City Organization Project: Community Outcomes Report

Note: This report is an informal analysis of a limited set of sources. It is not a scientific study and is not intended to be an exact measurement of community input. While the report does rely on sources that used national best practices and data science, it is a high-level summary of those sources based on the perspective of the author. This report is intended to be used a helpful resource to inform the City Organization and Future Improvements projects only and will be used solely for development of future community engagement and internal analysis.

Introduction

By Jan. 1, 2025, a new election system and form of government will take shape in Portland, as city charter changes approved by voters in Nov. 2022 take effect. These changes include a transition to ranked-choice voting, an expanded 12-member city council elected by district, and a mayor elected citywide to oversee services with the support of a city administrator.

What is the purpose of this report?

The City's transition team is using the information collected from multiple sources and consolidating these findings to help inform decisions in two projects, which are outlined below, that the City needs to implement to help prepare for the [new form of government](#) that was approved by voters in November 2022.

Over the years, communities have engaged with the City of Portland in many ways about how it can improve delivery of services to Portlanders. This Community Outcomes Report summarizes the common themes the project team discovered from several years' worth of input collected from community from a few specific and city-wide sources.

These sources include:
- ✓ City audits of bureaus and programs, 2020-2023
- ✓ Recommendations from the Ombudsman's Office, 2017-2023
- ✓ Public comment received by the Portland Charter Commission, 2020-2022
- ✓ Citywide community surveys: Portland Insights Survey, Portland Engagement Project, 2022-2023

Which projects will this report inform?

In the new form of government, the mayor will appoint a city administrator to manage day-to-day operations of the City. This is a change from the current structure, where bureaus report to one of five city council offices. To support this new configuration, and the opportunities it provides to improve City functions, city staff are working on two projects.

The first project, *City Organization*, is developing a recommendation for a high-level reporting structure for the bureaus. The new structure will include logical groupings of bureaus and programs and will help the new city administrator manage the bureaucracy effectively on their first day. The recommendation for a new structure will be considered by City Council in fall 2023.

The second project, *Future Improvements*, will begin as soon as the new structure is approved. This is a longer-term project that will identify additional structural, process improvement, and policy changes that can improve how we deliver services to Portlanders. Some of the changes may be made before 2025, while others will be forwarded as recommendations for the new Council and City Administrator to consider in 2025 and beyond.

What is the process for these two projects?

The *City Organization* project created a process called programmatic assessments to help leadership decide how bureaus and some programs should be arranged. The assessments are conducted by five teams of leaders from bureaus and City Hall. The teams consist of a Council office and the bureaus assigned to them as their 'service area.' Each team will evaluate how the current structures are working and how the City can best be arranged to deliver services effectively and efficiently. Collectively, they will inform the CAO's recommendation for a structure that a city administrator can logically manage. City Council will consider the recommended structure in fall 2023.

The *Future Improvements* project will evaluate process improvement opportunities after the City's organizational structure is finalized. This work is still evolving and will include engagement to capture community priorities, employee needs, and best practices for helping everyone manage the changes in a positive and productive way. More information about this project will be available soon.

Analysis

Opportunities of the Report

The following is a summary of input received by thousands of Portlanders since 2017. It is not intended to reflect every comment or response received, nor is it intended to be an exact quote from any single comment or response. This analysis is intended to broadly represent key findings from multiple surveys, listed above, that center around similar themes and can be addressed through similar outcomes.

Limitations of the Report

While the sources we used to conduct this analysis are reliable and represent many communities, we were unable to precisely account for every person who contributed. Not all the sources captured demographics information. Based on the sources that did track demographics, we know these sources of public input represent thousands of Portlanders from a variety of incomes, neighborhoods, and cultural backgrounds, as outlined below.

Demographics of sources	
Number of Portlanders	5,000+
Languages spoken	Spanish, Russian, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Chinese, English
Racial/Ethnic representation	American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Latinx or Hispanic, Middle Eastern or Northern African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, White
Geographic sextants	East, North, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest

The project team acknowledges that this report represents a personal review of an available inventory of engagement sources. This report is not a comprehensive review of every piece of input received and is not inclusive of all goals and desired outcomes and may not reflect all Portlanders.

