Hoa Nguyen, and Dr. Ben Hoffman went on with KGW's Straight Talk to discuss ways to fight chronic absenteeism in Oregon schools. The MYC Education/Youth Voice Committee has been working with Oregon legislators to put forward a proposal to push high school start times back to at least 8:30 am. These changes in other schools have been shown to increase students' academic and athletic performance, as well as their overall mental and physical health.

youtube.com/watch?v=gIMtHW7IkRY

Opportunities & Challenges

- The MYC is currently meeting with legislators, students, parents, administrators, unions, and other stakeholders to introduce a bill to the 2025 legislative session. On December 10, MYC Co-chair Aditi Subramaniam presented to the Oregon House Committee on Education to preview the Oregon SLEEP Act (currently designated LCO 653). This act is planned to be introduced during the 2025 legislative session to change high school start times in Oregon to no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

Administration and Communications

Description

Administrative staff provides administrative support to bureau director and staff. This includes coordinating meetings, HR responsibilities, bureau expenses, team cohesion activities, and more. Communications staff manage media relations, external and internal webpages, social media channels and the monthly newsletter, program collateral, Public Records Requests, and more.

Staffing Level – 4 FTE

- Director
- Executive Administrative Specialist III
- Public Information Officer - vacant
- Coordinator II

Budget

Proposed: \$1,247,389

Adopted: \$1,247,389

City Code and Governing Standards

City Code 3.96: “This chapter creates a framework by which the people of the City of Portland may effectively participate in civic affairs and work to improve the livability and character of their Neighborhoods and the City...This chapter also creates the Office of Community & Civic Life and sets out its functions, duties and responsibilities.”

portland.gov/code/3/96

Ordinance 189078: This ordinance renamed the Office of Neighborhood Involvement to the Office of Community & Civic Life to reflect more expanded and more inclusive programs and services.

efiles.portlandoregon.gov/record/12094968/

Strategic Partnerships

Diversity & Civic Leadership Program

Established by council in 2007, this program offers grants to BIPOC-led community organizations to design and implement programs that provide leadership skill development, culturally relevant community-building, and new ways to connect with the City to shape public policy. Organizations applied to participate and were selected by a panel made up of community members and City staff.

An audit in 2016 revealed that the established grantees were not made to reapply for funding through a competitive process. This led to an expansion effort that added one or two new grantees, but that did not mandate that established grantees reapply for funding.

As of 2023, there is no dedicated FTE role supporting this program. Additionally, funding for this program has been supported by one-time allocation from City Council for the last few budget cycles.

Participating Organizations:

- Urban League of Portland
- Latino Network
- Native American Youth and Family Center
- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization
- Unite Oregon

Budget:

Proposed: \$807,144

Adopted: \$807,144

Portland State University Population Research Center

Over the last few years, the Communications team has coordinated a project with Portland State University’s Population Research center to collect data about each Portland neighborhood to help us understand population characteristics like languages spoken, age, housing stability and more.

This data will help the City to:

- Improve outreach and communications.
- Set program priorities unique to each neighborhood.
- Understand the unique changes and issues in each neighborhood.

The data for the neighborhood profiles comes from the 2020 Census, the American Community Survey, the CDC Social Vulnerability Index, and other reliable sources. Most data, such as the U.S. Census, is aggregated by Census block. These neighborhood profiles provide data for each Portland neighborhood to uncover important information about our communities.

There are profiles available for each of Portland's 94 neighborhoods, the 4 voting districts, and the city. This data is available as PDF profiles and as an interactive mapping tool for users to visualize and compare data across the city. Links available here:

portland.gov/civic/myneighborhood/neighborhood-profile-maps

prcprojects.us/civic

Civic Life is currently working to draft a 5-year update agreement with PSU to keep these data tool useful and relevant.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Provide services expected by community while ongoing bureau funds and FTE are decreased to support citywide transition and budget goals; examples include sustainably maintaining funding levels for Diversity & Civic Leadership Program given recent years' reliance on one-time funding from City Council and loss of FTE position supporting the program.
- Charter transition, bureau reassignment, reorganization add deep change management challenges for all bureaus but especially smaller ones. Emergency declarations for present day crises and ongoing demands from Portlanders make planning and collaboration across bureaus essential. Civic Life is engaged in cross-bureau planning and process improvements which will serve as a foundation for changes to come.
- Secure a 5-year update agreement with PSU to update the neighborhood demographic profiles and mapping tool.

