

Age-Friendly Portland Advisory Council Comments & Suggestions
Portland Comprehensive Plan Revision
October 21, 2014



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October 21, 2014

Dear Planning and Sustainability Commission:

Please find attached the Age-Friendly Portland Advisory Council's comments regarding the City of Portland's 2035 Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft. Our Council, after reviewing the document, feels that the City of Portland – including the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS), the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC), and City Council – have been successful in utilizing an “age-friendly lens” in the current iteration of the Comprehensive Plan revisions and the wider activities carried out in Portland. We expect that the key strategies that emerged from the Portland Plan and the policy that is part of the current Comprehensive Plan will move Portland toward becoming a community for all ages in the near and long term.

However, we suggest that the advances that have been made to date are not forgotten and that additional efforts are made that create a Portland that is healthy, vibrant, inclusive, and just place for people of all ages and abilities. In fact, we urge BPS, PSC and City Council to embrace the Age-Friendly Portland initiative in an attempt to make Portland a model age-friendly community. In particular, the Action Plan for an Age-Friendly Portland offers guidance for implementation efforts related to the Comprehensive Plan (e.g., policy approaches for age-friendly housing, active transportation for an aging population). As the City refines zoning and building codes, regulations, and incentives, keep in mind that more than 40% of all of the households added to Portland from 2015-2035 will include a person aged 65 and older.

Our window of opportunity for preparing for population is rapidly shrinking and this revision of the Comprehensive Plan is the last before Portland (and the region, state and nation) face a rapid and unprecedented aging of its population. Please consider the attached recommendations with the foresight that planning in a sustainable manner must include planning for a markedly older population.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Margaret B. Neal in black ink.

Handwritten signature of Alan DeLaTorre in black ink.

Margaret B. Neal, Ph.D. and Alan DeLaTorre, Ph.D
Co-Chairs – Age-Friendly Portland Advisory Council

cc: Age-Friendly Portland Advisory Council

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Background: Researchers at the Institute on Aging (IOA) at Portland State University and members of Portland’s Age-Friendly Advisory Council (AF Council) have reviewed the City of Portland’s 2035 Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft (2014)ⁱ and offer the following comments and suggestions for the next draft of the Comprehensive Plan (the “Recommended Draft”). These comments and suggestions have been shaped using an aging and equity “lens” so that implementation of the Comprehensive Plan can help Portland to become a community for all ages. Furthermore, these comments and suggestions attempt to align the Comprehensive Plan update with the Action Plan for an Age-Friendly Portland (2013),ⁱⁱ which was created as a requirement for Portland’s membership in the World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and Communities and which was detailed as a 5-year action (Action Item #103) in the Portland Plan’s Health Connected City goal (2012, p. 83).

Public Testimony: These comments and suggestions will be accompanied with testimony to the Planning and Sustainability Commission on October 28, 2014.

General Suggestion 1: Additional Analysis of the Projected Household Growth by Age of Householders is Needed. The Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft (2014) highlights household growth in the City of Portland, specifically detailing that 120,000 new households are expected by 2035 (p. I-5). IOA researchers have examined data from Metro and the Office of Economic Analysis (Oregon) and have determined that 40-45 percent of these new households will include people who are aged 65+. These estimates suggest that additional analysis and preparation are needed to understand the implications of household growth in light of the age composition of the new households. We understand that new analyses are not timely for the current iteration of the Comprehensive Plan review; however, such analyses are extremely important for informing the implementation of policies, including those focused on accessible, affordable, and age-friendly housing. The IOA recommends the City conduct additional research regarding aging households.

Metro’s forecasts of households by age provide some guidance regarding the numbers and geographic distribution of older households; however, it is not clear that these “scenarios” adequately forecast the future growth in households that include people who are aged 65+. This is particularly important when planning for the where older households are anticipated to live (e.g., single- vs. multi-family housing).

Examining trends from 2015-25 – in the next ten years – IOA research has shown that households that included people aged 70-74 and 75-79 will have the highest rates of growth compared with all other age groups. Moreover, from 2025-2035, households with someone aged 80+ will grow at a higher rate than will all other households except those with people aged 40-44. Because the incidence of disabilities increased from age 70+, there are implications for the types of housing people in these age groups will need. In addition, housing costs become more of a concern for older adults living on fixed incomes. Although the development of various types of Neighborhood Centers may provide opportunities for services that are important to older persons, these centers may well price up or drive out single-family housing, inadvertently encouraging seniors to relocate and disrupting their social networks of support; additionally, multi-family and senior housing may be priced up driving older households to new communities.

