Charter Commission

City Council Elections Committee

Agenda

Section	Time
Welcome & Committee Business	10 min
Work Group Presentations & Discussion • Multi-member districts I & Size of Council: Anthony, Becca, Bryan, Debbie, Debra, Yasmin • Multi-member districts II: Melanie • Timing of elections: Raahi & Robin • Form of voting: Bryan, Candace, Salome, Vadim	90 min
Next Steps & Adjourn	10 min
Breakouts for workgroups	10 min

OMF

CHARTER REVIEW TIMELINE

We are here

Proposals for feedback

Ballot Referral

Election

	Aug 2021	Sept 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	Aug 2022	Sept 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022
	Monthly Work Sessions with Public Comment																
Phase I Issues	Evaluate and synthesize data and information Host community listening sessions					Determine charter amendment proposals		Collect feedback on proposals through public hearings and revise			Report	Educate Portlanders on proposed charter amendments			Election		
Phase II Issues						Determine phase II priority issues		Evaluate and synthesize data and information Host Listening Sessions			Determine proposed charter amendments		Collect feedback on proposals through public hearings and revise			Phase II Report

Desired Outcomes for City Council Elections Reform

1 | More voices being heard in elections

2 | Councilors who are easy to reach

3 | Councilors who look like the community they represent

4 | Councilors who understand your community needs

5 | Councilors who answer to the people

6 | Councilors who safeguard democracy

OMF

City Council Elections
Initial Research Questions

Elected offices: Which offices should be elected by the people?

Council constituency: What should the constituency of Councilors be? Examples include at-large, district, or a mixture of at-large and district. If the Committee recommends districts, how should they be drawn.

Council size: How many City Councilors should we have to fulfill the work of Portland?

Form of voting: What form of voting should we use to elect city elected offices? Should our system retain a winner-take-all/loser has none approach?

Timing of elections: Should we have a two-round system that includes a primary and a general election? Should local elections be aligned with the presidential general election?

Expanding democracy: Who should have the ability to vote on Portland's elected leaders? Who should have the ability to take part in direct democracy ballot measures?

Campaign finance: How can funds be raised and spent? What is the role of public financing?

City Council Elections Committee Areas of Agreement

1. Increase the size of City Council

2. Shift to a form of voting that allows for a result in one election and captures people's preferences

Main Questions

Question 1: How many districts should be drawn in the city?

Question 2: How many city council members per multi-member district?

Analysis:

How does your answer address the identified problems and advance the identified positive changes?

How does your answer advance our desired outcomes more broadly?

What are the arguments against what you are proposing?

Seeds for Multimember Districts

- Public Comments call for a desire of some sort of guaranteed geographic representation
- Desire to move away from winner-take-all systems
  - Where the same majority could elect all the positions
  - Winner take all also means "loser" gets none
- Desire to explore options that aren't single member districts
  - Portland doesn't have geographic distribution of BIPOC people for this to make sense
- Acknowledgement that it's hard for any one single person to represent the diversity of viewpoints in a district

