

Know Your New Government Q&A

A. Mayor

1. What qualifications must the Mayor have?

As an elected official, the Mayor must be a US citizen and a registered voter who has resided in Portland for at least one year before the election.¹

2. What are the general powers and responsibilities of the Mayor?

The Mayor is the chief executive officer of the City. They will be responsible to exercise careful supervision over the general affairs of the City.²

The Mayor:

- Has executive power to execute the laws passed by City Council, to administer the bureaus, employees, and facilities of the City, and to ensure that the City is using budgeted funds appropriately.³
- Has the authority to promote industrial growth and assist in securing additional business and industry within the City.
- May assist private industry and business in obtaining contracts or business and other promotional activities as the Mayor may find appropriate.⁴
- Is charged with encouraging programs for the physical, economic, social, and cultural development of the City, and to promote the economic development of the City.
- Serves as ceremonial head of the City.⁵

¹ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-202.

² Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-401(c).

³ Glossary, Changing Roles: City Council.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/16t3m2Bv2q7TJk5YpylksKT81eCkOwD-A0cQRpFQtsdk/edit>

⁴ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-126.

⁵ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-401(m).

- May establish advisory boards and commissions as necessary.⁶

3. Does the Mayor appoint any City officials?

Yes. The Mayor appoints the City Attorney, City Administrator, and Chief of Police, subject to City Council approval. These three officials report directly to the Mayor. In addition, the Chief of Staff reports directly to the Mayor. Other City employees are appointed and managed by the City Administrator.

4. Is the Mayor a member of the City Council?

No. The Mayor will no longer be a member of the City Council; the Mayor's responsibilities are executive, not legislative.

5. Can the Mayor veto Council actions?

No.

6. Does the Mayor preside at Council meetings?

No. The Council elects its own president and vice president to preside at its meetings.

7. Can the Mayor break tie votes of the City Council?

Yes.⁷

8. Can the Mayor negotiate and sign City contracts?

Yes. The Mayor has the power to negotiate and sign all contracts, including intergovernmental agreements with other public agencies, such as Multnomah County and Metro, the local regional government. All these agreements must be consistent with the adopted budget.⁸

⁶ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-103.

⁷ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-401(e).

⁸ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-401(j).

9. What is the Mayor's role in the City's budget process?

The Mayor has a central role in the budget process. The Mayor directs the process of budget preparation, which is carried out by the City Administrator. The Mayor presents a budget to the City Council by May 5th of each year. The Council then adopts it as presented or after it makes any changes. The Mayor can also propose budget amendments to the Council during the fiscal year, which runs from July 1 through June 30th.⁹

B. City Administrator

10. What qualifications must the City Administrator have? Who hires and manages the City Administrator?

The City Administrator must be a person of demonstrated administrative ability with experience in a responsible, important executive capacity.¹⁰ The Mayor appoints the City Administrator solely on the basis of executive and administrative qualifications, subject to confirmation by City Council. The City Administrator serves at the pleasure of the Mayor and can be removed by the Mayor for cause or by a vote of at least 9 members of City Council.¹¹

11. What positions report to the City Administrator?

The City Administrator's executive team includes six Deputy City Administrators, plus an Equity Officer, Sustainability Officer and an Assistant Administrator. The City Administrator may appoint a Budget Director to act under their direction.¹²

Each Deputy City Administrator is in charge of a "service area", consisting of 5 to 10 bureaus. The service areas are characterized as follows:

- Budget and finance,
- Community and economic development,

⁹ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-128.

¹⁰ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-406.

¹¹ Frequently Asked Questions: Council's New Roles & Responsibilities:
<https://www.portland.gov/vote/questions/roles-and-responsibilities>

¹² Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-406(h). The Deputy City Administrators and an Assistant Administrator were appointed on an interim basis in July, 2024.

- City operations,
- Community safety,
- Vibrant communities (Parks, Arts, Children's Levy), and
- Public works.¹³

12. What powers and responsibilities will the City Administrator have?

The City Administrator is responsible for the efficient administration of all City affairs and has the following responsibilities:

- Advance the city's core values of anti-racism, equity, transparency, communication, collaboration and fiscal responsibility.
- Advance the city's efforts to mitigate the human-made climate crisis and environmental justice initiatives.
- Appoint, reassign, discipline, and remove directors of bureaus and departments (except the City Attorney and Chief of Police).¹⁴
- Execute and enforce all laws adopted by the Council.
- Prepare the budget (and any amendments) for the Mayor to propose to the City Council.¹⁵
- Attend City Council meetings, committee meetings, and meetings of boards and commissions that they choose to attend.
- Administer the affairs of the City, including controlling and administering City finances and adopting administrative rules.¹⁶
- Prepare and submit reports to council, such as reports advising City Council on the financial condition and needs of the city.¹⁷

¹³ See the proposed City Organizational Chart - Executive Office:
<https://www.portland.gov/transition/documents/final-organizational-structure-11223/download>

¹⁴ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-406(c) and (d).

