

PROGRESS  
REPORT

#3



Portland  
Charter Commission



MARCH  
2022

# Table of Contents

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	3
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	5
Background	5
Phased Approach & Timeline	5
Desired Outcomes for Charter Reform	6
<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT</b>	7
Partnership with the Coalition of Communities of Color	7
Community Engagement Cohort	8
Public Comment	8
Community Listening Sessions	10
Community Surveys	15
Community Organization Policy Discussions	20
Discussions with Bureau Directors	21
Discussions with City Elected Leaders	23
<b>AREAS OF AGREEMENT</b>	25
Elections	25
Establishing Geographic Districts with Multiple Council Members Representing each District	26
Increasing the size of City Council Size to at least 12 plus a Mayor	27
Adopting Ranked Choice Voting for City Elections	28
Shifting to One November Election, Eliminating May Primary Election	29
Districting and Redistricting Process	31
Form of Government	31
Separating Executive & Legislative Powers	31
Ensuring City Councilors focus on legislating and constituent services	32
Authority to hire, fire, and supervise a professional city manager/administrator and bureau directors	32
Role of a Mayor on City Council	33
<b>WHAT'S NEXT?</b>	34

# Executive Summary

This summary is designed to give a high-level view of the approach and work of the Charter Commission at this stage in the process.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES

Any potential reforms would be evaluated based on their ability to advance these outcomes:

1. A participatory and growing democracy with more voices being heard in elections
2. An accessible and transparent government with Councilors who are easy to reach
3. A reflective government with Councilors who look like the community they represent
4. A responsive government with Councilors who understand your community needs
5. An accountable government with Councilors who answer to the people
6. A trustworthy government with Councilors who safeguard democracy

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The important work of charter reform requires engaging Portlanders across neighborhoods, lived experiences, and backgrounds. The Charter Commission is committed to a community-driven process to inform its decision-making and an equitable, accessible, and transparent community engagement process.

- **Partnerships:** The Charter Commission partnered with the Coalition of Communities of Color on the design and implementation of community education and engagement activities to meaningfully engage Portland's diverse communities in the charter review process and established a community engagement cohort made up of seven community-based organizations.
- **Public Comment:** As of March 17, 2022, the Charter Commission received **1,134 public comments**. Of those received, 57.2% mention form of government, 46.5% mention city council elections, 11.9% mention

homelessness, 8% mention climate justice, 4.6% mention safety, and 3.62% mention police.

- **Listening Sessions:** The Charter Commission and the Coalition of Communities of Color Collaborative hosted a total of **26 community listening sessions** that engaged **580 community members**.
- **Community Surveys:** The Charter Commission has distributed and collected data from two multi-lingual surveys. The first, from which **1,036 surveys** were collected, was designed to gauge understandings of the Charter Commission to inform engagement and communication. The second survey, from which there were **2,977 survey responses**, was designed to capture opinions about some of the Charter Commission's potential recommendations.
- **Community Organization Policy Discussions:** The Commission has met with 26 community-based organizations and groups to have policy discussions. Policy consultations are distinct from the engagements in that the Charter Commissioner sought to understand organization-specific priorities, positions, and expertise on the policies under consideration.
- **Discussions with Bureau Directors:** The Charter Commission held a series of meetings with all but one bureau directors to understand their lived experiences with city government and to hear their priorities for charter reform.
- **Discussions with City Elected Leaders:** The Charter Commission held a series of meetings with all city elected leaders—the Mayor, Auditor, and City Commissioners to understand their lived experiences with city government and to hear their priorities for charter reform.

## CHARTER COMMISSION AREAS OF AGREEMENT

Based on the public input received, individual and group research, and discussions, the Charter Commission decided on an initial set of agreements, which include:

1. Shift the constituency of City Council from all at-large seats and increase the size of City Council
2. Shift from the commission form of government to a form of government in which City Councilors do not directly manage bureaus
3. Shift to a form of voting that allows a decision in one election, eliminates the primary, and adopts a voting method that captures people's preferences

At the March 15th Charter Commission work session, the Commission found majority support for additional agreements in the two areas of current focus: elections and form of government. These areas of agreement included:

- **Establishing geographic districts with multiple council members representing each district:** Desires for guaranteed council representation from all parts of the city, increased representation, and lowering financial barriers for candidates to compete were key considerations in favor of this reform.
- **Increasing the size of city council to at least 12:** Increasing the size of City Council increases the chance that Portlanders can find someone on Council who represents their interests. The current five-member (including the mayor) City Council has not grown for more than 100 years, despite a nearly three-fold increase in the city population.
- **Adopting ranked choice voting for city elections:** Ranked Choice Voting would give a Portland voter the ability to choose more than one candidate to vote for, ranking the ones they like in order of preference by marking the ballot to indicate “1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd, choice, etc.” for as many as they care to offer a preference. These reforms give voters more choice.
- **Shifting to one November election, eliminating May primary election:** The Commission favors voting methods that elect candidates when the most people are likely to be voting. In November elections, voter turnout is substantially higher, so more voices weigh in on decisions that affect all Portlanders.
- **Separating executive and legislative powers:** The unanimous consensus of the Charter Commission is that City Council members should not directly manage bureaus and that a new form of government should ensure a separation of the executive (administrative) and legislative (policy) functions in city government.
- **Ensuring city councilors focus on legislating and constituent services:** By removing commissioners from overseeing bureaus, councilors will have additional capacity to focus on solving complex challenges and meeting with their constituency to draft policy and budgets.
- **Authority to hire, supervise, and fire a professional city manager/administrator and bureau directors:** The Charter Commission supports the creation of a professional city manager/city administrator role to coordinate city services, implement city policies passed the City Council, and supervise bureau directors. A mayor would nominate the person, subject to council approval.

While the Commission reached majority support for these ideas, there are still many topics yet to be fully determined. The Commission will continue to refine their recommendations and seek additional public input. In late June 2022, the Charter Commission will vote on their final set of recommendations for Portlanders to consider on the November 2022 ballot.



# Introduction

Since December 2021, the 20-member, City Council appointed Portland Charter Commission has been deeply engaged in extensive research and ongoing public and community engagement to shape and inform policies on two foundational issues to the City of Portland and its residents: the city's form of government and elections.

This is the third progress report from the Charter Commission. The purpose of the Progress Reports is to provide Portlanders with a general sense of where the Charter Commission is headed and provide information on the policies under consideration in a transparent and accessible way. This report does not represent any final decisions made by the Charter Commission.

## BACKGROUND

### **What is a city charter?**

The city charter is a guiding document that establishes the government system and structure of a city. It defines how the government is set up, how city leaders are elected, and the roles and responsibilities of those leaders. The city charter functions as the city's constitution—it creates the city as a legal entity, authorizes city powers, and outlines the broad basic fundamentals of city government. Portland's city's charter can ONLY be amended by a vote of the people.

### **What is charter review?**

The city charter requires that at least once every ten years, City Council appoints a 20-member Charter Commission to review and recommend changes to the charter. City Council appointed the current Charter Commission in December of 2020.

### **So, what's the process for making changes to the city charter?**

There are 20 Charter Commissioners participating in the review process. If 15 or more agree to a recommended change, those recommendations go directly to the ballot for Portlanders to vote on. If 11 to 14 Commissioners agree to a recommended change, then those recommendations go to City Council. City Council will decide whether to refer those recommendations to the ballot as-is, modify them, or do nothing. Again, it is only by a vote of Portlanders that the charter may be changed.

## PHASED APPROACH & TIMELINE

In summer 2021, the Charter Commission decided to approach the charter review process in two phases—meaning two sets of issues and two election cycles.

The Commission is currently in the first phase and is focused on two issues - form of government and elections. The second phase will begin later this year. At this time, the set of issues for the second phase has not yet been selected.