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General Suggestion 2: The Strategies Outlined in the Portland, Comprehensive, and Age-Friendly Plans Should be Integrated. The Portland Plan, adopted in 2012 by the City of Portland, set four shared strategies to guide the City’s and other government’s actions in Portland over the next 25 years (see below); the Comprehensive Plan has been described as an implementing tool of the Portland Plan.ⁱⁱⁱ Ten actions were also detailed in the Portland Plan that intended to make Portland a more physically accessible and age-friendly city and the Action Plan for an Age-Friendly Portland also detailed numerous actions that should be implemented to make Portland more age friendly. The following suggestions connect the Portland Plan (including the 10 action areas for “Creating a Portland for All Generations”), the Action Plan for an Age-Friendly Portland, and the revision of the City’s Comprehensive Plan:

- (1) *A Framework for Equity*: Portlanders vary in their needs and abilities, and the projected increase in the proportion of older adults and the increases in the number of people who require supportive environments make age-friendly environments – physical, social, and service – of great importance with respect to equity.
- (2) *Thriving Educated Youth*: Portland’s future depends greatly on the health, well-being, and the success of its youth. From a life course perspective, the early stages of life have a critical impact on individuals and society as Portlanders develop over time. The physical infrastructure needed for learning must be accessible for people with a range of abilities and adaptable to meet the needs of current and future generations, including for younger and older people within educational settings, and community members of all ages in need of places to gather and engage.
- (3) *Economic Prosperity and Affordability*: Older adults have tremendous financial and social assets and thus present opportunities for economic development and workforce development that can aid Portland’s future. While Portland is attracting young “creatives,” it is also drawing college-educated migrants aged 40 years and older at higher rate than other large metropolitan areas in the U.S. (Note: more research is needed to understand net migration patterns for this demographic group).^{iv} Infrastructure that attracts new residents and tourists (e.g., public information, accessible environments) needs to be inclusive for those across the age and ability spectrums. With respect to economic prosperity, Portland must look to couple policies and programs that further broad economic development goals and job creation with affordable housing, transportation, and services that advance economic well-being across socio-economic groups.
- (4) *Healthy Connected City*: As our population ages and becomes more diverse, having a healthy, connected city, which includes thriving and accessible centers and corridors, becomes increasingly important. Active transportation options, accessible outdoor spaces and buildings, and housing types that meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities, are needed to facilitate social interaction and inclusion, foster contact between the generations and enhance safety.

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General Suggestion 3: Examples of Age-Friendly Policies and Approaches that Should be Utilized Moving Forward

Chapter 1

- Page GP3-9: Policy 3.15: Design of centers to meet the needs of street users of all ages and abilities is critically important for future generations.

Chapter 3

- Page GP3-7: Policy 3.4: Use of citywide design and development for “people of all ages and abilities” is critically important for future generations.

Chapter 4

- Page GP4-6: Policy 4.4: Pedestrian-oriented design for a range of users is critically important for future generations.

Chapter 5

- Page GP5-7: Policy 5.7: Physically-accessible housing is critically important for future generations.
- Page GP5-8: Policy 5.17: Aging in Place. We agree that facilitating opportunities for aging in place is critically important for future generations and that this policy is central to creating an age-friendly Portland. It is important to note that when aging in one’s current home is not possible, aging in one’s community should be an option.

Suggestions Pertaining to the Seven Key Directions of the 2035 Comprehensive Plan:

- Page I-9: In the overview of the seven key directions, the concepts of accessibility and age-friendliness should be included.
 - In Key Direction 1, “Create complete neighborhoods,” we suggest adding “and help to create an accessible community for all ages” at the conclusion of the first sentence (“Grow and invest in well-designed centers and corridors that support healthy living *and help to create an accessible community for all ages.*”)
- Key Direction 1: Create Complete Neighborhoods. We applaud the use of images of older adults and people with disabilities, as well as the use of language such as “roll” to describe people using personal mobility devices such as wheel chairs or walkers. We urge care in characterizing all older adults and people with disabilities as “frail” or as within one functional category. The older populations are diverse and include active, non-mobility-impaired groups, in addition to frail older adults.
- Key Direction 5: Provide Reliable Infrastructure to Equitably Serve All Parts of the City. Older adults should also be a part of the equity approach. On page I-28, we urge the inclusion of older adults in the discussion of the consequences of gentrification and displacement (i.e., “These consequences include involuntary displacement of lower income households and a change in the *age*, ethnic and racial make-up of a neighborhood’s residents and businesses”).

