

1: The next Portland City Council will be unlike any that we've ever experienced in the past. How should Council operate and what will Council need to accomplish in the next two years to make the new form of government as effective and respected as it can be?

The City of Portland is changing its election system and form of government to implement voter-approved charter reforms. Approved in November 2022, Ballot Measure 26-228 includes ranked-choice voting, geographic districts, a bigger city council, and new leadership roles. As an architect of the charter reform, I have experience studying good governance models from across the globe over the past four years. I will use the lessons I've learned to help implement this new government.

The Council must prioritize collaboration and teamwork, ensuring a unified approach to addressing the city's challenges. This involves fostering a culture of cooperation among the 12 council members and the mayor, who will now focus on policy and community engagement. Transparency in decision-making is crucial, and the Council should maintain open communication with the public through regular forums, clear agendas, and accessible records.

Defining clear roles and responsibilities for each council member, the mayor, and the city administrator will be essential to avoid overlaps and ensure accountability. Efficient meeting management practices, such as setting clear agendas and sticking to time limits, will help maintain productivity and keep discussions focused.

Beyond that, the council must engage actively with the community through town halls, listening sessions, and regular communication, demonstrating that the Council values public input and is responsive to community needs. This also folds into committing to continuous improvement by seeking feedback, evaluating outcomes, and being willing to make adjustments as needed to encourage a culture of innovation and adaptability.

By focusing on collaboration, transparency, clear roles, efficient meetings, key accomplishments, community engagement, and continuous improvement, the Portland City Council can operate effectively, achieve significant progress, and build a respected and trusted form of government that meets the needs of its residents. By working together through this new era of the Portland City Council, I believe that we can accomplish key outcomes that could change our city for the better.

Key Outcomes for a new City Council:

Housing and Homelessness: Develop comprehensive strategies to address housing affordability and homelessness, including increasing affordable housing supply and supporting eviction prevention programs.

Public Safety and Police Accountability: Continue efforts to update the police department for 21st century needs, focusing on accountability, transparency, and reimagining community safety.

Climate Action and Sustainability: Prioritize initiatives to combat climate change, such as investing in green infrastructure, enhancing public transportation, and supporting renewable energy projects.

Economic Development and Job Creation: Foster economic growth by supporting local businesses, attracting new industries, and investing in workforce development.

Equity and Inclusion: Ensure all policies promote equity and inclusion, addressing disparities in education, health, and economic opportunities.

Infrastructure and Transportation: Invest in modernizing infrastructure, including roads, bridges, public transit, and digital infrastructure, to create a resilient transportation system.

2: Current City Council members have suggested that we need to relax environmental and natural resource regulations in order to address the housing crisis. What is your perspective on this issue? What is your top natural resource and environmental priority?

I strongly believe that relaxing environmental and natural resource regulations is not the right approach to addressing the housing crisis.

On the contrary, to avoid continuing to destroy our environment, we must be more committed than ever to ensuring that we don't cause further ecological and environmental harm as we address the housing crisis. While it's crucial to tackle housing affordability and availability, this should not come at the expense of our natural resources. We can and must find solutions that balance both needs.

Sustainable Development: We should focus on promoting sustainable development practices that prioritize both housing needs and environmental protection. This includes encouraging the use of green building techniques, increasing density in already developed areas, and protecting our natural spaces.

Innovative Housing Solutions: We can explore innovative housing solutions, such as converting unused or underutilized spaces into affordable housing, supporting the development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and incentivizing the rehabilitation of existing buildings rather than expanding into green spaces.

Public Transit and Infrastructure: Improving public transit and infrastructure can also help address the housing crisis. In East Portland, we have the opportunity to improve on all these goals. By creating more accessible and connected communities, we can reduce the need for sprawling developments that encroach on natural areas.

Community Involvement: Engaging with communities to understand their needs and working together to develop solutions that do not compromise environmental integrity is crucial. Collaborative efforts can lead to more innovative and acceptable solutions that benefit everyone.

Leverage Environmental Expertise: As the Executive Director of Verde, an environmental non-profit, I have firsthand experience and expertise in promoting sustainable practices and protecting natural resources. I will use this background to bolster my arguments against potentially harmful expansions and advocate for safer, more sustainable energy solutions.

By prioritizing sustainable development and environmental protection, we can address the housing crisis without compromising the health and well-being of our environment and communities.

3: Vehicles are Portland's largest source of emissions and continue to climb. For example, a number of cities have restricted downtown vehicle use. How should Council address this issue?

Council should address the issue of vehicle emissions in Portland by implementing a comprehensive strategy focused on reducing vehicle use, promoting alternative transportation, and enhancing the city's infrastructure for sustainable transit. Here are several key actions:

Restrict Downtown Vehicle Use: Implement policies to restrict vehicle use in downtown Portland, similar to initiatives in other cities. This can include creating car-free zones, limiting access to certain types of vehicles, and prioritizing pedestrian, cycling, and public transit access. This will reduce emissions, decrease traffic congestion, and make downtown more pedestrian-friendly.