The Charter Commission intends to put its recommendations on form of government and elections on the November 2022 ballot. The Commission prioritized the November 2022 election because it's the election with the highest voter turnout during the time the Commission is working, and the Commission believes that the most Portlanders as possible should decide these foundational issues. To qualify for the November 2022 ballot, the Commission's recommendations need to be finalized no later than early July 2022 due to State law.

## DESIRED OUTCOMES FOR CHARTER REFORM

The Charter Commission began its work by agreeing that any potential reforms would be evaluated based on their ability to advance these outcomes:

1. A participatory and growing democracy with more voices being heard in elections
2. An accessible and transparent government with Councilors who are easy to reach
3. A reflective government with Councilors who look like the community they represent
4. A responsive government with Councilors who understand your community needs
5. An accountable government with Councilors who answer to the people
6. A trustworthy government with Councilors who safeguard democracy

There is additional information about the desired outcomes on the Charter Commission's [website](#).

# Community Engagement

The important work of charter reform requires engaging Portlanders across neighborhoods, lived experiences, and backgrounds. The Charter Commission is committed to a community-driven process to inform its decision-making and an equitable, accessible, and transparent community engagement process.

The Charter Commission's Community Engagement Committee co-creates community education and engagement strategies with our community partners. The committee meets monthly to plan and evaluate engagement strategies for the Charter Commission.

**TABLE 1: Engagement by the numbers**

ENGAGEMENT	NUMBER
Survey responses	4,022
People receiving monthly email updates	1,082
Community listening sessions (partner & Commission hosted)	26
Participants at listening sessions (partner & Commission hosted)	580
Public comments received	1,134
Hours of verbal public comment	7 hours 45 minutes
Public meetings	70
Charter review briefings & presentations	84
Policy discussions with community organizations	26
Media articles, interviews, or inquiries	47

*Note 1. Numbers are as of 03/17/2022.*

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT PARTNERSHIPS

### Coalition Of Communities Of Color (CCC)

The Charter Commission partnered with the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) on the design and implementation of community education and engagement activities to meaningfully engage Portland's diverse communities in the charter review process with a focus on Portlanders who have been historically left out of city hall decision-making.

The Coalition of Communities Color partnered with a 12-member collaborative that includes the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), Hacienda CDC, Africa House, Pacific Islander & Asian Family Center, Muslim Educational Trust, Native American Youth & Family Center, Street Roots, Slavic & Eastern European Center, Unite Oregon, Urban League of Portland, Verde, and Next Up. All these partners bring deep community relationships and cultural expertise, with extensive experience in community engagement sessions, outreach, and trainings. The primary focus of CCC's collaborative is culturally-specific outreach and community engagement sessions with partner organizations. The secondary focus is broad multiracial outreach to the public at large while ensuring that all outreach materials are accessible to BIPOC communities, with anti-racist engagement strategies.

## Community Engagement Cohort

The Charter Commission also established a community engagement cohort made up of seven community-based organizations. Cohort members spend about 12 hours a month developing ways for community members to provide input—and then engage the communities they serve to participate in charter review. This approach was designed to ensure that engagement is culturally relevant, reduce barriers to participation and compensate community organizations for their expertise. Participating cohort members include Taking Ownership PDX, Hygiene4All, Equitable Giving Circle, Rosewood Initiative, East Portland Action Plan, Rohingya Youth Association of Portland (RYAP), and Sunrise Movement PDX.

Cohort member organizations have engaged their communities through various methods that meet the different needs of the communities they serve. All the organizations have tapped into their existing communication channels to share information and have varied engagement strategies. Some of the engagement activities have included newsletter outreach, charter 101 video creation, phone canvassing, social media posts, student class presentation, charter review presentations, in-language stakeholder interviews (Rohingya and Burmese), targeted conversation in Nepali, a community survey in Spanish, and more.

## PUBLIC COMMENT

As of March 17, 2022, the Charter Commission received 1,134 public comments through an online comment form, email, or nearly eight hours of verbal testimony. Of the 1,134 public comments received 57.2% mention form of government, 46.5% mention city council elections, 11.9% mention homelessness, 8% mention climate justice, 4.6% mention safety, and 3.62% mention police. Below is a summary of the public comment themes.

- **The commission form of government is not working for Portland.** There was overwhelming input that the city has outgrown the outdated commission form of government. People cited the failure of city government to make progress on significant, complex issues. A range of issues were cited including homelessness, gun violence and public safety, economic inequality, environmental crises, housing affordability, traffic fatalities, zoning, infrastructure, and trash.



- **City Commissioners should not directly manage bureaus.** Reasons people cited included a lack of shared vision to guide policymaking and budgeting, lack of bureau coordination and resulting silos, and the unnecessary cost overruns, delays and power struggles that occur when bureaus have misaligned goals or priorities. People also believe it results in inefficient management, lack of experience necessary to manage bureaus, and a lack of consistent management due to commissioners-in-charge changing.
- **There's a lack of accountability and no one is in charge.** People feel that it is hard to hold anyone accountable in the commission form of government and there's a lot of "that's not our bureau's responsibility" and finger-pointing. People feel like no one is in charge, no one is responsible for a strategic vision, and that the buck should stop somewhere. Many people noted the mayor doesn't have authority to do anything. While people indicated a desire for a mayor to have "actual authority," commenters varied on the extent and expression of that authority.
- **A professional city manager is needed.** Regardless of the new form of government, most people prefer a professional to oversee bureau administration to enhance bureau performance and ensure equitable and professional administration of bureaus and delivery of services. Commenters varied on whether a mayor alone or a mayor and council should oversee the position and who should be responsible for hiring and firing bureau directors. Some concerns about a city manager were raised, including the difficulty of holding the unelected position accountable, lack of transparency, and challenges of getting rid of a bad city manager.
- **City Councilors should be elected by geographic districts.** Public comment overwhelmingly supports electing city councilors by district to increase representation, help Portlanders know whom to reach out to, increase connection between elected leaders and their constituents, ensure unique needs of sections of our city are reflected, reduce barriers for people to run and win elected office, and ensure East Portland is no longer left out. Some commenters recommended a hybrid model with some councilors elected by district and some elected citywide to ensure issues are considered less parochially.
- **Increase the size of city council.** Many commenters recommended increasing the size of city council to increase representation, diversify councilors, increase councilors' focus on constituent services and legislating, and bring Portland more in line with cities of similar population. Recommended size varied anywhere from 6-35 councilors plus a mayor.
- **Interest in an alternative voting method.** Commenters expressed interest in an alternative voting method to give voters more choice and flexibility at the ballot box, increase voter engagement, address the number of candidates who have been elected with less than 50% of the vote, promote more positive campaigning, and have a voting system that accommodates the larger pool of candidates created by Portland's public campaign finance system. Most commenters who addressed voting methods preferred ranked choice voting. Some concerns included voter confusion, potential for an election result the majority doesn't want, and challenges for voters to learn about all the candidates. Commenters also noted the need for startup and voter education funding.

Other issues were raised in public comment, including the need for voter education on the charter reforms, environmental justice and climate action, police accountability, government transparency, participatory budgeting, and a civic participation commission.

### Who submitted public comment?

The only demographic data the Charter Commission has for public commenters is zip code data, and we only have that for about one-third of commentators. Based on available data, East Portland is currently underrepresented in public comments.

**TABLE 2: Public commenter demographic information in comparison to Portland**

LOCATION	PUBLIC COMMENTERS	PORTLAND POPULATION
North/Northeast Portland	39%	28%
Southeast Portland	23%	25%
East Portland	5%	24%
West Portland	25%	23%
Portland-Metropolitan area	7%	N/A
Other cities outside metropolitan area	<1%	N/A
Outside of Oregon	1%	N/A

*Note 2. Portland Population is sourced from the 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) data estimates and is subject to both sampling and non-sampling errors.*

## COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

The Charter Commission and the Coalition of Color Collaborative hosted 26 community listening sessions that engaged 580 community members. Community listening sessions provided an opportunity for Portlanders to learn about charter review and engage in small group discussions about their lived experiences and perspectives. Community members had the opportunity to explore their perspectives on the Charter Commission's phase one proposals of form of government and City Council elections.