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Comprehensive Plan Update: Urban Design Direction: Concept-Objectives-Framework: 9.10.2014:^v The Urban Design Direction document compiles and summarizes key urban design components of Portland’s Comprehensive Plan. Below are several suggestions that should be considered for future implementation of age-friendly policies and programs:

- Continue to highlight the following as the language is critical to successful messaging in the future: “Complete communities that offer a range of well-designed housing options and costs are the best way to support a diverse, resilient, and *age-friendly city*” (p. 5).
- The City Greenways language offers a strong example of age-friendly language: “City Greenways are a citywide network of trails and green, park-like corridors linking major centers, destinations, the rivers and other large open spaces...they help to promote active living, both for recreation and transportation, for *people of all ages and abilities*” (p. 31).

Additional Suggestions:

Chapter 1

- Page GP1-5: The section on Human Health” should add the phrase “*throughout the human life course*” as follows: “**Human Health.** Encourage land use decisions that avoid or minimize negative health impacts and improve opportunities for Portlanders to lead healthy, active lives *throughout the human life course.*”

Chapter 3

- Page GP3-9: Policy 3.11 – Housing in centers. We suggest adding: “*and prioritize accessible/universally-designed housing within a quarter-mile of the Town Center core*” as follows: “**Housing in centers.** Provide housing capacity for enough population to support a broad range of commercial services, focusing higher-density housing within a half-mile of the Town Center core *and prioritize accessible/universally-designed housing within a quarter-mile of the Town Center core.*”
- Page GP3-10: Regional Center – Gateway: Development and redevelopment in Gateway should be looked to as an opportunity to pilot accessible and universally-design environments, including high-density housing that meets the needs of older adults and people with a range of disabilities, as well as universally-designed public places. We suggest amending Policy 3.22 as follows: “**Role of Gateway.** Encourage growth and investment in Gateway to enhance its role as East Portland’s center of employment, commercial and public services *while facilitating opportunities to creative innovative, universally-design environments that can become best practices for sustainable and accessible environments throughout Portland.*”
- Page GP3-11: Policy 3.31: We suggest adding the following text to the end of the policy statement: “*Accessible/universally-designed housing for older adults and people with disabilities should be provided within a quarter-mile of the Town Center core.*”
- Pages GP3-26 & GP3-27: Figures 3-2 and 3-3 are mistitled (Figure 3-2 Centers is actually the corridors, and Figure 3-3 is actually the centers).

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Chapter 5

- Page GP5-7: Policy 5.8: Accessible design for all. We suggest adding the following text to the end of the policy statement: “*and other standards for accessibility and usability (e.g., for visitable housing, specialized design for deaf and hard of hearing and/or blind and low-vision communities).*”

Chapter 9

- Page GP9-1: In the fourth bullet point, we suggest defining “vulnerable road users” (i.e., add “*including cyclists, pedestrians, and mobility-impaired people.*”
- Page GP9-5: Goal 9.E: Positive health outcomes. We suggest adding the following text to the end of the policy language: “The transportation system promotes positive health outcomes and minimizes negative impacts for all Portlanders by supporting active transportation, physical activity, and community and individual health *across the life course.*”
- Page GP9-7: Policy 9.6 Transportation hierarchy for people movement. Special needs transit is not considered. The hierarchy should include a high-level tier for “*Special accommodations.*”
- Page GP9-11: Policy 9.37 Portland International Airport. Consider inserting the term “age-friendly” in the text as follows: “**Portland International Airport.** Maintain the Portland International Airport as an important, *age-friendly* regional, national, and international transportation hub serving the bi-state economy.”

ⁱ City of Portland (2014). 2035 Comprehensive Plan Proposed Draft. City of Portland, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. Retrieved from <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/57352>

ⁱⁱ Age-Friendly Portland Advisory Council (2013). Age-Friendly Portland Action Plan. Retrieved from <http://agefriendlyportland.org/article/age-friendly-portland-action-plan/>

ⁱⁱⁱ City of Portland (2012). The Portland Plan. Retrieved from <http://www.portlandonline.com/portlandplan/index.cfm?c=56527&>

^{iv} Jurjevich, J., & Schrock, G. (2012). *Is Portland really the place where young people go to retire? Migration patterns of Portland's young and college-educated, 1980–2010.* Portland, OR: Portland State University. Retrieved from <http://mkn.research.pdx.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/JurjevichSchrockMigrationReport1.pdf>

^v City of Portland (2014). Urban Design Direction: Concept – Objectives – Framework. Retrieved from <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/article/497442>