Context for Maps

- Series of maps of Portland looking at:
  - City of Portland boundary
  - % People of Color Voting Age Population by Census Block Group
  - Difference in People of Color (2020 - 2010) by Census Block Group (Migration)
  - Median Household Income
  - % Youth 18-34
  - % Renter Occupied Homes
  - Terms: VAP = Voting Age Population
- Data taken from 2020 Census where possible; supplemented by 2019 Census American Communities Survey. 2020 ACS survey was deemed unusable by Census Bureau due to Census outreach complications
- Won't show theoretical district lines at this meeting; much more to educate the public about possibilities!
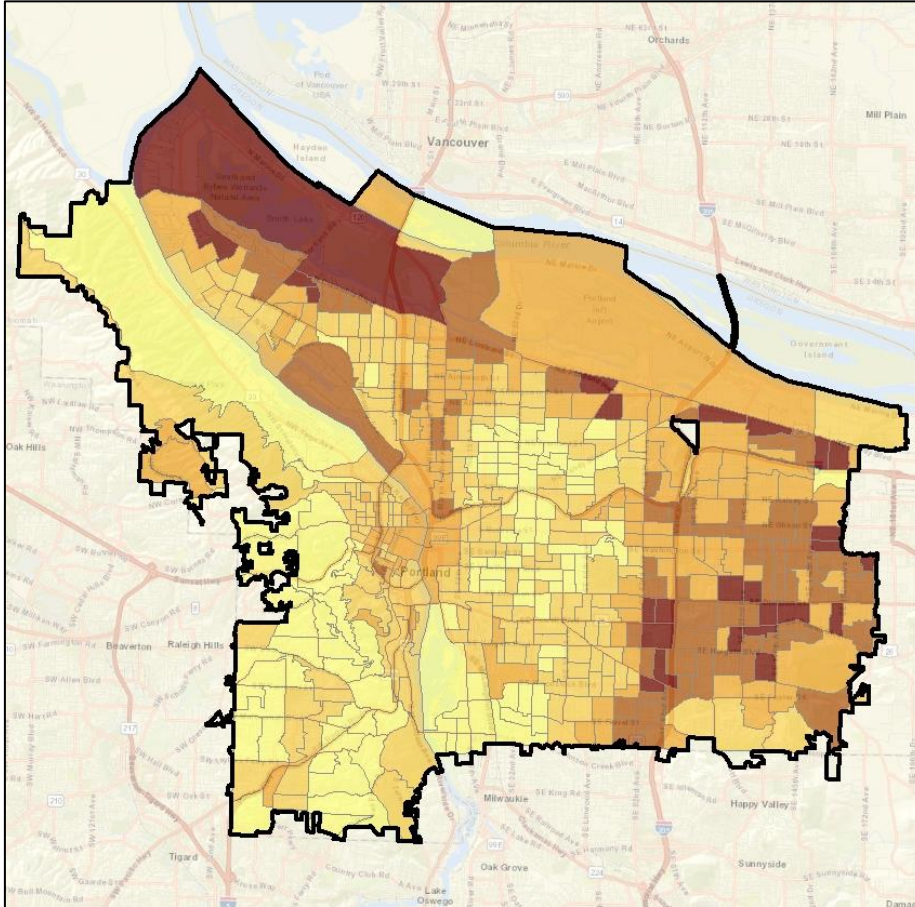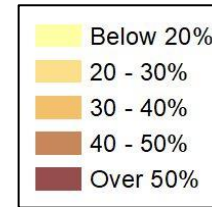
Portland Context
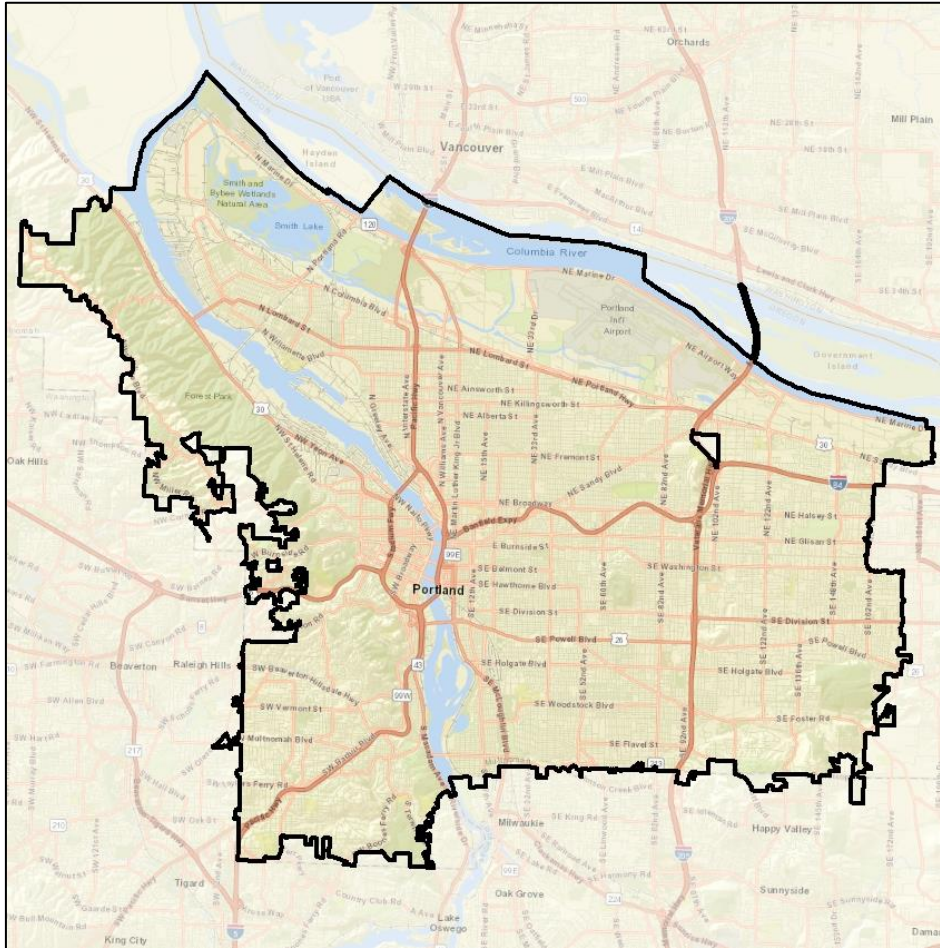
	Portland
Population	652,503
API VAP	11%
AA VAP	7%
Latino VAP	10%
POC VAP	31%
POC CVAP	23%
HH Income	$76,000
% Y. (18-34)	27%
% Renters	46%