The Coalition of Communities of Color decided to design two-part sessions to educate community members about the charter review process in an accessible way. The Charter Commission's listening sessions mirrored CCC's structure and discussion topics. The first part of CCC's sessions, titled the Charter Review 101 Workshop, took place in November 2021. Participants from the

first workshop were prioritized for part two of the series, which took place in January 2022. The objective of part one was to inform community members about what the Charter Commission is and to present foundational education about the topics the Commission is exploring - form of government and elections. The objective of part two was to present an initial set of proposals and to gather feedback, concerns, and opinions from community members about potential changes to the form of government and elections. The discussions primarily focused on form of government alternatives, district representation models, city council size, and alternative voting methods. However, participants shared many other opinions on the Charter Commission's potential proposed recommendations. Below are the collective themes that were uplifted among the community listening sessions. It's important to note that no community is a monolith, each participant is an individual with their own set of lived experiences and opinions, and these themes only capture the perspectives of those who participated in the events. This information should not be interpreted as universal opinions or preferences from any community.

### **November 2021 community listening sessions**

In November 2021, our partners hosted part one of the listening sessions through hosted engagement by the Coalition of Communities of Color collaborative. Five key themes emerged from this engagement:

1. A lack of information and knowledge about the city, its services, bureaus, and processes due to barriers to access and a lack of outreach and communication from the city.
2. City government does not adequately or equitably respond to the community's needs or concerns due to the city not taking sufficient action to meet community needs and community voices not being meaningfully centered in decision-making process.
3. Accessibility is the main barrier to participating in City Council elections. Accessibility concerns included lack of voting education, voter registration, citizenship status, location, the process of voting and language.
4. There's a disconnect between the community and candidates. Candidates don't know the lived experiences or issues that communities face and/or feeling that none of the candidates reflect their values or interests.
5. Communities prefer some form of geographic or localized representation.

In November 2021, the Charter Commission also hosted part one of their listening sessions. Six key themes and ideas emerged from this engagement:

1. Portlanders want change
2. Portlanders want to be heard by city hall
3. Portlanders want a government that creates positive movement on issues that matter to us
4. Portlanders want all of us to be enthusiastic about voting
5. Shift to a form of government in which City Commissioners do not directly manage bureaus

## 6. Shift to district-based elections

Some additional solutions included increasing the size of the City Council, reforming campaign finance, adopting a voting method that captures people's preferences, increasing access to voting, adopting participatory budgeting, and there was a variation on whether primaries are beneficial.

The full reports of the November 2021 listening sessions can be found on the Charter Commission's [website](#).

### **January 2022 community listening sessions**

In January 2022, the Coalition of Communities of Color collaborative hosted part two of the sessions. Nine key themes emerged from this engagement:

1. Participants elevated the importance of accountability, regardless of the form of government
2. Participants supported shifting away from the commission form of government
3. Overall, participants did not have a clear preference between a Mayor-Council or Council-Manager form of government
4. Participants preferred district representation for City Council seats
5. Participants preferred a model of multi-member districts with multiple elected leaders per district
6. Participants raised concerns about the districting process and called for an equitable and community-centered process
7. Participants supported an increased City Council size
8. Participants supported the shift to an alternative voting method rather than Portland's "pick one" method
9. Most participants preferred ranked choice voting as the alternative voting method

In January 2022, the Charter Commission also hosted part two of the listening sessions. Thirteen key themes and ideas emerged from this engagement:

1. Change is overdue
2. Portlanders are unclear who is responsible for different city functions and who to hold accountable
3. A desire for elected leaders to work collaboratively
4. Portlanders want more representation
5. Preference for district-based elections
6. Slight preference for multi-member over single-member districts
7. Shift to a form of government in which City Commissioners do not directly manage bureaus

8. Portland needs clear roles and responsibilities and lines of authority
9. Portlanders were split on Council-Manager or Mayor-Council form of government
10. Portland needs an improved voting system
11. Preference to get rid of primaries
12. Reform campaign finance
13. Need for robust civic education

A full report of both the Coalition of Communities of Color collaborative report and the Charter Commission report is available to access on the [Charter Commission website](#) under the “Key Information and Documents” section. To read more about the collective findings and themes, check out the full reports.

#### *Who participated in the community listening sessions?*

**TABLE 3: Charter commission & community partner hosted community listening session totals**

	CCC & PARTNER HOSTED	CHARTER COMMISSION HOSTED	TOTAL
<b>NUMBER OF LISTENING SESSIONS</b>	22	4	26 Sessions
<b>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</b>	373	207	580 engaged

*Note 3. CCC & Partner sessions include sessions through CCC, APANO, Hacienda CDC, IRCO, MET, NAYA, Next Up, Street Roots, Unite Oregon, Urban League, & Verde.*

In the community listening held in November 2021 and January 2022, a total of 580 participants were engaged. Of the 373 engaged through our partner-hosted sessions, we have demographic information on 70% of session participants for racial and ethnic community identified and 65% of session participants for additional communities identified. Of the 207 engaged through the Commission-hosted sessions, we have demographic information on 27% of session participants. All demographic questions were optional, and it's important to note that these percentages reflect the responses of participants who specifically responded to these questions. Additionally, not every participant who attended the listening sessions felt comfortable disclosing their demographic information.

**TABLE 4: Racial & Ethnic Communities identified in comparison to Portland**

RACIAL & ETHNIC COMMUNITY IDENTIFIED	CCC & PARTNER HOSTED	CHARTER COMMISSION HOSTED	PORTLAND POPULATION
Black, African American, or African	19.4%	1.8%	6%
Latinx/e	30.1%	3.7%	10%
Asian	15.6%	0%	8%
Pacific Islander	5.3%	0%	1%
Native American/Native Alaskan	12.9%	0%	1%
Middle Eastern	< 2 %	1.8%	1%
White/Western European	19.8%	88.8%	71%
Slavic/Eastern European	3.0%	0%	6%
Don't know	< 1%	0%	N/A
Don't want to answer	< 3%	N/A	N/A
Other (Please List): Biracial, Arab-American, Ashkenazi, Taiwanese, Hmong, Ashkenazi, & Jewish	6.8%	5.5%	N/A

Note 4. CCC & Partner sessions include sessions through CCC, APANO, Hacienda CDC, IRCO, MET, NAYA, Next Up, Street Roots, Unite Oregon, Urban League, & Verde. The demographic information in this table is from 70% of participants from CCC-Partner Sessions and 27% of participants from the Charter Commission hosted sessions. The Portland population was sourced from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data estimates and is subject to both sampling and non-sampling error. The 2019 ACS data does not include don't know, don't want to answer, and other.