Budget Challenges and Future Priorities

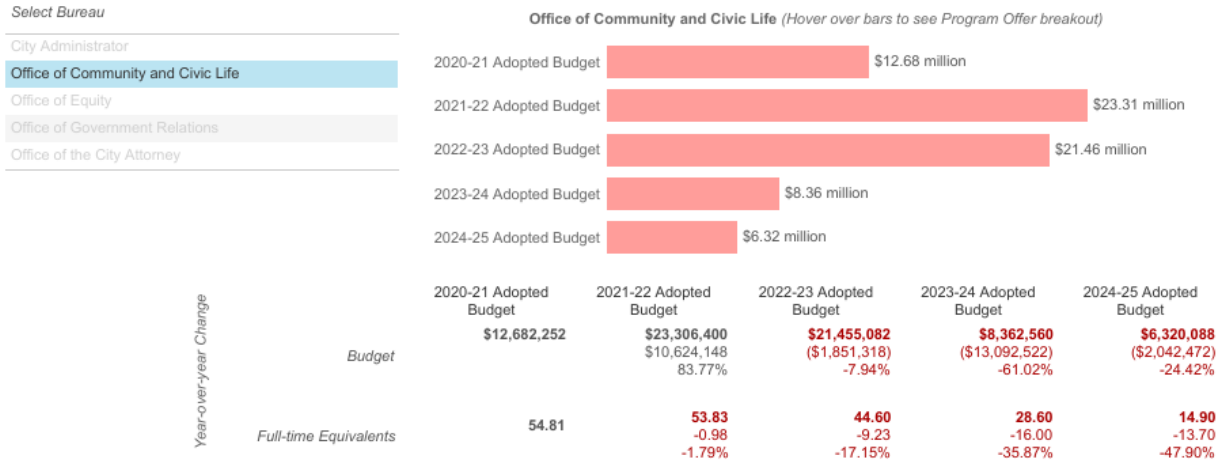
Budget Changes

Like many bureaus, Civic Life has felt the challenges of budget cuts in the years since the pandemic. In addition to Citywide budget cuts, Civic Life's budget and FTE were greatly reduced when the Noise, Liquor, and Cannabis programs were moved to other bureaus in 2023. Civic Life teams have experienced reduced capacity from these cuts, while simultaneously experiencing an increased demand for services from community.

A breakdown of these budget changes is available on the next page.

FY 2024-25 Adopted Budget Dashboard

Public Safety	Auditor	Budget & Finance	City Administrator	City Operations	Community & Economic Development	Council and Mayor	Public Works	Vibrant Communities
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Highlight YoY Percent Changes Over:
50%

Resources	External Revenue	Miscellaneous Fund Allocation	\$1,000,000	\$6,217,000	\$7,261,763	\$0	\$0
		Charges for Services	\$1,959,202	\$1,989,171	\$1,947,130	\$0	\$0
		Intergovernmental	\$0	\$0	\$250,000	\$0	\$0
	Internal Revenue	General Fund Discretionary	\$9,508,648	\$14,509,587	\$11,466,375	\$8,043,871	\$6,070,384
		General Fund Overhead	\$129,238	\$279,042	\$298,173	\$306,589	\$234,704
Requirements		Interagency Revenue	\$85,164	\$11,600	\$11,850	\$12,100	\$15,000
	Fund Balance	Beginning Fund Balance	\$0	\$300,000	\$219,791	\$0	\$0
	Total		\$12,682,252	\$23,306,400	\$21,455,082	\$8,362,560	\$6,320,088
	Bureau Program Expenses	Personnel	\$6,560,539	\$6,821,391	\$5,800,797	\$3,548,032	\$2,292,242
		External Materials & Services	\$5,186,321	\$14,962,436	\$14,309,392	\$3,684,586	\$3,248,610
Fund Level Expenses		Internal Materials & Services	\$918,885	\$1,190,547	\$1,287,408	\$1,129,942	\$779,236
		Contingency	\$0	\$299,578	\$0	\$0	\$0
		Fund Transfers - Expense	\$16,507	\$32,448	\$57,485	\$0	\$0
	Total		\$12,682,252	\$23,306,400	\$21,455,082	\$8,362,560	\$6,320,088

5-Year Priorities

Revise and update the ONI standards; build a Citywide Engagement strategy; and align bureau structure to support engagement strategy, citywide guidance, and standards for consistent citywide approach to engagement; evolve community engagement practices working in concert with City practitioners.

Long-Term Financial Outlook

Establish new engagement activities to consolidate existing revenue streams while expanding revenue sources. Collaborate with other organizations on community work to launch new coalitions, leverage funding opportunities available for public agencies. Explore new funding structures like matching grant programs, venture capital, donor-advised funds, and 3P initiatives.