Portland Context

% POC Voting Age Population by Census Block Group

	Portland
Population	652,503
API VAP	11%
AA VAP	7%
Latino VAP	10%
POC VAP	31%
POC CVAP	23%
HH Income	$76,000
% Y. (18-34)	27%
% Renters	46%

Legend:
- Below 20%
- 20 - 30%
- 30 - 40%
- 40 - 50%
- Over 50%

Source:
2020 Decennial Census
2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Portland Context
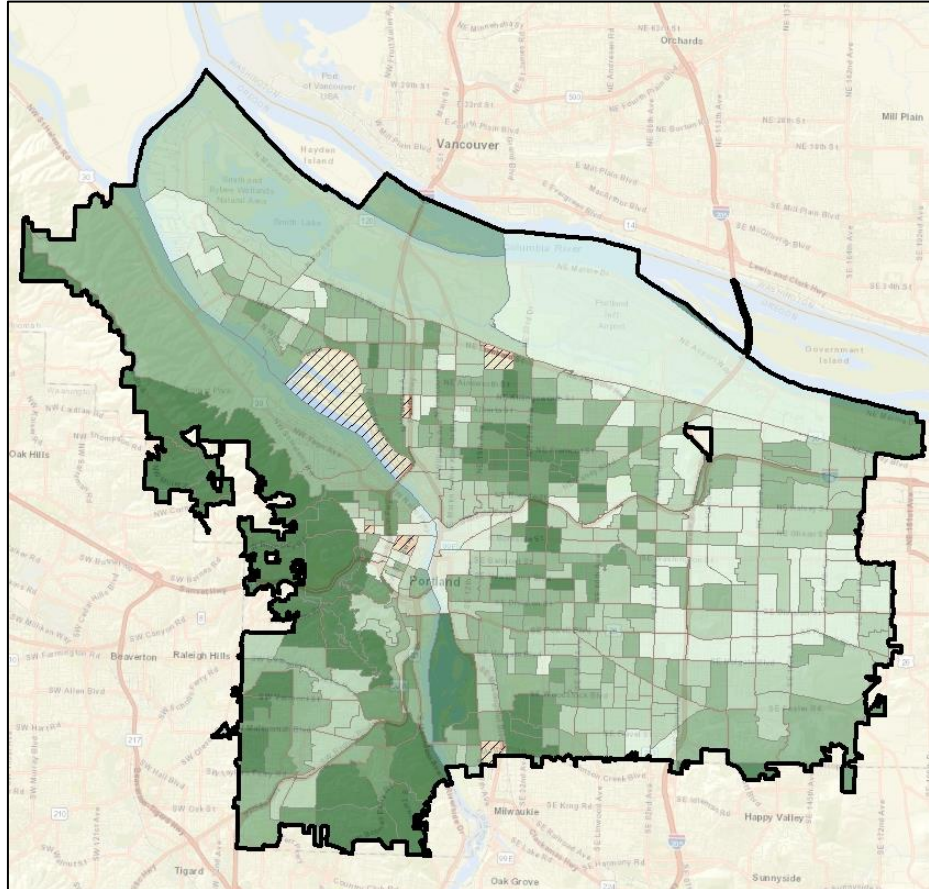## Difference in POC (2020 - 2010) by Census Block Group

	Portland
Population	652,503
API VAP	11%
AA VAP	7%
Latino VAP	10%
POC VAP	31%
POC CVAP	23%
HH Income	$76,000
% Y. (18-34)	27%
% Renters	46%