¹⁵ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-406(i).

¹⁶ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-406(l).

¹⁷ Frequently Asked Questions: Council's New Roles & Responsibilities:
<https://www.portland.gov/vote/questions/roles-and-responsibilities>

13. How will the City transition to the new form of government between now and when the first City Administrator is hired in 2025?

The replacement of five elected officials (the mayor and city commissioners) as bureau administrators with a professional City Administrator requires major realignment in both the budgeting process and the management of the City's 7,500 employees. To move this process forward, before July 1, 2024, Portland city bureaus were realigned into 6 new groupings called "service areas." At the same time, the five City Commissioners, including Mayor Ted Wheeler, each appointed a Deputy City Administrator to oversee one of the service areas. Those Deputy City Administrators in turn report to Michael Jordan, the interim City Administrator.

Between now and December 31, the Mayor and the interim City Administrator, Michael Jordan, are evaluating and implementing, to the extent possible, changes in human resources, office technology and accounting systems, among other functions, necessary to support the government structure that becomes effective January 1, 2025.¹⁸

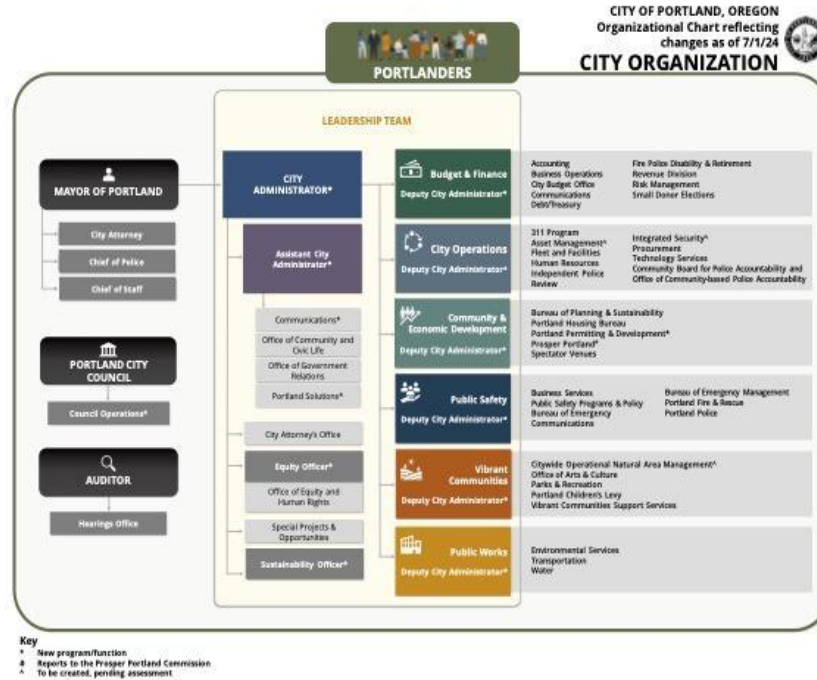
Portland voters will elect a new Mayor and new City Councilors during the November 2024 general election.

Effective December 31, 2024, Mayor Wheeler and the Commissioners will step down from their current positions. On January 1, 2025, the newly elected Mayor and the newly elected Councilors will be installed in office. Michael Jordan has agreed to serve as interim City Administrator until the new Mayor has hired the new City Administrator. Until then, the Deputy City Administrators will report to Mr. Jordan.¹⁹ See City Organization Chart below.²⁰

¹⁸ *Portland's new government will include more administrators, better accountability*
<https://www.opb.org/article/2023/09/13/portland-oregon-government-politics-administrators-city-council-change-new-form-redistricting/>

¹⁹ *City Staff Is Filling In the Blanks of What Was Left Unsaid in the Charter Reform Measure*
<https://www.wweek.com/news/2024/03/27/city-staff-is-filling-in-the-blanks-of-what-was-left-unsaid-in-the-charter-reform-measure/>

²⁰ Once hired in 2025, the City Administrator will have the authority to modify the organization structure and this chart. <https://www.portland.gov/transition/government/city-organization/draft-chart-recommendation>



14. Who will appoint the new Deputy City Administrators?

After the new City Administrator is appointed in 2025, they will appoint the deputies. In the meantime, interim deputies have been appointed and are managing their assigned service areas.