Community Goals and Outcomes Summary

Goal 1: The City should be **COORDINATED**

Key takeaway: The community wants a city that works in unison.

Description: This means to operate under one vision for Portland's future that creates benefit for all.

Outcomes: *If the city were better coordinated, it might mean:*

- Budgets are unified and resources are distributed based on how they support shared goals and values.
- Infrastructure projects, like sewer and street repair, work in the same location at the same time and in a way that is predictable to the public.
- Goals, plans, resolutions, and policies that have city-wide impacts (i.e., Climate, Equity, Emergency Management) would be aligned and brought under standardized management.

Goal 2: The City should be **ACCOUNTABLE**

Key takeaway: The community wants a city that answers to the people.

Description: This means to make progress on goals and values and clearly communicate every step of the way.

Outcomes: *If the city were more accountable, it might mean:*

- Performance measures for city-wide goals would be created and progress would be easy for the public to find and track.
- The public can see a clear connection between the taxes and bonds they pay and resulting services and outcomes.
- New public-led processes like participatory budgeting and oversight committees that are more inclusive and representative help make decisions for implementation of city policies.

Goal 3: The City should be **ACCESSIBLE**

Key takeaway: The community wants a city that is informative and helpful.

Description: This means improving how Portlanders connect to government services.

Outcomes: *If the city were more accessible, it might mean:*

- A modernized website provides reliable, interactive, and multi-lingual information about services available.
- It is easy to find a point of contact for a bureau or service-related question.
- Permitting programs are easy to understand and quick to navigate.

Goal 4: The City should be **RESPONSIVE**

Key takeaway: The community wants a city that can quickly address emerging issues that harm Portlanders.

Description: This means centralizing leadership efforts to effectively focus on solutions to social, economic, and public health challenges to improve quality of life and wellbeing for Portlanders.

Outcomes: *If the City were more responsive, it might mean:*

- Standardized practices are applied to all public services, but service areas are allowed flexibility to specialize and meet community needs.
- Hygiene issues like trash and bathroom facilities are addressed quickly and equitably in all neighborhoods.
- City departments are aligned on solutions and have the authority to make decisions directly with jurisdictional partners to address issues that need regional support.

Goal 5: The City should be **EQUITABLE**

Key takeaway: The community wants a city that makes it easier for everyone to thrive.

Description: This means prioritizing solutions and services for people who experience the most disproportionate impacts of social, economic, and public health challenges.

Outcomes: *If the City were more equitable, it might mean:*

- Enforcement actions by the City are less complaint-driven and are standardized to reduce their disproportionate impact on vulnerable Portlanders.
- Taxes, fines, and fee collections are standardized and brought under unified management.
- City funding for services that address affordability and community safety are prioritized to meet the needs of communities who face disproportionate impacts.

Project Area Summary

The following table identifies which of the two project areas (City Organization or Future Improvements) might be able make progress toward achieving the community outcomes. Some outcomes are grouped into both project areas because structural changes may only be one step toward achieving a successful outcome. Both projects will be informed by community input, but it may not be possible to address each of these and other inputs through these projects alone.

Goals and Outcomes	Project Area	
	City Organization	Future Improvements
Coordinated		
• Budgets are unified and resources are distributed based on how they support shared goals and values.		X
• Infrastructure projects, like sewer and street repair, work in the same location at the same time and in a way that is predictable to the public.		X
• Goals, plans, resolutions, and policies that have city-wide impacts (i.e., Climate, Equity, Emergency Management) would be aligned and brought under standardized management	X	X
Accountable		
• Performance measures for city-wide goals would be created and progress would be easy for the public to find and track.		X
• The public can see a clear connection between the taxes and bonds they pay and resulting services and outcomes.		X
• New public-led processes like participatory budgeting and oversight committees that are more inclusive and representative help make decisions for implementation of city policies.		X
Accessible		
• A modernized website provides reliable, interactive, and multi-lingual information about services available and opportunities to engage.		X
• It is easy to find a point of contact for a bureau or service-related question.		X
• Permitting programs are easy to understand and quick to navigate.		X
Responsive		
• Standardized practices are applied to some public services, but service areas are allowed flexibility to specialize and meet community needs.	X	X
• Hygiene issues like trash and bathroom facilities are addressed quickly and equitably in all neighborhoods		X