Legend:
- Below 0%
- 0 - 7.5%
- 7.5 - 15%
- Over 15%
- No Data

Portland Context
Median Household Income

	Portland
Population	652,503
API VAP	11%
AA VAP	7%
Latino VAP	10%
POC VAP	31%
POC CVAP	23%
HH Income	$76,000
% Y. (18-34)	27%
% Renters	46%

Legend:
- Below $50,000
- $50,001 - $75,000
- $75,001 - $100,000
- $100,001 - $125,000
- Over $125,000
- No Data

Source:
2020 Decennial Census
2019 American Community Survey
5-Year Estimates

more equitable democracy
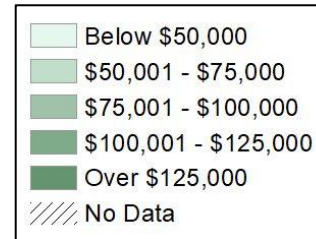
Portland Context
Percent Youth (18-34)
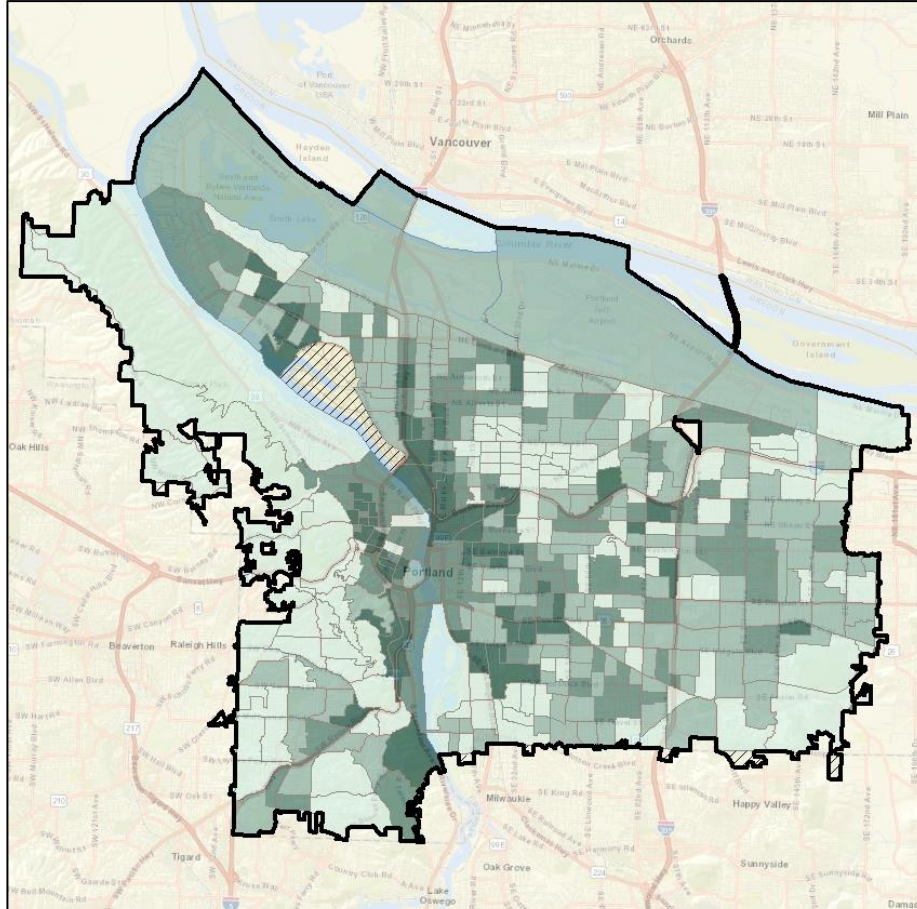
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POC CVAP	23%
HH Income	$76,000
% Y. (18-34)	27%
% Renters	46%