15. How might the business sector, for example developers, benefit from the new structure of City government?

The Charter Commission found a great deal of support for replacing Portland's commission system, where elected officials ran city bureaus (departments) with more coordinated professional administration. The ballot measure made this change, and the City Council is already implementing it. The business sector, including developers, can benefit from efficiencies of the new government. As an

example, by July 2024, the City Council consolidated City permitting functions previously held in different bureaus into the Community and Economic Development service area, citing this structural change as a critical foundation for future improvements. Many changes have already been implemented based on a comprehensive 2021 audit of the permitting process. The recent structural alignment promises to facilitate the completion of the rest of the audit recommendations.

C. City Council

16. What qualifications must Councilors have?

A Councilor elected from a district must have resided in that district and been a registered voter in that district for at least one year before the election.²¹

17. What role will Councilors have?

Councilors are elected to represent their constituents and be the city's legislators (lawmakers.) Together, Councilors constitute the legislative body known as the City Council, which has the authority to make local laws.²² Some of the Council's responsibilities include: creating bureaus and departments, passing city codes, setting salaries, approving the city's budget, and applying its quasi-judicial authority to laws and policies.²³ In addition, Councilors will take input from their constituents.

18. What significant changes will we see in Councilors' jobs?

Effective January 1, 2025, Commissioners will no longer directly oversee City bureaus. Instead, members of City Council will focus on setting policies²⁴ to

²¹ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-202.

²² Portland Transition, Frequently Asked Questions: Council's New Roles & Responsibilities accessed 3/4/24 <https://www.portland.gov/vote/questions/roles-and-responsibilities>

²³ "Quasi-Judicial" is defined as a proceeding or decision-making process by officials based on a record of evidence and facts presented. While it is similar to a court proceeding, the decision makers are administrative officials, not law judges. Quasi-judicial action may be appealed to a court of law. In practice, very few quasi-judicial matters appear on the Council agenda. See Glossary, Changing Roles: City Council.

²⁴ A "policy" is a law, regulation, procedure, administrative action, incentive, or voluntary practice of a government and other institution. Policy decisions are frequently reflected in the allocation of resources through the City budget. See Glossary, Changing Roles: City Council.

achieve desired community outcomes. To that end, the Council will convene public meetings, gather input from constituents and others, debate, evaluate policy choices, and adopt laws to reflect these choices.

19. What will City Councilors do when they are no longer supervising City Bureaus?

City Council members set policy and enact ordinances. They have the power to make appropriations and raise revenue by reviewing, amending and approving the city budget. City Council has a role in building intergovernmental relationships, collaboration, and communication with other local, state, and federal jurisdictions, although the Mayor is ultimately responsible for executing.²⁵

In a system with deliberate checks and balances, City Council will collaborate with the Mayor to create performance expectations of the bureaus as well as maintain legislative oversight.²⁶ Councilors will exercise quasi-judicial power to apply to laws and policies. Note: quasi-judicial authority means the power to apply laws and policies to a set of circumstances such as land use issues.

20. What are the duties of the Council President?

At its first meeting each calendar year, the Council elects a President and Vice President by majority vote of those present. The President presides over Council meetings, works with the City Auditor to finalize meeting agendas, assigns submitted items to Council committees or to the Council as a whole, assigns seats in Council chambers, and signs items approved by Council when necessary.²⁷

21. How can the Council develop procedures to take advantage of the increased number of legislators while spending limited time in Council meetings?

City Transition staff and the Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC) are reviewing practices of other cities to efficiently conduct legislative business, which they will report.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/16t3m2Bv2q7TJk5YpylksKT81eCkOwD-A0cQRpFQtsdk/edit>

²⁵ Charter Commission Final report, 2022 P15

²⁶ Charter Commission Final report, 2022 P17

²⁷ Frequently Asked Questions: Future City Council:

<https://www.portland.gov/transition/advisory/questions/future-city-council>

The Council will establish its own rules of procedure. After newly-elected Councilors assume their responsibilities in January, 2025, they will organize themselves to do committee work, with subgroups of council members specializing in different policy areas.²⁸ Subject to confirmation by the Council, Standing Committees of the Council might focus on specific issues such as:

- Government Performance & Finance
- Public Health & Public Safety
- Transportation and Infrastructure
- Community Development
- Sustainability & Climate
- Housing & Homelessness.

