

I. CITY OF PORTLAND

City Government (2020, 1991, 1965, 1963, 1961)

The League of Women Voters of Portland believes that a thriving, livable city requires a city government that meets these criteria: accountability, responsiveness, equity, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and nonpartisanship.

Our members believe that to more fully meet these criteria, Portland needs to improve its government structure. The highest priorities for change are to improve citizen representation by increasing the number of commissioners, to institute a city manager, and to establish the City Council as a legislative or policy-setting body. We also support electing some or all city councilors by district.

Within the City Council, the mayor should have the same voting power as the other members, establish the council agenda in collaboration with the other councilors, run the council meetings, prepare a city budget for council consideration, and serve as the formal representative of the city.

We support adequate and thoughtful long-range planning in accordance with other published League positions.

We also support adequate and thoughtful coordination with other local governments in accordance with other published League positions.

We believe city government should solicit broad and inclusive input through fully representative, accessible and robust public involvement processes that reflect best practices. The city should also provide adequate feedback on how community input has been used in its decision-making.

Planning (2009, 1974, 1973)

The League of Women Voters of Portland supports comprehensive long-range city planning based on:

- Citizen involvement at all stages of the planning process;
- Communication and coordination among citizens, citizen advisory groups, and city and regional planning agencies;
- Consideration of environmental, social and economic impacts of proposed plans and actions;
- Determination of long-range goals and priorities.

Goals should include:

- Area-wide orderly growth and development;
- A visually attractive urban community with a sustainable and healthful environment and a healthy economy;
- Quality infrastructure and public facilities designed to meet the needs of residents and businesses;
- Fair distribution of tax burdens and government investment.

Economic Development (2015)

The League of Women Voters of Portland believes that economic development is a proper concern for governmental entities including the City of Portland. We define economic development to include the broadest range of activities that contribute to the stability, growth and diversification of the Portland economy, measured by the increase and rate of increase in the median family income and standard of living in Portland.

The most important factors to be considered when promoting economic development are:

- Quality and number of jobs
- A healthful environment
- Creation and preservation of open spaces
- Neighborhood revitalization that benefits existing residents
- Effects on existing local businesses
- Equity issues
- Ability to attract private investment
- Overall return on investment of public funds.

We believe effective strategies to advance economic development goals include infrastructure development, targeted job training, and protection of the industrial land base including brownfield reclamation. Other tools that may be employed with appropriate restrictions and accountability include participation in public-private partnerships, tax increment financing (TIF) for urban renewal, loans of public funds to private enterprises, and tax credits and abatements.

Prosper Portland (formerly known as The Portland Development Commission (PDC)) is Portland's principal redevelopment and revitalization agency. When Prosper Portland uses tax increment financing for urban renewal, the City must consider the impact on overlapping taxing jurisdictions and the essential services they provide. The City should perform regular performance audits to study the effectiveness of urban renewal and TIF in the delivery of the financial benefits promised to taxing jurisdictions. The City should have a limited ability to amend urban renewal areas' duration, maximum indebtedness, or acreage. Urban renewal districts should be reserved for areas that are physically deteriorated, unsafe, poorly planned, or economically stagnant.

The League supports reviewing the City's system of regulations, fees and taxation to identify unnecessary impediments to businesses operating in the city. City regulations should be less vulnerable to differential interpretation at the permit level. Designated staff should assist businesses in navigating development regulations.

The League supports greater investment in education at all levels, including specific workforce training programs as a key component of local efforts to spur economic development. Educational institutions, private industry and government should cooperate to create a workforce with skills relevant to the needs of local industry.

The Auditor's office should evaluate the expenditure of economic development funds and the effectiveness of those expenditures in accomplishing the stated goals. Governmental agencies should hold recipients of public dollars accountable with binding agreements for recovering funds when promised goals are not met.

We support transparency and public participation in all phases of economic development projects: planning, monitoring, and evaluating.

Neighborhood Associations (2007, 1975, 1973)

1. The LWV of Portland believes that Portland's Neighborhood Associations have the potential to serve the public good by providing important opportunities for civic participation and improving neighborhood livability. To meet this potential, Neighborhood Associations must be integrated into city networks of communication and decision-making, and they must be adequately supported by city funding and services. Neighborhood Associations, in turn, need to consistently invite and include all residents in their operations.
2. Portland's neighborhood system structure:
 - Neighborhood Associations should continue to be autonomous entities separate from city government.
 - Because Portland's neighborhood system is grassroots in nature, diversity of NA character should be honored. A decentralized system of service delivery is appropriate.
 - District Coalitions, in their varied organizational formats, should remain in place as long as they are effective, with funding from the city.
 - Uniformity and equity should be pursued where possible but should not come at the expense of effectiveness.
3. The city's role in supporting Neighborhood Associations should consist of:

At the Council and Bureau level:

 - Informing Neighborhood Associations of city projects and activities affecting them
 - A willingness to solicit and receive neighborhood input
 - Consideration of neighborhood needs within city budgeting process
 - Funding that is adequate to maintain this system

Through the Office of Neighborhood Involvement:

 - Ensuring a neighborhood voice in city operations
 - Encouraging better communication between city bureaus and neighborhoods
 - The setting forth of healthy governance practices in guidelines for Neighborhood Associations
 - Support for neighborhoods and District Coalitions including assistance and adequate funding for communication, outreach, leadership training and technical assistance
4. Successful Neighborhood Associations should:
 - Be independent with the authority to set their own agenda

- Have the ability to interact with all government and non-governmental entities
- Work to engage the various populations in the neighborhood
- Respond to neighborhood needs
- Represent neighborhood interests effectively to the city
- Utilize effective means to communicate with neighborhood residents at least twice a year

Neighborhood Associations should not be the only avenue for civic engagement with Portland's government. If resources are adequate, city assistance could be offered to groups other than Neighborhood Associations to increase organizational capacity. When Neighborhood Associations are functioning effectively, with both the resources to do their work, and city's acknowledgement of their role, encouragement should be given to other community groups to channel work on civic issues through the neighborhood system.

Portland Police Bureau (1982)

The League of Women Voters of Portland believes the primary function of the Portland Police Bureau is the protection of life and property through the just and effective enforcement of the law, including crime prevention programs and strong visibility of the police.

Just and effective enforcement of the law demands good police/community relations. We support the specialized education and training of police personnel in human relations, including the use of specialists from outside the Bureau. The selection and assignment of police personnel should reflect the individual's knowledge of and sensitivity to variations in community needs.

We support citizen involvement in the functioning of the Portland Police Bureau including, but not limited to, budget advisory committees, precinct advisory councils, and citizen advisory groups.