Legend:
- Below 20%
- 20 - 30%
- 30 - 40%
- Over 40%
- No Data
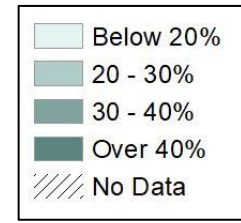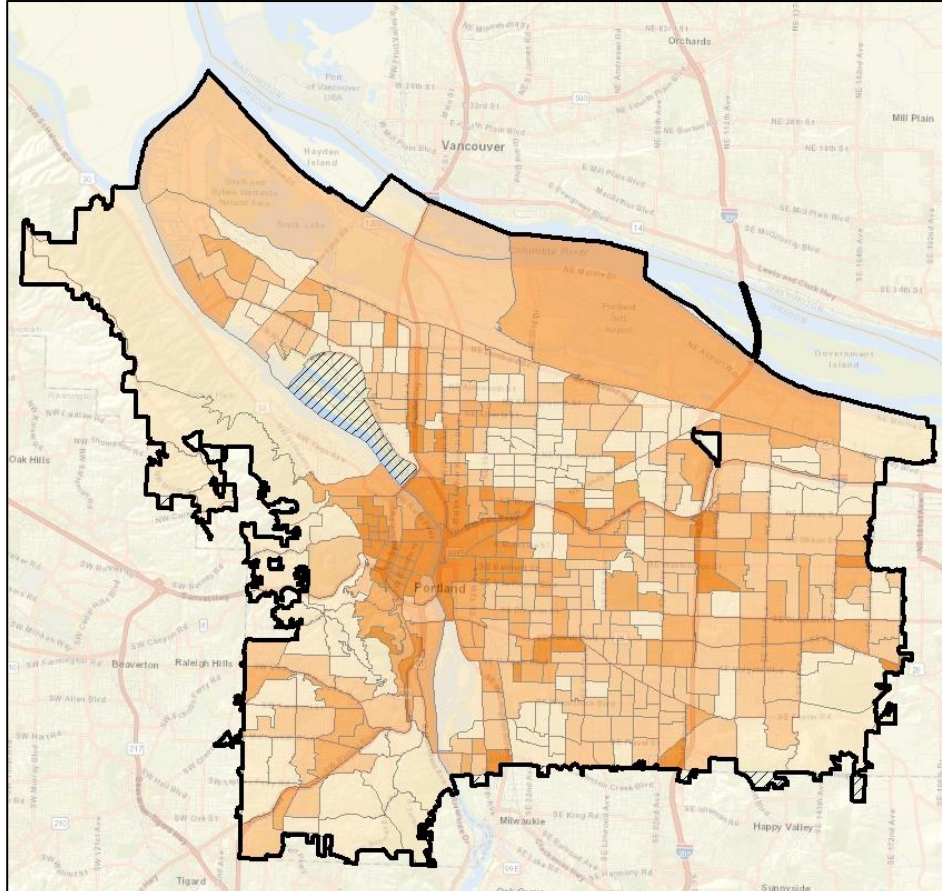
Source:
2020 Decennial
Census
2019 American
Community Survey
5-Year Estimates

Portland Context
Percent Renter Occupied Homes

	Portland
Population	652,503
API VAP	11%
AA VAP	7%
Latino VAP	10%
POC VAP	31%
POC CVAP	23%
HH Income	$76,000
% Y. (18-34)	27%
% Renters	46%

Legend:
- Below 25%
- 25 - 50%
- 50 - 75%
- Over 75%
- No Data
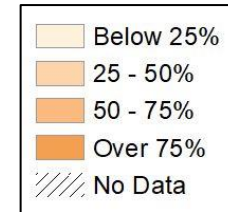
Source:
2020 Decennial Census
2019 American Community Survey
5-Year Estimates

Recommendations

How many districts should be drawn in the city?

At least 3 multimember districts

- Moving to multimember districts addresses the historic geographic underrepresentation of different parts of Portland (particularly east county) and having multiple members per district puts us in a better position for communities of color (and other historically underrepresented constituencies) to elect a candidate of their choice.
- Running for office more accessible to more people because campaigns will be cheaper to run in a district than they are city-wide.
- District-based elections may ensure more geographic representation from other areas of the city. Historically, a large majority of elected councilors have come from the west side of city.
- Changing from at-large to districts promotes a more accountable, responsive and accessible city council.

How many city council members per multi-member district?

At least 4 members per district

- Proportional Representation -- best opportunity for communities of color to choose the candidate of their choice. Winner-take-all single-member districts reward the same majority repeatedly.
- Promotes more power for marginalized groups, especially communities of color, renters, low income and others who cannot elect candidates of choice on their own.
- Increased representation and ability of constituencies to elect a candidate of their choice and increased access and accountability between councilors and their constituents.
- Multiple councilors working on issues. Likelier to have a group of councilors who can reflect the district than one single entity
- Compels councilors to work in coalitions – rather than one interest group.

Potential Arguments Against?