**TABLE 5: Additional Communities they identify with in comparison to Portland population**

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITIES THEY IDENTIFY WITH	CCC & PARTNER HOSTED	CHARTER COMMISSION HOSTED	PORTLAND POPULATION
Renter	49.3%	12.9%	47%
Low-income	48.1%	11.1%	<60%AMI: 28% <80%AMI: 45%
Transit dependent	14.8%	9.2%	N/A
Unhoused/person experiencing houselessness	< 3%	3.7%	1%
Disabled/person with a disability	11.1%	7.4%	12%
LGBTQ+ community	18.1%	7.4%	7%
Immigrant	32.9%	3.7%	14%
Refugee	6.9%	0%	N/A
Retired	N/A	44.5%	N/A
Other (Please List): Property owner, citizen, older, business owner, taxpayer, long term resident, veteran, Chuukese, first-generation, first-time homeowner, Muslim, student, Taiwanese American	10.6%	25.9%	N/A
None	N/A	9%	N/A

Note 5. CCC & Partner sessions include sessions through CCC, APANO, Hacienda CDC, IRCO, MET, NAYA, Next Up, Street Roots, Unite Oregon, Urban League, & Verde. The demographic information in this table is from 65% of participants from CCC-Partner Sessions and 27% of participants from the Charter Commission hosted session. Please note that the CCC's survey did not have a choice option for "retired" or "none." The Portland population was sourced from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data estimates which are subject to both sampling and non-sampling error. The 2019 ACS data does not have community verified data for transit-dependent, LGBTQ+ community, retired, other and none. The LGBTQ+ percentage for Portland Population was sourced from a community partner. The Commission continues to seek additional community-verified percentages for the missing percentages for the Portland Population.



## COMMUNITY SURVEYS

### Survey 1: Civic Engagement Survey

In November 2021, in partnership with the Coalition of Communities of Color, the Charter Commission launched a multi-lingual civic engagement survey that asked respondents how they wanted to participate in the charter review process. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and traditional and simplified Chinese. CCC's partner organizations and others helped to broadly distribute the survey. In total, 1,036 survey responses were collected. The survey was both a tool to gauge community members' current understanding of the Charter Commission and inform future engagement and communication strategies. The results from the survey were instrumental in helping the Coalition of Communities of Color and the Charter Commission design events in community-centered and accessible ways.

Most participants, 55.2%, responded that they know some to a little amount about the Charter Commission. 15.4% responded that they don't know anything about the Charter Commission. 31.2% of participants were somewhat comfortable interacting with our city government, and 10.2% were extremely uncomfortable.

#### Participant Information and Communication Outlet Preferences

Participants were asked to share which communication outlets they typically obtain information from related to community events and activities. Most participants shared that social media (24.7%) and newspaper (15.1%) outlets are their typical methods of obtaining information about community engagement opportunities. 11.4% shared that they use community-based organizations' email lists to obtain information and 7.5% access information through community bulletin boards. These outlets of communication are important to consider as trusted mediums for delivering information about the Charter Commission and have been utilized to share engagement information.

#### Participant Event Preferences

Participants were asked how they preferred to participate in community events. Most participants indicated that group conversation and more time focused on learning were important to their engagement. Among those who selected "other" many preferred a combination of learning, asking questions and group discussions. Other participants indicated that their preference was based on the topic and objective. Participants also suggested allowing for more time for feedback and listening to other community members. Lastly, among those who answered other many suggested having a clear topic, with action items. The majority of participants preferred small to medium groups ranging from 10 to 50 participants total per event.

Lastly, survey participants were also asked to share what would make it easier to be involved in the charter review process. Some themes in responses included: hosting events at varying times of the day, including evenings and weekends, offering language interpretation, providing skilled facilitators at events who are trusted members of the community, making intentions clear and building trust with the community, and providing more opportunities for the community to engage in open dialogue with Charter Commissioners. This data has helped the Commission inform charter review

community education and engagement efforts to be responsive to various community needs and reduce participation barriers.

**Community Survey 2: Phase One Community Priorities Survey**

In January 2022, in partnership with the Coalition of Communities of Color, the Charter Commission launched a second multi-lingual survey that asked respondents how they would like to be served by the city government and how they would like to be represented by city leaders. This survey was designed to capture opinions from Portlanders about some of the Charter Commission's potential proposed recommendations. CCC's partner organizations and others helped to promote the survey. The survey was available in English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Traditional, and Simplified Chinese. In total, there were 2,977 survey responses.

Although the CCC and the Charter Commission worked to design the survey in the most accessible manner, it's important to emphasize that the survey has limitations. First, the familiarity with the concepts presented varied per respondent, and due to the technical nature of these topics, survey respondents may not have understood all the questions or options. Equally important, the only context respondents were given on the survey was an introductory section that defined the terms “city elected leader,” “City Council,” “Mayor,” “City Council elections,” and “City Administrator” and a link to the Charter Commission's website for more information. Additionally, the survey's quantitative methodology limits respondents' ability to detail their opinions, experiences, and perspectives in their own words. Therefore, the results of this survey are narrowed and do not adequately capture the full breadth of respondents' desires for their city government and leadership. Lastly, the demographic sample of the survey is limited in diversity and is particularly not representative of racial minorities, low-income, immigrant, and refugee communities. These limitations are crucial to consider while reviewing the results.

Form of Government Survey Questions

**TABLE 6: Survey question: Should the Mayor have more power than a City Council member?**

PERCENTAGE	RESPONSES
57.6%	Yes, the Mayor should have more power than a City Council member to ensure there is one leader with the responsibility to lead the city and be accountable to voters
24.6%	No, the Mayor should have equal power to a City Council member to ensure there isn't too much power in one single leader who could be bound to special interests
10.8%	I don't know and need more information

The objective of this survey question was to gauge whether respondents would prefer a government structure with a Mayor who serves the Chief Executive role of the city, or whether they would prefer another type of government structure in which a Mayor and the City Council more closely have equal powers. Most respondents preferred a government structure in which a Mayor serves the executive role of the city government. Within the Coalition of Communities of Color Workshop

listening sessions, most participants did not have a preference between a mayor-council and a council-manager government. However, of the six organizations that did express a preference, four organizations preferred a council-manager structure with more equal powers among a Mayor and the City Council. This information is also helpful to understand many respondents needed more educational context about the form of government structures.

**TABLE 7: Survey question: If a Mayor has additional power to a City Council member, what should they be able to do?**

PERCENTAGE	ANSWER OPTIONS
34.4%	Supervise city departments
25.3%	Hire and fire the heads of city departments
19.5%	Decide the policy agenda for City Council meetings
17.6%	Override (veto) decisions of the City Council

The objective of this survey question was to assess what responsibilities and powers respondents would like a Mayor to be tasked with. Respondents were able to mark all the options they agreed with. These responses align with the results of the previous question, in which respondents leaned towards an executive mayor-council government structure.

**TABLE 8: Survey question: Who should be responsible for hiring and firing the heads of City bureaus that help deliver our city services?**

PERCENTAGE	ANSWER OPTIONS
33.6%	A non-elected City Administrator that is supervised by both the Mayor and the City Council
30.6%	The Mayor and City Council together
16.4%	A non-elected City Administrator that is supervised by the Mayor alone

The objective of this question was to explore respondents' preferences on the administrative and daily operations of the city. These survey results suggest that survey respondents like the idea of a non-elected City Administrator like a Chief Administrative Officer or a City Manager and want both a Mayor and City Council to supervise the position.

## City Council Elections Survey Questions

**TABLE 9** Survey question: A voting system can impact the representation of different groups in the city. Which option best reflects your beliefs about representation on our City Council?

PERCENTAGE	RESPONSES
48.1%	Minority groups should be able to elect a proportionate share of seats on the City Council
22.4%	A single majority group should be able to elect every seat on the City Council

The objective of this survey question was to explore whether participants preferred a winner-take-all majoritarian system or a proportional system regardless of the districts. These survey results lean towards more respondents preferring a proportional system in which voters win a proportionate share of seats on City Council in proportion to their share of the voters.

**TABLE 10:** Survey question: How would you like to vote for the candidates in our City Council elections?

PERCENTAGE	ANSWER OPTIONS
57.6%	Rank the candidates in order of my preference
20.8%	Give the candidates a rating based on how much I like them
17.6%	Pick only one candidate I think is best

The objective of this survey question was to assess whether respondents like the “pick one” voting method or if they like an alternative voting method that allows them to express their preferences like Ranked Choice Voting. These survey results indicate that most respondents like an alternative voting method and prefer ranking candidates in order of preference. This aligns with the Coalition of Communities of Color listening sessions in which most participants also preferred ranking candidates in order of preference to other voting methods.