22. With 3 Councilors representing my district, who should I contact if I have a problem involving a policy issue?

Given the size and complexity of our City, no single Counselor could be an expert on all issues at hand. With three council members in a district, each may focus on specific concerns. Call one of them or speak with a Council staff person who could direct you to the appropriate Councilor.

If your issue involves delivery of a city service, call 311 to be directed to the appropriate person involved in the service bureau.

D. Districting and Representation

23. Why are we electing 12 City councilors?

A key goal of the Charter Commission was to design a city government that would fairly represent the people of Portland. The current 5-person city council (including the mayor) dates back to 1913, when Portland had a population of around 200,000 and provided one commissioner for every 40,000 people. While the size of the city council has remained unchanged since then, the City's population has more than tripled, to around 620,000, resulting in a ratio of 1 Councilor for every 124,000 people. A 12-person city council brings us back to a

²⁸ Charter Commission 2022 Final report P15.

more representative government, with a ratio of 1 representative (12 councilors plus the mayor) for every 50,000 people.²⁹

24. Why 4 districts with 3 council members each?

For historical reasons,³⁰ Portland's population is far more dispersed than other cities, so that no individual district could fairly reflect our racial, economic, or political diversity.³¹ The Charter Commission decided that Portland needs larger districts which are less prone to the polarization and insulation often associated with small geographical districts. With larger districts, people are more likely to find candidates who, as a whole, can represent the district.

With 3 councilors for each district, diverse communities are more likely to have a voice in City Council. Whereas the representative of a single-member district need only represent the choice of half of the residents, a 3-person multi-winner district reflects the interests of 75% or more of the community. Research has shown that multi-winner districts with ranked choice voting create an elected body that is both more diverse and more able to deal with the variety of problems facing neighborhoods such as ours.³²

25. How were the boundaries of the four districts drawn?

An Independent District Commission (IDC) was established to determine the boundaries of four districts in Portland.³³ The IDC was composed of 13 volunteers - Portland residents appointed by the mayor and confirmed by City Council. The appointed volunteers represented a diversity of race, age, gender, and geography.³⁴ The IDC produced the final district map before the deadline of September 1, 2023.³⁵ Having met that deadline, it was dissolved.

²⁹ Much of this text is courtesy of Melanie Billings-Yun, although we are responsible for any errors.

³⁰ *History of Racist Planning in Portland*: <https://www.portland.gov/bps/planning/adap/history-racist-planning-portland>

³¹ See Portland map showing population by race: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V9KBkMsLnUu7Vtyt00cJLHnYYisZX8DX/view?usp=sharing>. In addition, see an interactive map here: <https://www.prcprojects.us/civic>

³² Much of this text is courtesy of Melanie Billings-Yun, although we are responsible for any errors.

³³ Charter of the City of Portland, Section 3-110. District Plan Criteria. <https://www.portland.gov/transition/districtcommission/documents/independent-district-commission-charter-amendments/download>

³⁴ Progress Report #6, Portland Charter Commission, page 13.

³⁵ District map: <https://www.portland.gov/transition/districtcommission/map>

26. What public input did the Independent District Commission (IDC) seek?

The IDC sought extensive community input about how to balance the required criteria when establishing district boundaries. They intentionally considered public input at each phase of the decision-making process.³⁶

The Charter Commission encouraged Portlanders to engage with the IDC in several ways, such as:

- Attending hybrid public meetings,
- Giving verbal comments at public meetings or hearings,
- Submitting written testimony,
- Staying informed through regular email updates from the city,
- Attending a mapping training session,
- Designing and submitting a district map,
- Attending a community event or listening session, and
- Requesting a briefing for a community group.

In addition, Commissioners were expected to use their connections in the community to have conversations with targeted groups.

27. What criteria did the Independent District Commission (IDC) use to draw boundaries and where did the criteria come from?

The amended City Charter required the IDC to use the following criteria to set the boundaries of each district.