Rooted mostly in currently unanswered (but totally answerable) questions and growing pains with any change, because so many of these factors of our reforms are interrelated and connect with form of government reform and election reform (such as form of voting)

- **Polarization**. A wider range of views on Council could lead to more polarization. Possibility of elected a broader spectrum of political ideology, which could be a negative (if idealogues block process/progress) or a positive (more Portlanders would feel they have a voice at city hall).
- **Expenses**. Councilors need to have a district office and be visible. Education campaign on new form of voting, picking multiple candidates on a ballot, concept of districts. Increasing size of council could incur office/staffing cost changes.
- **Redistricting**. Potentially contentious redrawing and would need criteria spelled out to guide whatever entity redraws the lines after every 10 year census.
- **Diffuse Responsibility**. Potential impression that responsibility for policy will be more diffused and it will be easier for individual council members to pass the buck and hide in crowds.

Intersections & Considerations

- Anticipate needing more answers coming from the form of voting while considering a multimember district

- The size of the council needs to hang together with the form voting, number and geography of districts and roles/responsibilities of councilors. This is also true for public financing/OAE/campaign finance reform.

- It may seem complicated and change is hard, but it's possible to address resident/voter hesitation when taken together to tell a larger narrative about access and representation.

City Council Size

Council Size Must Increase
- Current ratio is: 1/130,000 voters in Portland

City Comparisons: Cities comparable to Portland in population all have larger councils
- *See next slide*

Constituency Size: Analysis of Potential Multimember Districts Provides Us Guidance on Council Size:
- Must continue this research

Areas of Further Consideration and Research:
- Concern over council size being too big
- Budget Considerations when increasing the total number of councilors

City Comparison

Cities comparable to Portland in population all have larger councils

- Baltimore 15 (14 single member districts + 1 at-large) + Mayor = 16
  - Mayor-Council
- Washington DC 13 (8 single member districts + 5 at-large) + Mayor = 14
  - Mayor-Council
- Boston 13 (9 single member districts + 4 at-large) + Mayor = 14
  - Mayor-Council
- Memphis 13 (7 single member districts + 6 in two 3-member districts) + Mayor = 14
  - Mayor-Council
- Detroit 9 (7 single member districts + 2 at-large) + Mayor = 10
  - Mayor-Council
- Oklahoma City 8 (8 single member districts) + Mayor = 9
  - Council-Manager
- El Paso 8 (8 single member districts) + Mayor = 9
  - Council-Manager
- Las Vegas 6 (6 single member districts) + Mayor = 7
  - Council-Manager
- Portland 4 (all at-large) + Mayor = 5
  - Commission

Timing of Elections

City Council Elections Meeting 11/4/2021

Main Questions

Question 1: If there is one election date (no primaries), when should we hold city council elections?

Question 2: Should all city council be elected at once?

Analysis:

How does your answer address the identified problems and advance the identified positive changes?

How does your answer advance our desired outcomes more broadly?

What are the arguments against what you are proposing?

Recommendations

When Should City Elections be Held?

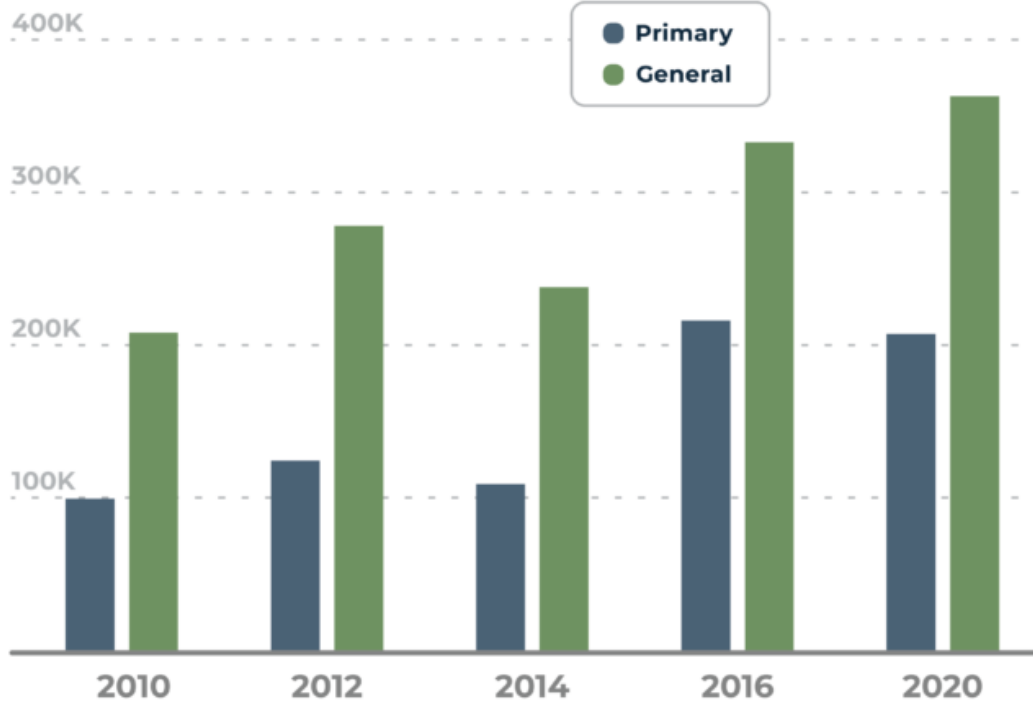**November General Elections on presidential years (e.g. 2024, 2028, etc.).**