**TABLE 11:** Survey question: : How often should city leaders be elected?

PERCENTAGE	ANSWER OPTIONS
58.7%	Half of the city leaders to be elected in one year, and the other half be elected two years later
16.4%	All city leaders be elected at the same time every four years when I vote for president
10.2%	All City Council members be elected at the same time every four years, and the Mayor be elected two years later

The objective of this survey question was to explore whether respondents would prefer elections to be staggered or unstaggered for the Mayor and City Council's seats. The survey results suggest that most respondents like the current system in which the Mayor and City Council's seats are staggered, for example, 2 Council members and the Mayor are elected in 2022, then 2 Council members are elected in 2024.

**TABLE 12: Survey question: Would you like to elect multiple City Council members to represent your area of the city?**

PERCENTAGE	ANSWER OPTIONS
38.4%	To elect only one City Council member to represent my area of the city
38.1%	To elect multiple City Council members to represent my area of the city
12.9%	I don't know and need more information

The objective of this survey question was to gauge whether respondents would like one elected leader or more than one to represent their district, should a district model be implemented. At the Coalition of Communities of Color listening sessions most participants preferred a multi-member district model.

*Who responds to the surveys?*

**TABLE 13: Survey respondents' demographic information in comparison to Portland**

RACIAL IDENTITIES	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESPONDENTS	PHASE 1 PRIORITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS	PORTLAND POPULATION
Black and African American	8.8%	3.9%	6%
Latinx/e	7.2%	5.0%	10%
Asian	6.6%	3.9%	8%
Pacific Islander	2.5%	1.1%	1%
Native American	5.5%	2.8%	1%
Middle Eastern	<1%	1.6%	1%
White	59.5%	65%	71%
Slavic or Eastern European	4.2%	4.2%	6%
Didn't want to answer	<3%	9.6%	N/A
Other	N/A	2.9%	N/A
None	N/A	9%	N/A

*Note 6. Portland Population data is sourced from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data estimates and is subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. The 2019 ACS data does not include don't want to answer, and other.*

**TABLE 14: Additional identities of survey respondents in versus to Portland**

ADDITIONAL IDENTITIES	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESPONDENTS	PHASE ONE SURVEY RESPONDENTS	PORTLAND POPULATION
Renter	25.8%	13.6%	47%
Homeowners	N/A	36.3%	53%
Low-income	14.8%	7.2%	<60%AMI: 28% <80%AMI: 45%
Transit dependent	15.8%	5.9%	N/A
Unhoused or people experiencing houselessness	6.2%	<1%	1%
Disabled or people with disabilities	9.8%	5.1%	12%
LGBTQ+	12.4%	10.4%	7%
Immigrant	7.1%	3.4%	14%
Refugee	2.1%	<1%	N/A
Preferred Language other than English	N/A	1.0%	2%
Senior	N/A	11.2%	13%
Youth	N/A	1.1%	18%
Other	N/A	3.5%	N/A

*Note 7. Portland Population data is sources from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data estimates and is subject to both sampling and nonsampling error. We did not have the 2019 ACS data does for low-income, transit-dependent, LGBTQ+, refugee, language and other. The LGBTQ+ percentage for Portland Population was sourced from a community partner. The Commission continues to seek additional community verified percentages for the missing percentages for the Portland Population. Please note that the Civic Engagement survey did not include some of the identities captured in the phase one survey. After feedback from survey respondents, the additional identities were added. Percentages of Phase One survey was determined out of how many total respondents answered the overall question so the totals do not add up to 100%.*

## City of Portland Employees

Survey respondents were asked to share if they were an employee of the City of Portland, and only 11.6% responded that they were city employees. The CCC compared the differences in the city employees' sample to the responses of the full survey sample. However, the responses did not change more than a few percentage points, which may have been due to the sample size difference.

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION POLICY DISCUSSIONS

The Charter Commission knows that Portland's community-based organizations are on the frontlines serving our communities, interacting with city government throughout their work, and have a wealth of knowledge and expertise on the policies the Commission is considering. The Commission has met with community-based organizations and groups to have policy discussions. Policy consultations are distinct from the engagements noted above in that the Charter Commissioner sought to understand organization-specific priorities, positions, and expertise on the policies under consideration (compared to organizations engaging their constituents in charter review).



As of this progress report, the Commission has held policy discussions with 26 community-based groups and engaged more than 170 people. The Commission will continue to reach out to organizations throughout the rest of the charter review process.

From these policy conversations, emerging themes include:

1. Preference for council-manager form of government with clear internal and external protocols for accountability and clear roles and responsibilities.
2. Preference for an equal and equitable distribution of power among elected officials
3. Portlanders need more representation
4. City Commissioners should not directly manage bureaus
5. Preference for multi-member districts
6. Portlanders have questions about how districts would impact displacement, as well as organizations' work, engagement, advocacy, funding and direct access to City Councilors
7. Preference for a voting method that allows for historically underrepresented communities to be represented
8. Slight preference for ranked-choice voting, over STAR, due to its simplicity
9. Need for robust community education

### **Who participated in policy discussions?**

The Commission met with the Urban League of Portland and Imagine Black, Somali American Council of Oregon, Regional Arts & Culture Council, Native American Youth & Family Center, Sunrise Movement PDX, Muslim Educational Trust, Self Enhancement Inc., Human Solutions, Verde, Bradley Angle House, Coalition of Communities of Color, Next Up, Hacienda CDC, Pacific Islander & Asian Family Center, Home Forward, African Youth and Community Organization, AFSCME, Unite Oregon, SEIU Local 49, Rosewood Initiative, East Portland Action Plan, Business for a Better Portland, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, Latino Network, Living Cully, and The Slavic & Eastern European Center.

## **DISCUSSIONS WITH BUREAU DIRECTORS**

In May 2021, the Charter Commission held a series of meetings with bureau directors to understand their lived experiences with city government and to hear their priorities for charter reform. All but one bureau director met with the Charter Commission.

**Bureau directors identified some benefits of the current system:**

- Equal power incentivizes council offices to work together to find budget solutions
- Opportunity for collective focus on city-wide issue or single geographic area
- Unique access to city government—Portlanders can reach the city commissioner who is directly responsible for an issue that is bureau-specific
- With a supportive commissioner, a bureau can have access to more resources

**Bureau directors identified challenges with our current form of government:**

- Lack of clarity in decision-making and governance between government entities, including the city and county, and the city and metro
- Council offices are incentivized to advocate for “their bureaus” rather than city-wide issues
- Bureaus only have one champion at a time making it hard to make systemic change
- Hinders long-term strategic initiatives, in part because bureau assignment changes are disruptive and time consuming
- Commissioners-in-charge of bureaus vary significantly in their bureau management approach—creating inconsistent practices, policies, values, and even how employees are treated—and commissioners may not understand the bureau's line of business
- Lack of continuity in bureau directors and lack of consistency for director evaluations, goal setting, accountability, and requirements for working with the community they serve
- Bureaus don't get consistent messages about the direction they are supposed to be moving in
- Culture of fragmentation built over the last 100 years from the very top to the very bottom of the city
- When bureaus do work on a problem together, they invent the process to collaborate every time which wastes a lot of energy
- Bureaus duplicate efforts including budgeting and human resources
- Bureaus are pitted against each other

**Considerations for charter reform:**

- Promote council's ability to function as policymakers and leaders
- Focus on how all Portland communities can be represented on council
- Centralize support for outreach and communications
- An executive—either a mayor or city manager—can focus on accountability for the outcomes of the bureaus' work, ensure bureau coordination, manage and make detailed budget decisions, help coordinate the legislative agenda, and reflect the expectations of the public

- While bureau creation and merger should stay with the legislative body, consider bureau consolidation into common areas so work is coordinated

Other issues raised by bureau directors included codifying city values in the charter and the need to connect them to everyday work, a charter preamble, increased council size, the management of Open & Accountable Elections, and contract limitations in the charter.

