

## Olivia Clark

### **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?**

Under the Charter change, the new Portland City Council becomes a legislative body and no longer manages the City's 26 bureaus. It is imperative that we make this new system work in order to show the electorate that we have a functioning city government that can solve the problems which confront us. This will begin to restore confidence and respect.

First, it will be critical for the new Council to show they can work together even when they disagree; that they can work with the Mayor and with the new City Manager to make a smooth transition. They need to demonstrate collaboration, not rancor. Hopefully, they announce shared goals including making the City work for everyone and being more user friendly. Restoring the "City that Works" moniker will take time. Ideally, they will work well with the new city management towards positive change. The new management needs to implement a program of continuous quality improvement to execute on the promises made to its citizens.

Second, I recommend a 120 day agenda to address the immediate needs of the downtown: more public restrooms (the Portland-Loo), trash pick up and graffiti removal to instill confidence in our electorate that the downtown is safe and clean. (While homelessness and open-air drug use will take longer than 120 days to solve). The downtown is critical to our City's tax base and is the front door to our State. We must turn it around beginning with small seemingly superficial actions that will build confidence and lead to reinvestment. People need to feel safe in order to return to downtown and encourage both investment and re-use of office buildings.

The Council will need to establish their own goals for the next two years that should include ending homelessness, ending public drug use/public safety (may improve after Sept. 1 when SB4002 is implemented), reducing 911 wait times — these are issues that are top of mind for many people in Portland. Following those immediate issues are longer term strategies that revolve around creating safe streets & sidewalks, road maintenance, insuring that our bureaus are prepared for climate change and disaster, supporting our sense of safety throughout the City and renewing our commitment to carbon reduction.

Lastly, the Council members need to make themselves available to their constituents through District-based meetings, pop ups, columns in the neighborhood-based newspapers, attending neighborhood meetings, etc. Keeping the electorate informed of their progress and listening to their concerns will also build confidence in City government.

**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?**

We must find ways to encourage more housing development in Portland. This requires new approaches to permitting, building codes, building materials and new ways to address our environmental and natural resource regulations. There is no one silver bullet. The City could encourage pilot projects involving the creativity of the private sector in cooperation with the City's own housing bureau and the Oregon Community Foundation or other philanthropic organizations.

I started my career in affordable housing in Oregon and founded a non profit to build farmworker housing (CASA— which is still going strong). I have personal experience with resistance to siting needed housing types. It is frustrating that we have gone backwards from the time I advocated for affordable housing and expanded state housing programs. Creative pilot projects could offer new possibilities and address some of the resistance to infill, ADUs, etc. At a recent City Planning Commission meeting, there was considerable public testimony around the need for greater density along transit and other main corridors. Several grassroots organizations have arisen with young people advocating for more density and affordable housing opportunities, particularly on the east side of Portland. I heard the slogan "4 floors and a corner store". They expressed their frustration with incessant City planning processes and demanded action.

We must continue to address carbon reduction and our contributions to climate change. I also want to insure that our City water source is well-protected and that our infrastructure bureaus are resilient and redundant as we face severe weather events and disasters. In the long-term, Oregon will be a climate refuge and we must protect our quality water and natural resources.

**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?**

Sadly, transit use has plummeted since the pandemic along with the change in work patterns. Having worked at TriMet to successfully raise the funds for the build out of the light rail system and the iconic Tillicum bridge, I know that transit use increases once gas prices reach a certain threshold (formerly \$5 a gallon). People are also resistant to using transit today due to the perception that it isn't safe. We need to restore the City's investment in the transit police.

While at DEQ, I successfully moved legislation to update of Oregon's Clean Air Plan through a hostile legislative environment. I also had legislation passed that insured the state has primacy and can be more stringent than the federal government. In addition to reducing vehicle use, there are other strategies that we can employ.

I am open to discussing opportunities for restricted downtown vehicle use and creating more pedestrian-friendly options perhaps on a pilot basis. However, it should be explored within the context of a downtown revitalization.

**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 3R units, but not nearly enough to explain the difference.**

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

If I had a magic wand, I would be purchasing these apartment buildings as well as hotels that are (or will soon become) distressed properties. I would also include the purchase of vacant lands to landbank. (A policy recommendation I made to Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury during her tenure.). I understand that the county may be in the process of renting more rooms for the homeless at distressed hotels when they should be buying them to replace the lost inventory of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels that once dotted the downtown.

In the long run, we need to move a segment of housing out of the private market and into public ownership to guarantee it's long-term affordability. This is what used to be called public housing, a program that was defunded by the Reagan administration and replaced with vouchers and a complex use of the tax system to fund new affordable housing (Low income housing tax credits). As mentioned in your #4, financing associated with affordable housing increases the cost and requires the use of specialized tax accountants.

The Joint Office should be judicious with the public dollars it is giving to non-profits across the county. There should be increased accountability and performance measures.

**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.**

** [How Ireland Transformed Democracy with Citizens' Assemblies](#)**

It is a great video and something we could consider. Thank you!

I was involved in Governor Barbara Robert's "Conversation with Oregon". This was an effort to bring motivated voters together in all regions of the state to learn about the state's tax system and where the revenue was spent. This was followed with discussions of how best to change our tax system. It was an excellent effort that could be replicated to address other issues and find consensus.

When I worked for Governor Kitzhaber in his first two terms, we created the Community Solutions Teams which later became Oregon Solutions. This is another approach to problem solving that brings all interests to the table to find a solution to a problem. The current City Administration is proposing a Portland Solutions office.

## **6. What is another City doing that Portland should replicate?**

There are several examples of innovative approaches being used in different cities. However, cities such as Houston are very different than Portland. Seattle has a youth homeless program with tailored intervention to stop the cycle of homelessness particularly for young people exiting foster care. Cleveland may be leading the way with office conversions as buildings linger on the market and prices decline much like Portland. They front-load financial incentives to spur re-use. Like Portland, they are also interested in creating a 24/7 downtown.