- *Contiguous and compact.* To be contiguous, a district should be functionally contiguous. For example, it cannot be functionally contiguous if a railroad track bisects it with no crossings. To be compact, a district should be drawn

³⁶ Independent District Commission Final Report, page 11.
<https://www.portland.gov/transition/districtcommission/documents/independent-district-commission-final-report-september-2023/download>

in a way that minimizes distortions and strange shapes; it should have a fairly regular shape.

- *Utilize existing geographic or political boundaries.* As much as possible, consider legislative boundaries, voter precincts, neighborhood organizations, water districts, school districts, etc. It is not possible to give 100% weight to all of them.
- *Not divide communities of common interest.* These are communities that share a common policy concern and would benefit from being together in a district. They could be based on historical communities, economic interests, cultural amenities, school districts, rural or urban environments, or residents who are homeowners or renters, etc.³⁷
- *Be connected by transportation links.* Links may include bridges, streets and MAX lines.
- *Be of equal population.*³⁸
- *Not drawn to favor any political party, elected official or other person.*³⁹
- *Not drawn to dilute the voting strength of any language or ethnic minority group.*

28. What other factors did the Independent District Commission (IDC) consider?

The IDC made a strong effort to achieve a fair distribution of “assets” among the four districts.⁴⁰ Assets may include things such as businesses, parks, OMSI, Lloyd District, the Convention Center, the Portland International Airport, colleges, etc. Assets may increase the power of a district and its representatives. For example, Councilors in districts with many assets may be able to gain a higher profile in the public eye and promote connections with other government agencies.

³⁷ IDC minutes of Meeting #1, page 5 and Redistricting Partners Memo 2/15/2023.

³⁸ Memo from City Attorney to City Administrative Officer, February 22, 2023, and Directive of the Office of the Secretary of State, September 9, 2021.

³⁹ ORS 188.010.

⁴⁰ Independent District Commission Final Report, September 2023, pages 4, 6 and 19.
<https://www.portland.gov/transition/districtcommission/documents/independent-district-commission-final-report-september-2023/download>

29. Why did the Independent Districting Commission (IDC) decide that the Sellwood/Westmoreland/Reed neighborhoods should join the Westside district?

Community input from East Portland (generally, the area east of 205) strongly urged that it remain whole. That made it almost impossible to divide the Westside, since it has *less* than a quarter of the population. The IDC needed to add to the Westside a contiguous portion of the inner east side or the north to make the districts generally equal in population.

The IDC listened to community input, then decided to add the Sellwood/Westmoreland/Reed neighborhoods to the Westside. There are multiple bridges between those neighborhoods and the Westside. Those neighborhoods have demographics and socioeconomics similar to many areas of the Westside. Also, they have active and engaged voters, likely to assert their own interests.

30. Are districts based on the number of residents, voters, or citizens?

Districts are based on the US 2020 decennial census, which uses total population rather than number of citizens or voters.

31. Will downtown get adequate representation since 9 councilors represent other districts?

Downtown is located in District #4 which of course has three Councilors. A proposed City ordinance must have the affirmative vote of at least seven Councilors, which means that Councilors from at least three districts must vote in the affirmative.⁴¹ As with all districts, it will be important for District 4 voters to elect councilors who can collaborate and negotiate effectively with their counterparts.

32. Why wasn't the west side broken up?

The population of each district must be generally equal in size. With four districts, the population target for each district is 163,126. The Westside population is much smaller than the target, so the Independent District Commission needed to add portions of contiguous neighborhoods to create a district that would generally have a population equal to the other three districts.

⁴¹ Charter of City of Portland, Section 2-117.

33. Isn't running a campaign for City Council too expensive for most Portlanders?

District elections for City Council will be less expensive than citywide elections because candidates can focus on a smaller number of voters. In the past three elections, when commissioners were elected citywide, a campaign could easily cost \$500,000 or more.⁴² This gave an advantage to candidates with financial resources and those who were politically well-connected.

Portland's Small Donor Elections program seeks to reduce the influence of money in politics and encourage the election of people to City office who reflect their community.⁴³ To qualify for the program, City Council candidates must raise donations of \$5-\$350 from at least 250 Portland donors. The program matches the first \$20 Portlanders give to participating candidates 9-to-1 up to a maximum in 2024 of \$120,000. Donations are limited to no more than \$350 from each individual contributor.⁴⁴

34. Why don't we have more districts, so my neighborhood can be represented?

See answer to the question 24 above.