A recording of all these meetings is available on our [website](#).

## DISCUSSIONS WITH CITY ELECTED LEADERS

In April and May 2021, the Charter Commission held a series of meetings with all elected leaders of the City of Portland: the Mayor, four City Commissioners, and the Auditor to understand their lived experiences with city government and to hear their priorities for charter reform. Elected leaders noted benefits of the commission form of government, including the ability to act quickly because of direct administrative control and the ability to ask questions related to bureaus they oversee.

### **Elected leaders identified challenges with our current form of government:**

- Hard to act with urgency and transparency around council's agreed upon priorities
- Lack of city-wide approaches, bureau coordination, and difficulty of moving into alignment across bureaus, e.g., in homelessness, communication and community engagement, community safety, equity in contracting, maintenance deferral, and permitting
- Gridlock when bureaus disagree about the approach to a single problem or goal
- Councilors and their staff spend significant time on the daily management needs of bureaus
- Structural conflict in budgeting to be both an administrator of a bureau and a legislator
- A disconnect between authority and responsibility—Portlanders believe the mayor is responsible, but the position lacks authority greater than other city commissioners
- Challenges collaborating with other jurisdictions that have different forms of government
- City declares emergencies to break down silos within government and work around the current form of government

### **Considerations for charter reform:**

- Most elected leaders support shifting away from the commission form of government but also note that a new form of government is not a panacea to all our community problems
- Break down silos and don't create new ones
- A new form of government will produce more city-wide goals that bureaus and systems are held accountable to and greater transparency about the city's progress on those goals
- Ask what form of government will work best for Portland under a stress test environment

- Most elected leaders support district-based elections for city councilors to reduce barriers for candidates, enable candidates to run on bringing neighborhood issues to council, increase local accountability and relationships, and diversify council voices

Other issues raised by elected leaders included campaign finance reform, increased council size, community safety and police accountability, the role of the police commissioner, participatory budgeting, and the role of the Auditor's Office.

A recording of all these meetings is available on our [website](#).

# Areas of Agreement

Between summer 2021 and January 2022, the Charter Commission had two issue committees — one on the city's form of government and one on city council elections. The two subcommittees established initial research questions, built an understanding about current conditions and alternatives; agreed to early reforms; analyzed options for reforms; and heard from Portlanders through public comment and community listening sessions.

Those efforts yielded three areas of initial agreement, all of which were supported by a significant majority of Commissioners. These initial areas of agreement were as follows:

- To shift the constituency of City Council from all at-large seats and to increase the size of City Council
- To shift from the commission form of government to a form of government in which City Councilors do not directly manage bureaus
- To shift to a form of voting that allows a decision in one election, eliminates the primary, and adopts a voting method that captures people's preferences

This month, the Charter Commission continued to refine and clarify details for these areas of agreement, with an emphasis on finding a cohesive package of reforms that fit together and makes sense for Portland in 2022 and beyond. At a March 15<sup>th</sup> work session, majority viewpoints emerged from Charter Commissioners around the two intertwined reforms of Elections and the Form of Government. Please note the analysis below reflects the Commission's current thinking but the Commission will not be voting on a final set of reforms until the end of June 2022.

## ELECTIONS

For more than 100 years, Portlanders have been electing City Councilors in an at-large system, meaning any eligible candidate in the city can run for office and be elected, regardless of their geographic location. Despite Portland's continued growth, especially within the last few decades, the number of seats on City Council has not increased, depriving Portlanders of political representation fit for a complex city of our size and decreasing the number of opportunities for diverse communities and interests to elect candidates of choice. Historically, candidates of choice for Black, Indigenous, communities of color, and political minority groups, have lacked access, power, and representation in Portland city hall. An accounting of the demographics of previous city commissioners shows that our elected representation was continually and disproportionately dominated by white, affluent, and male councilors despite a demographically diversifying city. Moreover, while city commissioners are elected at-large, city commissioners have resided in the Portland downtown area or west of the Willamette River in significantly higher proportions. These disparities are hard to ignore and will remain persistent challenges without reform of the underlying system.

## **Establishing Geographic Districts with Multiple Council Members Representing each District**

Nearly all Charter Commissioners agree with calls from the public to shift City Council from all at-large seats to a system with district-based geographic representation. A Mayor and Auditor would continue to be elected city-wide. The Commission also expressed *supermajority support*— meaning support from at least 15 of the 20 commissioners, enough to directly refer the charter amendment to voters for the November 2022 election — for multiple representatives to be elected in each district of the city. Multi-member districts for Portland would mean that more than one elected leader would represent each geographic area. Desires for guaranteed council representation from all parts of the city, increased representation, and lowering financial barriers for candidates to compete were key considerations in favor of this reform.

Multi-member districts acknowledge the simple truism that it's incredibly difficult for any one single elected individual to represent the diversity of viewpoints and experiences in a geographic district. Having multiple people allows for a greater chance that more viewpoints and experiences will be represented. The Charter Commission is prioritizing multi-member districts because this system would help community members feel more connected to their elected leaders and increase accountability between communities and elected leaders. Because multiple leaders would represent one area of the city, this would also increase opportunities for collaboration and coalition building for geographic issues between those leaders.

While geography is important and neighborhoods do play a significant role in Portland's civic life, Portlanders also understand that just because you live in the same neighborhood as someone else does not mean you share the same politics or priorities, let alone have the same lived experience. Multi-member districts allow for many more possibilities for city representation. Voters can choose to support candidates who focus on issues most important to them, whether that be geography, racial identity, income level, or experiences as a renter, homeowner, business owner, or student, to name a few examples.

Dividing Portland into districts so that elected leaders can represent geographic areas of the city instead of the entire city also creates a likely opportunity that residents, such as those in East Portland, who have been continually shut out from representation and political attention in city hall despite making up a large part of the city population and landmass, could have representatives elected specifically from their geographic area. The Commission believes that City Councilors should be easy to reach, and having leaders represent certain parts of the city can make it easier for people to reach out when they have an issue. Having geographic-based representation could also lend itself to more localized and neighborhood-based constituent services and civic participation that is not dependent on Portlanders' ability to access downtown.

Shifting the constituency of City Council from all at-large seats to district seats also addresses problems associated with the significant financial barrier to running for office city-wide. District-based elections will likely reduce the cost of campaigning because candidates focus on a smaller constituency.



Proponents for keeping at-large or city-wide seats argue that they allow more people the flexibility to run instead of being limited to run only in one geographic area. However, this is not how our history has played out, when only a handful of elected city councilors have lived east of 82nd Avenue out of the dozens to have served. The current system of at-large elections affords greater opportunities for financially resourced and politically well-connected candidates to succeed, and those individuals have been shown to be concentrated in certain areas of Portland.

Increasing opportunities for communities of color to elect their candidates of choice has also been a driving goal for the Commission. Portland does not have a geographic distribution of BIPOC residents that could allow for a drawing of a majority BIPOC district, nor does it have the level of income or age segregation and stratification that characterizes other large cities. The Commission favored reforms that would more likely give smaller and historically under-represented communities (e.g., renters, young residents, communities of color, minor political parties) a greater ability to form coalitions to elect candidates of their choice.

Further exploration is ongoing to better understand the potential impacts districts may present on addressing issues that require city-wide coordination and planning, such as housing construction, zoning, public transportation and road networks, health and human services, and land-use planning to name a few. As the Commission researches implementation of potential transition plans and spending, the prospect of district-based constituent offices will continue to be explored.