- Empirically this is consistently the single highest voter turnout day in Portland in any period.
- This means that elections would occur every 4 years and no staggered elections.
- It is bad to have systematically embedded differences in election experience for different members of the council – that does not seem fair.
- Would require PDX to adopt a form of voting that would allow for a voters to decide election results on this one date

Should all city council be elected at once?

Yes! All city council and mayor should be elected at once.

- It is bad to have systematically embedded differences in election experience for different members of the council – that does not seem fair.
- One consequence of staggering elections is that certain councilmembers end up more accountable to different slices of the electorate, depending on when their term is up. The candidates up in presidential years, for instance, might be more responsive to young voters, working-class voters, and voters of color than candidates up in midterm years (when those voters tend to vote less).
- Related to proportional representation/multi-member: the more offices that are up for election at once, the more proportional the results will be (and thus the more accurately the results will reflect the makeup of the community).

More Portlanders vote in general elections than in primaries.

Sightline
INSTITUTE

Legend: Primary, General

Y-axis: 400K, 300K, 200K, 100K

X-axis: 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2020

Source: Voter Activation Network VoteBuilder

November Presidential Year City Elections

RY: "I define a better democracy as one in which more voices weigh in (in this case with their vote) on decisions that affect all Portlanders."

- Eliminating or de-emphasizing primaries by ensuring that the real race is always in November would give more Portlanders a say in who sits on the city council.

- A different (May) electorate wouldn't set up choices for another (November) electorate. As is the case in our system currently, of the past 15 city council races (not including mayoral races), only five went on to the November election. This means that a large chunk of voters in Portland didn't get a real say in who their elected city council member was because there wasn't an election in November for them to consider.

- May primary elections do not play well for nonpartisan races like the current City of Portland members.

Additional benefits of consolidated elections

This reform serves both **candidates** and their **constituents**

- Creates less barriers for **candidates** & widens the pool of candidates who would even consider running
  - Campaign cycle wouldn't need to be as long (especially with Portland's Open & Accountable finance system) because it's not literally preparing to campaign in both May and November
  - Campaigns would not start as early (because it does not need to fundraise to reach the entire city's worth of voters at-large), fundraising needs would be more feasibly met
  - we'd reduce the number of campaign cycles by eliminating city elections every 2 years

- For **constituents**, the city council bears the responsibility and owns the outcomes as a collective whole, up for election at the same time, incentivizing collaboration and problem-solving.

- In every 4 year cycle, there would just be less overall days of city candidates/incumbents spending time campaigning for votes, fundraising for dollars

- More time spent legislating and enacting programs before election season kicks in

Potential arguments against?

OPPONENTS: Aligning all city elections to the presidential election would have the effect of taking attention away from local considerations, and relatively less emphasis would be placed on city elections.

- Response: There are always other topics on the ballot. The presidential election guarantees that more people participate in our local elections, period.
- Switching to times that aren't the presidential November really only plays out in real life as less attention *in general* on elections, in less participation. smaller portion of voters paying attention to non-presidential election votes is relatively and disproportionately whiter, wealthier, older, and folks with life flexibility to be able to inherently devote more time to electoral causes.

OPPONENTS: Concerns about continuity of government and the question of turnover if theoretically the whole council could be voted out.

- Response: The chances that the entirety of council is thrown out in one election is miniscule, there will be continuity (as defined as retained city councilors). This is why we're exploring systems of proportional representation so that unless 100% of the city does not want to retain any single member of council, then the voters who do want to re-elect will have their view represented.
- Portland currently does not have term limits either, which helps in retention/continuity not being forced to turn over the council by expiration date.

