

# Stephanie Routh

**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 first job of the new Portland City Council will be to coordinate with the Mayor and City Administrator to stand up a more responsive, accountable form of government. That will be no small task! A century of our current commission form of government has resulted in bureaus operating as silos. We need to create new pathways between bureaus to advance a culture of collaboration and achieve the cost savings we desperately need in order to deliver basic services—from pothole repair to welcoming parks—that Portlanders should expect from their local government.

We also need to knit East Portland into the fabric of citywide decision-making. East Portland has long been left behind in terms of investment and involvement. Building a better government means that we respect community members by engaging all of us in decisions in a meaningful way that honors our time and effort. The transition to a new coordinated bureau system must center accountability and transparency and ensure that all Portlanders can both decide and track how their tax dollars are spent and how we are moving forward on our shared priorities.

One skill that I bring to this moment in our city's history is that of coalition building. I filed an intent to run for Portland City Council early because I believe we have a rare chance to build a more collaborative organizational culture in Portland city government, and I believe in order to be successful, that work needs to start on the campaign trail. On Council, I will take an approach of developing a welcoming environment within local government for civic engagement, community leadership, and support for neighbors. We have been faced with steep challenges—a climate crisis, a housing emergency, an expanding wealth gap, a pandemic—and meeting those challenges is going to take all of us.

**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 can address our housing crisis and our climate crisis together. And we must.

My neighborhood of Lents, one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the state, had the most deaths of any other zip code during the heat dome event of 2021. They were the first deaths directly attributed to climate change in our region.

<https://www.wweek.com/news/city/2021/07/14/this-is-the-hottest-place-in-portland>

Local threats include extreme heat events, such as the heat dome event mentioned above, and extreme cold events, such as our recent weeklong ice storm. Either one would impact our community's already precarious urban tree canopy, but both create the conditions for tree canopy loss at a level our neighborhoods simply cannot tolerate. We need a serious focus on shade equity citywide, as well as a coordinated effort to protect our most vulnerable neighbors during extreme climate events.

Last year, the Planning Commission was tasked with balancing near-term development with other citywide priorities, including environmental protections, through our work on the Housing Regulatory Relief conversation. As a commissioner, I appreciated the opportunity to engage with a broad spectrum of perspectives, which resulted in retaining ecoroof and bird glazing requirements while also responding to housing developers' needs.

I am a lifelong climate advocate, and I will continue to advocate for growing our tree canopy, to support the work of the Portland Clean Energy Fund to guide our city to a just transition, and to invest in active and resilient transportation choices. I will continue to advocate for youth to be fully engaged at climate action and planning tables, because their futures depend on our collective actions.

**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?**

Individuals and families make life decisions based on the choices available to them. Right now, many families—and particularly families in East Portland—can't realistically choose anything other than driving. That's the work before us. To build true choice into our transportation system.

Last year, I served on Portland's Transportation Decarbonization Roundtable as part of the Climate Investment Plan process. In that role, I advocated for a number of programs that I believe will shift our mode-share: e-bike rebate program (including cargo e-bikes), car-sharing investments, and expansion of the Transportation Wallet, a program that offers incentives for multi-modal transportation and is administered by the City, as a few examples. I would work to support implementation of those programs.

Over 40% of our state's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector, overwhelmingly from single occupancy vehicles. As the largest city in the state, Portland has the opportunity and responsibility to prioritize active transportation infrastructure. I have over 20 years of experience, including serving as the former executive director of Oregon Walks and on a number of local and statewide transportation committees and commissions, navigating transportation funding and policy decisions. I will leverage my office to build robust walkable and bikeable infrastructure as well as advocate for accessible, convenient, and safe public transit.

**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?**

I think at least part of the answer resides in your question. It makes all the sense in the world to me to find our purchasing power and acquire apartment buildings (and/or developable land) that are currently on offer at prices below what we could build them for in “high opportunity areas,” meaning parts of town well-served by transit with nearby access to parks and other city amenities. In fact, the best opportunities may precede the election - so I hope Portland’s current leaders seriously explore this opportunity. It might not be easy, but it is a simple and elegant path to unlocking affordable housing. For this to work, we’d need two things that local governments often lack: a spirit of bold, persistent experimentation ([in the words of FDR](#)) on the part of elected officials, and quick access to flexible cash. Both are hard in different ways, particularly in our current context. To the best of my understanding, no city staffer has been assigned to act on opportunities like this, because they’re unusual. For that reason it’s ultimately up to top-level people, including elected officials, to connect the dots and prepare a funding mechanism that can move quickly when opportunities arise that are worth seizing. If there’s no flexible local cash available, it may be that a local elected official’s best role in this specific situation is to relentlessly knock on Metro or OHCS’s doors until the state takes advantage of this big opportunity for the public and those of us struggling for housing.

More broadly, I think it’s important to first recognize that we didn’t get to our current housing crisis overnight. A lot of factors—exclusionary zoning, statewide prohibition of inclusionary housing, racial discrimination by banks, and the dismantling of low income federal housing subsidies over time—brought us to where we currently are, and it is going to take dedicated collaboration and work to get us to where we need to be as a city and a region. This will, for better or worse, be the work of decades. It’ll need to continue through many different business cycles. But we need to keep making progress while we simultaneously address our acute needs.

As City Councilor, I will use the expertise I have developed as a Planning & Sustainability Commissioner to advance codes and funding for abundant housing policies. We have a near-term opportunity through the Housing Production Strategies Project to explore solutions that will advance housing production. I am supportive of Portland’s changes to its Inclusionary Housing Program and am eager for a single permitting authority. We also need to work closely with regional and state partners to fund a spectrum of housing types, including recovery

housing.

**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 believe in the power of citizen assemblies, which are also sometimes referred to as civic juries to include all residents. We can look to Ireland, but we can also look closer to home, to neighboring Milwaukie, Oregon. The City of Milwaukie recently teamed up with Healthy Democracy to convene a civic jury on Milwaukie's City Councilor salary levels. You can read more about it here:

<https://healthydemocracy.org/what-we-do/local-government-work/2019-milwaukie-citizens-jury-pilot-project/>

Generally, I believe this can be a powerful tool to find innovative solutions to some of our pressing challenges by tapping the considerable knowledge and expertise of Portlanders. It also advances participatory democracy, which is close to my heart.

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

I'm interested in the concept of a "night mayor" position, which [Philadelphia and a number of other cities](#) have been experimenting with.

In most cities, I understand that the position focuses on the local music and entertainment industries. In addition to that, I'd also be interested in exploring other aspects of how our city differs from night to day, and how we can better support workers, neighborhoods, and industries. For example, my mom has been a critical care nurse, and we have talked about how different it is to be a charge nurse on night shift, because it has significant impacts on triage resources. People who work overnight experience health and safety impacts both short- and long-term, like [this recent OHSU study](#) notes regarding firefighter shifts. Our city functions differently from dusk 'til dawn. I would be interested in having a conversation about how our city needs to show up at night.