### **Increasing the size of City Council Size to at least 12**

Increasing the size of City Council increases the chance that Portlanders can find someone on Council who represents their interests. The City of Portland's current five-member (including a mayor) City Council has not grown for more than 100 years, despite a nearly three-fold increase in the city population. This is a major problem. Portlanders are underrepresented compared to cities of similar size in the United States.

The Commission currently has supermajority support for a City Council size of at least 12 members. The suggestion of a 12-member council is primarily driven by the Commission's support for multi-member district representation system where Portland is drawn into 4 districts each sending 3 representatives to the city council. A 12-member City Council achieves many of the Commission's desired outcomes while managing the perceived sticker shock of meaningfully increasing city council size.

In 1913, Portland city government had one city commissioner for approximately every 42,000 residents and in 2022 the ratio has grown to one city commissioner for every 130,000 residents. The most typical pattern among cities of similar size to Portland (680,000+ residents) is about two representatives per 100,000 residents, situating the proposed 12-member council within that range. Other comments from the public also pointed out the need for more local representation when Portlanders currently have more elected state representatives in the Oregon legislature than local city councilors.

Increasing the number of seats on City Council may give underrepresented communities more voice in the decision-making body and offer a chance to help alleviate dissatisfaction with City Council, because more Portlanders are able to elect leaders that represent their interest and understands their experiences. Expanded Council capacity should also improve government's ability to respond to large, complex problems facing our community. Increasing the size to a greater number can ensure that more leaders are responding to Portland's diverse communities and devote more time to legislating and passing city policies.

Into the spring, the Commission will work with the city to explore potential fiscal impacts and financial resources needed to set up this reformed city government. The Commission will evaluate different proposals regarding salary and compensation of city councilors, council organization and committee work, the number of city council office personnel afforded each councilor, and the establishment of district offices.

### **Adopting Ranked Choice Voting for City Elections**

The Charter Commission has a goal of achieving a participatory and growing democracy with more voices being heard in elections. A supermajority of Charter Commissioners support adopting Ranked Choice Voting as the alternative voting method to replace our current “winner-take-all” form of voting. Ranked Choice Voting allows voters to be a part of a process that uses their ballot to the fullest. When voters' first choices are not elected, they can trust their vote will be counted for their next viable choice.

Currently, voters are asked to choose one candidate, and the candidate who receives the most votes, even if they receive less than 50% of the vote, is the sole person elected. No matter how many candidates are on your ballot, you only select one option, and a candidate can win no matter how small their vote share ends up. Simple and familiar as it may be, what if voters had expanded options to offer opinions on multiple candidates? What would we learn from the Portland electorate if we retain information about their top preferences, their second preferences, etc., and what type of candidates they liked more than others?

Ranked Choice Voting would give a Portland voter the ability to choose more than one candidate to vote for, ranking the ones they like in order of preference by marking the ballot to indicate “1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd, choice, etc.” for as many as they care to offer a preference. These reforms give voters more choice. Voters can rank the candidates or just choose one candidate. Studies show that communities that have switched to Ranked Choice Voting have had an increase in voter participation. By giving voters more meaningful choices, they have more reason to vote.

Ranked Choice Voting can be used in races to elect one winner or multiple winners, but, most importantly, how the ballot appears to voters and how voters mark their ballot would remain the same in either format. The only difference is the vote tabulation math on the back end, which can be released round by round in a transparent matter until winners are calculated.

Ranked Choice Voting allows voters to have a fuller accounting of their preferences for the election shown on the ballot and allow them to vote their conscience and worry less about strategic voting. Portlanders today are asked to strategically calculate their vote to support a candidate they think can win the election - not necessarily for their preferred candidate in the race - or risk not having their vote impact the election at all. Instead, when voters can rank their ballot in order of their first, second, and third choice, voters have the freedom to vote for the candidates they believe in, rather than having to choose between the lesser of two evils. Adopting Ranked Choice Voting could better ensure a city council where more Portlanders are represented by someone from their top vote preferences.

Ranked Choice Voting is frequently used by tens of millions of Americans in local and state elections, including large cities such as New York City, San Francisco, Oakland, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Portland, ME; the states of Maine and Alaska, and even locally here in Benton County, Oregon. As of November 2021, 43 jurisdictions used Ranked Choice Voting in their most recent elections, and more than 50 jurisdictions are projected to use it in their next election.

There is also growing evidence that Ranked Choice Voting promotes more civil, issue-oriented campaigns and decreases the incentive for negative campaigning. Rather than candidates focusing on attacking their opponents to decrease support, candidates can focus on reaching out positively to as many voters as possible, including those supporting their opponents, because even if may not get the first votes from these voters, they can contest for high-ranked votes as a 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choice. Campaigns may be friendlier as a result of fostering stronger coalition-building and candidates even collaborating and aligning on policy platforms.

The election system that the Charter Commission is proposing, one with Ranked Choice Voting and multi-member districts would form the basis for Portland to have a Proportional Representation system (PR). Proportional Representation systems are the most used electoral systems in the world. Proportional Representation is a voting system that ensure political minority groups a measure of representation to their share of the voters (e.g. if a group is 33% of the voters, they should receive 33% of the seats). Proportional representation is rooted in the belief that everyone should have the right to fair representation, reflective of their community's views.

Implementing Ranked-Choice voting will not be without its challenges, however. Voters will need time to adjust to a new system and the city and county elections offices will need to lead a public education campaign before its first potential use in November 2024. Although the Commission finds great benefit in voters having more choice on their ballot, it does result in more for voters to decide, and a more complicated ballot than they are currently accustomed to. It is also likely that city election results would be finalized later than Portland voters are currently accustomed to, with the likelihood of multi-round counting of the ballots' first-, second-, third-, etc. rank choices.

### **Shifting to One November Election, Eliminating May Primary Election**

The Commission favors voting methods that elect candidates when the most people are likely to be voting. In November elections, voter turnout is substantially higher, so more voices weigh-in on

decisions that affect all Portlanders. A core benefit to the use of Ranked Choice Voting is that it allows for decisive instant run-offs to be counted in one election, eliminating the need for May primaries for city elections.

Currently, in our nonpartisan City Council elections, several people can run for one at-large seat ahead of the May primary. If a candidate for that seat wins over 50% of the vote, then they win the race outright. If no one makes it over that threshold, then the top two candidates go to a runoff in the November general election.

Eliminating May primaries ensures that more Portlanders are able to elect their city council during one election. Although Portland City Council races are nonpartisan, they occur within the context of larger statewide May partisan primary elections, whose turnout is driven largely by the attraction of closed primary contests (where only registered party members can vote in their respective primaries), which skews the makeup of the electorate in Portland.

Election turnout results from this century consistently show that as little as one-quarter to one-half as many Portland voters turn out in May as they do in November. In midterm years, November turnout is generally double the May turnout, and in presidential years, a significantly higher numbers of Portlanders cast ballots in November compared to May. The increased turnout in November elections tends to come from younger, more racially diverse voters as well. Of the past 15 city council races (not including mayoral races), only five went on to the November run-off election. This means that many November-only voters in Portland didn't get to vote for a council member because their election had already been decided.

Moving to a single election could also reduce financial barriers for candidates and widen the pool of candidates who would consider running. The cost of campaigning places additional burdens on candidates without personal wealth or connections to large financial backers. Campaigns would not start as early (Portland City Council candidates now regularly declare more than a year out from November election because of the May primary), City Councilors running for re-election could spend fewer total days campaigning for votes and fundraising for dollars, and instead focus on enacting policies.