• City departments are aligned on solutions and have the authority to make decisions directly with jurisdictional partners to address issues that need regional support	X	X
Equitable		
• Enforcement actions by the City are less complaint-driven and are standardized to reduce their disproportionate impact on vulnerable Portlanders.		X
• Taxes, fines, and fee collections are standardized and brought under unified management	X	X
• City funding for services that address issues like affordability and community safety are prioritized to meet the needs of communities who face disproportionate impacts.		X

Next steps

The community outcomes as included in this report will become part of an assessment lens that City leadership will use when deciding between different organizational options in the City Organization project. The assessment lens will help leadership identify which options are most likely to lay a foundation for improved service delivery to Portlanders, advance the City's core values, and reflect employee input.

The information included in this report will also be used to inform the Future Improvements project. As shown in the table above, only 4 out of 15 outcomes could potentially be impacted through a change in organizational structure. But all the 15 outcomes can potentially be addressed though further evaluation of more process improvements the City should consider.

The Future Improvements project will include more opportunity for community engagement and deeper involvement from Portlanders as the City evaluates long term process improvement recommendations for the future government to consider.

It is important to note that the community outcomes listed in this report may not result in future improvement recommendations. More evaluation and engagement must occur before recommendations are made.

Appendices

Methodology

There were several steps taken to analyze the sources and develop the goals and outcomes provided in this report, outlined here. For more detailed information about the sources, please see Source Index below.

1. The Auditor's office was asked to provide feedback to the project team about any relevant Audit Services or Ombudsman reports related to delivery of services to Portlanders. In May 2023, the Auditor's office provided the project team with feedback that contained a number of publications and recommendations. This document was reviewed and helped inform the first draft of goal and outcome themes. The outcomes were drafted to capture the sentiment of the recommendation, and the goals were then drafted based on the theme the outcomes tended to cluster under.
2. The Portland Charter Commission public comments related to service delivery were coded using the themes from the first draft of goals and outcomes. Additional goals and outcomes were drafted through this process and added to the list to create a second draft of goal and outcome themes.
3. The City of Portland community surveys were compared to the second draft of goals and outcome themes to determine if those sources had similar themes. Additional goals and outcomes were identified through this process and added to the list to create a third draft of goal and outcome themes.
4. The Portland Charter Commission public comments related to service delivery were re-coded using the themes from the third draft of goals and outcomes. The goals were finalized.
5. A source summary table, below, was created to analyze whether the list of outcomes was supported by multiple sources. Any outcomes not supported by more than one source were eliminated from the list. The outcomes were finalized.

Source Summary

The following table lists all the community engagement sources that provided feedback specific to the goals and outcomes.

Goals and Outcomes	Source			
	Charter Commission comments	Audit Services Reports	Ombudsman Recommendations	City of Portland community surveys
Coordinated	56	X		X
• Budgets are unified and resources are distributed based on how they support shared goals and values.	15			X
• Infrastructure projects, like sewer and street repair, work in the same location at the same time and in a way that is predictable to the public.	2	X		
• Goals, plans, resolutions, and policies that have city-wide impacts (i.e., Climate, Equity, Emergency Management) would be aligned and brought under standardized management	18	X		
Accountable	120	X		X
• Performance measures for city-wide goals would be created and progress would be easy for the public to find and track.	17	X		X
• The public can see a clear connection between the taxes and bonds they pay and resulting services and outcomes.	22			X
• Public-led processes like participatory budgeting, climate oversight committees, and other public bodies are more inclusive and representative to help make decisions for implementation of city policies.	67			X
Accessible	81	X	X	X
• A modernized website provides reliable, interactive, and multi-lingual information about services available and opportunities to engage.	60	X		X
• It is easy to find a point of contact for a bureau or service-related question.	8			X
• Permitting programs are simplified and can be managed through an online portal	9	X	X	X