35. Why weren't neighborhood association boundaries always given top priority?

The amended City Charter required the IDC to balance several criteria. Neighborhood association boundaries were only one of those criteria.⁴⁵ Accordingly, neighborhood association boundaries could not always be given top priority.

36. What will happen when Council districts are adjusted after each census?

After the next census in 2030, the boundaries of City districts must be slightly adjusted to accommodate any significant change in population. For the City,

⁴² Oregon Secretary of State, Total Expenditures for year of election reported by the winning and next runner-up candidates for Portland City Commissioner.

<https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Pages/campaignfinance.aspx>

⁴³ Small Donor Elections: <https://www.portland.gov/smalldonorelections>

⁴⁴ Candidate Guide: <https://www.portland.gov/vi/media/46888/download>

⁴⁵ See answer to Districting and Representation Question #5 above.

required criteria,⁴⁶ including equal population, will be reapplied. Redistricting happens at all levels of government. For example, local, state and federal jurisdictions are redistricted for the purpose of apportioning representation after each 10-year census.

37. How was the decision made to reduce the current seven neighborhood coalitions to just four coalitions, one per district?

The City of Portland Office of Community and Civic Life made the decision to reduce the current 7 District Coalition Offices (DCOs) into 4 District Coalition Offices aligned with the city's 4 Districts.⁴⁷ The goal was to have the DCOs serve roughly equal populations with shared characteristics and interests. The new model will enable Portlanders to work with their DCO to engage with City Councilors serving their district. Neighborhood Associations will continue to have representation at the City and receive support from Civic Life's Neighborhood Outreach & Support District Engagement Coordinators in this new structure. Funding will be distributed equitably by population among the 4 offices to allow similar levels of staffing and services. The new model will take effect on July 1, 2024.

E. Ranked-Choice Voting

38. What is Portland's new voting system for Mayor and Auditor?

Starting with the November 2024 election, Portland will move to single-winner ranked-choice voting for Mayor and Auditor.⁴⁸

39. What is single-winner ranked-choice voting?

Voters have the option to rank up to 6 candidates in order of preference. Starting with the November 2024 election, the first candidate to receive at least 50%+1 of

⁴⁶ Criteria are listed in response to Question #5 above.

⁴⁷ *Southeast Uplift Balks at City's Plans to Reduce Its Funding as the Neighborhood Model Changes*
https://www.wweek.com/news/city/2024/02/19/southeast-uplift-balks-at-citys-plans-to-reduce-its-funding-as-the-neighborhood-model-changes/?mc_cid=0e3b5688ba&mc_eid=0b14aed7e8

⁴⁸ Charter of City of Portland, Section 3-102. <https://www.portland.gov/omf/charter-review-commission/documents/phase-ii-progress-report-3-0/download>

the votes is elected. Votes are counted in rounds, starting with voters' first-ranked choices. If no one gets 50+1% of the votes in the first round, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. The next-ranked choices of those who voted for the eliminated candidate are redistributed among the remaining candidates. This process continues in successive rounds until someone wins.⁴⁹ This voting system eliminates the need for a primary, saving taxpayer money. The Mayor is elected city-wide for a term of 4 years.⁵⁰

40. What's an example of the difference between counting votes under the prior system, compared to single-winner ranked-choice voting?

To demonstrate the difference in voting systems, let's compare the last mayoral election to the new single-winner ranked-choice system. In May of 2020 there were 19 mayoral candidates. In the primary, no candidate received a majority of the votes, so the top two candidates proceeded to the runoff election in November. In the runoff election, a total of 363,056 votes were cast. Ted Wheeler won the election with a majority (167,260 votes or 46% of votes cast). Under the new single-winner ranked-choice voting system, the winner will need at least 181,529 votes (50%+1).⁵¹

41. Where can I find information about candidates running for Portland City offices, including Council seats in my district?

For information about these candidates and more, to go:

- [City Election office](#)
- [Rose City Reform](#)
- [Vote411](#) (scheduled to go live Sept 30)

You will find additional election information at [League of Women Voters' Election 2024 Hub](#).

⁴⁹ Frequently Asked Questions: New Election Methods:
<https://www.portland.gov/vote/questions/election-methods>

⁵⁰ Charter of City of Portland, Section 3-101.

⁵¹ City of Portland 2024 Election Results <https://www.portland.gov/elections/city-election-results/2020-city-elections-results>