Enhance Public Transit: Invest in expanding and improving public transit options, making them more accessible, reliable, and efficient. This includes increasing the frequency of buses and trains, expanding routes, and ensuring transit services are affordable for all residents. This is particularly needed in my district, which lacks north-south connectivity and frequent bus lines. A robust public transit system can significantly reduce the number of vehicles on the road.

Promote Active Transportation: Encourage walking and cycling by expanding bike lanes, improving sidewalks, and creating safe and connected routes for non-motorized transportation. Increasing use of bike-sharing programs and secure bike parking can also encourage more people to choose cycling over driving.

Support Electric Vehicles (EVs): Promote the adoption of electric vehicles by expanding the EV charging infrastructure, particularly in East Portland, which hasn't seen as much infrastructure development as central Portland; offering incentives for EV purchases; and

transitioning the city's fleet to electric vehicles. Encouraging the use of EVs can help reduce emissions from those who still need to drive.

Encourage Hybrid Work Models: Support and incentivize hybrid work options for businesses and employees. Reducing the need for commuting through a mix of remote and in-office work can significantly decrease vehicle emissions and traffic congestion, while still ensuring that people live, work, and visit downtown areas.

Engage in Public Education and Outreach: Conduct public education campaigns to raise awareness about the environmental impact of vehicle emissions and promote the benefits of alternative transportation. Engaging the community in these efforts can lead to broader public support for sustainable initiatives.

Partner with Businesses: Collaborate with local businesses to create incentives for employees to use public transit, cycle, or walk to work. This can include offering transit passes, creating bike-friendly workplaces, and supporting flexible work hours to reduce peak-time congestion.

By implementing these measures, the City Council can effectively reduce vehicle emissions, improve air quality, and create a more sustainable and livable Portland.

4: There are a number of new and recently built market rate apartment buildings listed for sale for under \$250,000 per unit. The Portland Housing Bureau is financing a number of affordable housing projects that are costing more than \$500,000 per unit. There are some extra costs associated with affordable housing financing and with building more 2BR and 3BR units, but not nearly enough to explain the difference.

What specifically would you do to more effectively use our limited resources for affordable housing?

Affordable housing can cost more than market-rate housing due to factors like higher construction loan interest rates due to perceived higher "risk," high construction costs due to a shortage of workers available to build our homes, and public requirements to make sure those workers are paid a fair wage, and other requirements to make sure people living in affordable housing have safe, healthy, and pleasant homes.

Here are the specific actions I would take to address high costs:

Support All Forms of Housing: Make sure we are building every form of housing for people, from shelters, to transitional housing, to permanently supportive housing, affordable rental housing, and homeownership opportunities. Every solution requires a different level of funding and serves a different community of people — and all are deeply needed.

Keep Tenants in Their Homes First: The primary reason people become homeless is because they can't afford their rent. We must reduce the pressure on the affordable housing market by making sure people can stay in their homes. This involves defending, enforcing, and expanding Portland's renter protections like limits on increases and evictions and notice requirements.

Leverage Existing Market Rate Units: Encourage the acquisition and conversion of existing market rate apartment buildings into affordable housing. Given that there are market rate units available for under \$250,000 per unit, this could be a more cost-effective solution compared to building new units from scratch. By negotiating bulk purchases or utilizing city incentives, we can secure these properties and make them available to low-income residents.

Promote Partnerships Between the City, the State, and Private Funders: Foster partnerships between the City, non-profits, the State's housing finance agency, and private developers to share expertise, coordinate various funding sources, and align processes. These collaborations can lead to innovative solutions and leverage additional funding sources, reducing the financial burden on the city.

Build the Housing Construction and Services Workforce: We don't have enough workers in construction trades to build the housing we need, which results in delays and high costs. We also see rapid turnover among people working in resident services and supportive services. We need to expand the pipeline for people who build our affordable housing and provide critical support to people living in it. This can involve apprenticeship programs, other workforce development programs, especially for youth, BIPOC Portlanders, people reentering from the justice system, and others who have been shut out of these opportunities.

Make Sure Inclusionary Zoning Works in East Portland: Inclusionary zoning is a useful tool in Portland to build homes at prices that we may not otherwise see. However, because of the ways we measure affordability, inclusionary housing is not always affordable to the residents of East Portland. We need to make sure our affordability metrics make sense at the neighborhood scale.

Create a Social Housing Program: Social housing programs have found success by creating permanently affordable, publicly-owned housing at ALL income levels. Rent revenues from higher-income units help finance lower-income units. Residents have agency over their homes through cooperative governance structures. Seattle and Montgomery County, Maryland offer examples from the U.S., in addition to many other models across the world.