Responsive	105	X		X
• Standardized practices are applied to some public services while service areas are allowed flexibility to specialize and meet community needs.	3	X		
• Hygiene issues like trash and bathroom facilities are addressed quickly and equitably in all neighborhoods	39			X
• City departments are aligned on solutions and have the authority to make decisions directly with jurisdictional partners to address issues that need regional support	10	X		
Equitable	62	X	X	X
• Enforcement actions by the City are less complaint-driven and are standardized to reduce their disproportionate impact on vulnerable Portlanders.	1	X	X	X
• Taxes, fines, and fee collections are standardized and brought under unified management	1	X	X	
• City funding for services that address issues like affordability and community safety are prioritized to meet the needs of communities who face disproportionate impacts.	54			X

Source Index

1. Audit Services Reports & Recommendations

The following publications helped inform this report:

- Building Permit Review Audit, March 2021
- Taxes, fines, and fees: Customers who owe caught in maze of inconsistent and uncoordinated collection strategies, February 2022
- Sewer Maintenance: Renewed attention to partnership needed to better serve ratepayers, September 2021
- Emergency Management: Pandemic highlights City's long-standing neglect of people with disabilities, December 2021
- Risk Management: City loss prevention needs a proactive approach, June 2017
- Equity in Construction Contracting: Some goals achieved despite mismanagement, waste, and gamesmanship, September 2020

Analysis also included broader feedback from Audit Services based on their experience, but not always formalized in an audit report. This feedback was included when it was also reflected by at least one

other source. The following are a summary of the Audit Service comments that were provided to the project team, based on their experience:

- Performance Measures: Over the years, bureaus have been discussing performance measures and intermediate goals, which help connect high level goals and missions with day-to-day work responsibilities. Some work has begun recently on structures, processes, and practices to support better performance and data management, which could be a resource for bureaus working on how to measure performance against their goals.
- Citywide Efforts led by individual Bureaus: It can be challenging for individual bureaus to lead citywide work, trying to account for a variety of priorities and coming from sometimes very small bureaus. Some examples of citywide work include climate plans, data governance, Tribal Relations, and emergency management.
- Central Services: Coordination and division of labor between central service providers and bureaus is a challenge, as are communication and feedback loops. Illustrative examples include: [Risk Management](), [Social Equity Contracting](), [Collections](), [Building Permits](), [Americans with Disabilities Act compliance]() as well as IT/software needs, procurement/contracting process, facilities, fleet, legal services, Human Resource issues.
- Services outside City's historic portfolio: A more recent subject has been services outside the City's historic portfolio, such as human services and health related items. Working relationships, coordination and collaboration with other local jurisdictional partners are incredibly important to ensure success in these areas.

2. Ombudsman Reports and Recommendations

The following publications helped inform this report:

- [City's reliance on complaints for property maintenance enforcement disproportionately affects diverse and gentrifying neighborhoods, November 2021]()

Analysis also included broader feedback from the Ombudsman based on their experience, but not always formalized in a publication. This feedback was included when it was also reflected by at least one other source. The following are summaries of the Ombudsman comments provided to the project team based on their experience:

- Permitting: Community members have shared that it is challenging and costly to navigate the permitting process.
- Collections: Community members have shared that bureaus don't seem to be operating with a standard debt collection policy, which can lead to inequitable outcomes."

3. Portland Charter Commission public comments

The Portland Charter Commission received thousands of [public comments from 2021-2022](). The comments received were coded into themes, one of which was "service delivery". Those comments coded as "service delivery" were further coded into goals and outcome themes for this report. See Methodology for more details.

4. City of Portland community surveys

The following surveys were reviewed:

- Portland Insights Survey: This survey gathered feedback from Portlanders in 2022. The full report is not yet available for publication but will be on the website once it is available.
- Portland Engagement Project: This project gathered feedback from Portlanders in 2022-2023. More information and feedback results can be found on the website.