A supermajority of Commissioners also supports staggered city council elections, with Portlanders electing leaders every two years, in line with strong community survey results favoring staggered elections. A supermajority of Commissioners believes that waiting four years for voters to express their opinions on elected leaders is too long. For example, some districts and a Mayor could be up in a November Presidential year (2024, 2028, etc.) and other districts and the Auditor could be up in a November midterm year coinciding with the race for Oregon Governor (2026, 2030, etc.). However, any district that has elections must have all the seats in that district up at the same time to achieve the stated benefits of the Commission's proposed multi-member proportional system.

## **Districting and Redistricting Process**

To suppose geographic district representation also supposes a process to draw official district lines. The Charter Commission supports proposing an outline for a districting process but would not propose a formal map for adoption. The Commission would look to propose a clear set of criteria to inform a fair, community-involved process to draw and implement district lines and district-based elections. One clear requirement included would be for districts to be as nearly equal in population as possible. Other factors could also include natural geographic and transportation network boundaries and preserving communities of common interest.

The districting process could begin immediately after the November 2022 election and would ideally occur well in advance of the November 2024 election to allow for ratification and candidate filing. Subsequent redistricting would be tied to census population updates every 10 years, beginning 2030.

## **FORM OF GOVERNMENT**

In our commission form of government, the mayor assigns each member of City Council a portfolio of bureaus to manage. When this form of government was created over 100 years ago, it allowed for cities and towns to be nimble in responding to urgent crises as the councilors could make quick decisions for their bureaus. Additionally, often individuals would run for a seat that reflected their professional technical area of expertise. In modern-day Portland, however, this supposed benefit of the commission form of government is not being fulfilled. Additionally, as the mayor assigns and reassigns bureaus Portlanders do not know which bureaus a candidate for office will manage. The Commission continues to hear that this form of government creates siloes, avoids accountability, and lacks transparency. The commission form of government is not driving towards the outcomes that Portlanders have identified as their needs for clear, consistent delivery of services and responsiveness to pressing city issues.

### **Separating Executive & Legislative Powers**

The Charter Commission repeatedly stresses the importance of checks and balances between city government, clear divisions of power, and streamlined divisions of labor to produce effective and efficient city services. The unanimous consensus of the Charter Commission is that City Council members should not directly manage bureaus and that a new form of government should ensure a separation of the executive (administrative) and legislative (policy) functions in city government.

Removing the role of Commissioner-in-Charge of bureaus from City Commissioners and shifting bureau management elsewhere increases City Council capacity to focus on legislation, such as making laws, engaging constituents, and bringing community voices into decision-making. Expanded legislative focus and capacity will improve the quality of laws passed and overall government responsiveness. Removing the bureau management role should also create a more unified voice in city operations, more collaborative and cohesive responses, more consistent supervision of bureaus, create checks and balances through the separation of powers, and increase trust when laws are made.

## **Ensuring City Councilors focus on legislating and constituent services**

The Commission imagined the role of City Councilors when not directly managing bureaus to be traditionally legislative in nature, focusing on policymaking and oversight, with budget authority derived from the elected city council. By removing commissioners from overseeing bureaus, councilors will have additional capacity to focus on solving complex challenges and meeting with their constituency to draft policy and budgets. The imagined role of city councilors would include:

- Responsibility for policy development (legislating)
- Approving the city budget
- Increased constituent engagement, outreach, and community relationship building
- Greater ability to link on-the-ground constituent engagement into effective policy reforms
- Collaboration on major initiatives and long-term strategic planning for the city
- Committee work specializing in different policy areas (e.g. transportation, policing, housing, environmental protection, etc.)
- Oversight and accountability towards city bureaus and executive branch
- Intergovernmental relationship building, collaboration, and communication
- Responsiveness to local issues facing their respective districts

The Charter Commission ultimately envisions an important role for the office of Mayor, elected city-wide, in carrying out the policies of City Council.

## **Authority to hire, fire, and supervise a professional city manager/administrator and bureau directors**

The Charter Commission supports the creation of a professional city manager/city administrator role to coordinate and run the city's civic services - its bureaus, programs, and resources in order to deliver a working government and implement city policies passed the City Council. A Mayor is responsible for nominating a person to serve in the role, hired subject to confirmation by a simple majority vote of City Council. A Mayor would provide supervision day-to-day. The city manager/city administrator position helps ensure that there is someone in place that can competently manage city operations and frees a Mayor from having that sole responsibility. However, a Mayor would share responsibility and political accountability for the duties of the city manager/city administrator by extension of supervising the position, subject to the legislative oversight by the City Council.

The city manager/city administrator will also be in charge of hiring, firing, and supervising bureau leaders, insulating the bureaus from political jockeying while prioritizing continuity of service and longer-term planning. The Charter Commission envisions this hybrid system where Mayor and council should together create performance expectations of the bureaus but not directly manage or hire/fire bureau directors.



## **Role of a Mayor on City Council**

The Charter Commission continues to discuss the unanswered questions related to Form of Government reform, particularly around the extent to which a Mayor should have a role on City Council. Outstanding questions the Commission is evaluating include whether a Mayor is a formal member of council, and if so what are their powers to propose policy, veto ordinances, and preside over a meeting; how and when would a Mayor vote, and whether the firing of a city manager/administrator should involve the input of City Council. A majority of Commissioners believe a Mayor should not have veto authority. Decisions around what is the role of a Mayor will also shape the leadership organization and structure on the City Council.

## What's Next?

The Charter Commission wants to continue to hear from community. There are many ways community members can [get involved](#) in charter review and give feedback including attending virtual public meetings, giving verbal public comment, submitting written public comment, requesting a briefing or meeting with Commissioners or staff, signing up for email updates, or engaging through one of our community partners.

Here are ways to engage with the Commission in coming weeks:

Now	<a href="#">Sign up for monthly Charter Commission email updates</a>
Now	<a href="#">Learn more about the Charter Review Process</a>
On March 24	<a href="#">Attend work session</a> on Form Government & City Council Elections
On March 31	<a href="#">Attend the Charter Commission Meeting</a> from 6:00-8:00pm <a href="#">Sign up to give verbal public comment</a> at the March 31st meeting
Two days before commission meetings	<a href="#">Submit public comment</a>

Your engagement will help the Charter Commission conclude March 2022 with a preliminary vote on which recommendations to send for charter amendment legal drafting and financial analysis. The Commission will continue researching and evaluating many of the outstanding questions and considerations noted in this report. Once the Commission receives the drafted charter amendment language for ballot measure use, the Commission will host a series of public hearings for Portlanders to provide input. The March vote does NOT refer an amendment package to the November 2022 ballot, but, rather, will be used by the Commission to solicit input and support from the public. The final amendment package will be voted on at the end of June before going to City Council for official referral to the November ballot.

The potential beginning of phase two research is also planned for April 2022. Some potential topics for discussion include the role of the city charter as it relates to city agencies like Prosper Portland and the Auditor's Office, proposed reforms brought forward by the city bureaus themselves, changes needed for future charter review processes, an independent campaign finance commission, how the city charter relates to items like climate justice, transparency, participatory budgeting, and expanding what it means to be an eligible voter to include legal permanent residents have garnered interest. Additionally, the Multnomah County Charter Review Commission is simultaneously exploring potential amendments for the County charter which may be of interest to the Portland Charter Commission.

Below is the timeline of key dates and upcoming activities related to phase one.

**TABLE 15: Charter Commission, phase I key milestone timeline?**

KEY DATES	ACTIVITIES
March 31	Charter Commission meets — preliminary vote on reform package to send to the City Attorney's Office to draft charter amendment language and descriptions and the City Budget Office for financial analysis
April	City Attorney's Office drafts charter amendments and descriptions
May	Proposed charter amendments and descriptions released and Commission hosts series of public hearings
Early June	Commission meets — preliminary vote on charter amendments to send to the City Attorney's Office to draft ballot titles
Late June	City Attorney's Office drafts ballot titles
Before July 8	Ballot referral