Advocate for State and Federal Support: Work with state and federal governments to secure additional funding and support for affordable housing. By advocating for increased funding and policy changes at higher levels of government, we can augment our local resources and address the affordable housing crisis more effectively.

Increase Flexibility in Funding: Advocate for more flexible funding models that allow for a mix of financing options, including low-interest loans, tax credits, and grants. By diversifying funding sources, we can reduce the per-unit cost of affordable housing projects.

Streamline Approval Processes: Work to streamline the approval and permitting processes for affordable housing projects. Saving development time can help lower costs.

Utilize Modular and Prefabricated Construction: Encourage the use of modular and prefabricated construction methods for affordable housing projects. These techniques can significantly reduce construction costs and timelines, making it possible to build more units with the same amount of funding.

By implementing these strategies, we can make more efficient use of our limited resources, reduce the cost per unit of affordable housing, and ultimately provide more affordable housing options for Portland residents.

5: Ireland used Citizen Assemblies to deal with difficult issues such as Abortion. Please watch this two minute video and let us know if you think Citizen Assemblies could help Portland come together

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKSgPtnN0s0>

I firmly believe in learning from other cities and countries. One innovative approach Portland could consider is the use of Citizen Assemblies, which have been successfully implemented in Ireland to address complex issues like abortion. My work on participatory budgeting aligns closely with the principles of Citizen Assemblies, highlighting my commitment to inclusive and democratic decision-making.

As someone who was on the charter commission and pushed for participatory budgeting, and as a current endorser of the campaign for participatory budgeting, I believe this is our opportunity to implement the principles of Citizen Assemblies with actual dollars, influence, and power behind it. By harnessing the collective wisdom of its residents, Portland can build consensus, enhance trust in the democratic process, and develop actionable solutions that reflect the values and needs of the community.

Participatory budgeting involves giving citizens a direct say in how public funds are spent, ensuring that budget decisions reflect the community's needs and priorities. Similarly, Citizen Assemblies consist of randomly selected citizens who have come together to deliberate on important issues and provide recommendations. These assemblies ensure broad representation, including diverse viewpoints and demographics. Participants received balanced and comprehensive information on the issues, enabling them to make informed decisions.

Facilitated discussions help build consensus on contentious issues, fostering a sense of unity. Direct citizen involvement in decision-making enhances trust in government and the democratic process, and assemblies provide well-considered recommendations to guide policymakers in addressing complex issues.

In Portland, a Citizen Assembly could deliberate on comprehensive solutions to homelessness, involving diverse perspectives from affected communities, service providers, and residents. Engaging a Citizen Assembly to discuss and recommend climate action strategies could ensure that policies are both effective and broadly supported by the community.

To implement this in Portland, we should start with a pilot Citizen Assembly focused on a specific issue like affordable housing or climate action to demonstrate the value and process of citizen deliberation. Ensuring a representative selection of participants that reflects the demographic and socio-economic diversity of Portland will be crucial. Skilled facilitators will be needed to guide the deliberation process, ensuring balanced discussions and respectful dialogue.

Maintaining transparency in the process, including clear communication about the assembly's goals and outcomes, and ensuring that the council seriously considers and acts on the recommendations provided by the Citizen Assembly, is essential. Citizen Assemblies could help Portland come together by providing a platform for inclusive, informed, and respectful deliberation on difficult issues.

6: What is another City doing that Portland should replicate?

Mobile, Alabama: The Homeownership Provides Equity (HoPE) Program

The HoPE Program allows residents using Section 8 vouchers to put those vouchers toward the *purchase* of a home, not just rent. This program combines several innovations in affordable housing.

Publicly Supported Construction of Infill Housing: The City uses American Rescue Plan funds to build new infill homes — wisely recognizing that housing is infrastructure and we should fund it as such.

Building Equity through Section 8: Residents can put their Section 8 vouchers toward their mortgage payments on their homes. This innovation of a long-standing program helps residents build equity.

Below-Market Interest Rates: With interest rates as sky-high as they are currently, mortgages are even more unaffordable for people than usual. The City offers below-market interest rates to keep mortgages affordable for residents.

Down Payment Assistance: This program supports people with down payment assistance. Portland has existing down payment assistance programs and could easily apply them to a program like HoPE.

Benefits for Portland:

Increasing Homeownership: Very few homeownership options exist at an affordable level. This program could leverage several sources to make sure more Portlanders can afford the stability homeownership provides.

Better Use of Public Resources: Portland already supports residents with Section 8 vouchers, down payment assistance, and other incentives to construct infill and affordable housing. Combining all these tools makes the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

By learning from the innovative approaches of other cities, Portland can address its own urban challenges, promote sustainable development, and enhance the quality of life for its residents.