Form of Voting

Bryan Lewis

Candace Avalos

Salome Chimuku

Vadim Mozyrsky

Identifying the Problems

- Low voter turnout in primaries gives choice of candidates to whiter, older voters
- Primary voters dictate the choices of General election voters
- If someone's preferred candidate doesn't win, there is a disconnect from their voice being heard
- Voters have limited choices in General elections
- Frustrated electorate because winners may not have the support of even 50%
- System advantages wealthy or financially backed establishment candidates
- Candidates face significant obstacles such as time, expense and geography
- Candidates aren't representative – they don't speak to you or your interests
- System driven by wealth has produced inequitable distribution of services with focus on westside
- Unrepresentative candidates and councilors limit the effectiveness of government responses

Our Desired Outcomes

- Increased voter turnout
- More opportunity to elect your preferred candidate
- A different electorate doesn't set up choices for another electorate
- More choices for voters
- Portlanders are excited to participate in elections and feel their choice mattered
- Portlanders can influence power regardless of their wealth or other privilege
- Less barriers for candidates
- Candidates look like our diverse communities
- People elected are supported by Portlanders
- More equitable distribution of services
- Representative candidates and councilors improve the effectiveness of government responses

RCV vs STAR

- In RCV voters rank candidates in order of preference rather than voting for just one candidate. Their preferred candidate is their first choice, their back-up candidate is their second choice, they can designate a third choice, and so on.

- If no candidate reaches a majority, the candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. That candidate's supporters now have their votes count for their second choice. And so on until a majority is reached.

- RCV is used by over 10 million Americans, in dozens of places around the country.

- In STAR voting, voters score candidates 0 to 5 stars, and can show their preference order and level of support for every candidate on the ballot.

- STAR stands for Score Then Automatic Runoff. The scores of the all candidates are added up, and the two highest-scoring candidates advance to an automatic runoff. In the runoff every voter's full vote goes to the finalist they preferred (if the voter scored the two finalists equally, their ballot counts as "no preference"). The finalist preferred by the most voters wins.

- STAR Voting is the great innovation and compromise of the voting reform movement to empowers voters and improve our democracy.

Why STAR?

- People would get to select candidates based off their priorities and all they care about, without fear of throwing away their vote. It makes it easier for candidates with less money to compete since people can choose them and another candidate.

- People can "vote their conscience" instead of having to be strategic with their votes

- Voters can simply vote their values and not compromise. These methods reduce or eliminate the worry about spoiler effect or people wasting their votes.

Why STAR?

- More incentive for similar candidates to build coalitions instead of try to compete for votes because they can all receive 5 stars.
- Will help avoid the gatekeeping done by endorsing organizations that shift and sway voters. This gives newer candidates that aren't chosen by the establishment an opportunity to rise up.
- Removing the primary and giving voters more options at the ballot box with less confusion of having to vote twice.
- More candidates will vote in general elections vs primary, and normally primary eliminates candidates before people even really have a chance to get to know them – now they'll have more time to know candidates and more ways to support them at the ballot box .
- STAR was created in Oregon for a reason and if Portland is bold enough to implement and risk the challenges of a new voting system, we will set the stage for it scaling and applying to other large cities.

Why not RCV?

- Unless your RCV ballot accommodates all of the candidates—very impractical with upwards of twenty—you have to limit the number of rankings allowed. (Most municipalities using RCV limit rankings to top 3 or top 5.) This leads to "exhausted ballots": when a voter has not ranked any of the non-eliminated candidates, their ballot is not counted. Rates of ballot exhaustion can range from 9-27%; those voters don't have a say in the final runoff, and winners often are not "majority" winners.

- If a voter ranks two candidates equally (either by accident or misunderstanding the rules), their ballot is "spoiled" and thrown out. Rates of spoiled ballots are higher in low-income, high-minority population areas. STAR ballots can't be spoiled.

- RCV fails "Favorite-Betrayal" criterion: ranking your favorite candidate first can cause your least favorite to win. It still suffers from the spoiler effect; sometimes voters should still vote for the "lesser evil".

- RCV can deliver unrepresentative results, meaning sometimes the consensus candidate is eliminated, leaving voters confused and unhappy with the system.

- Unrliable method,

How does STAR Voting work?

STAR VOTING
SCORE - THEN - AUTOMATIC - RUNOFF

- Give your favorite(s) five stars.
- Give your last choice(s) zero stars.
- Show preference order and level of support.
- Equal scores indicate no preference.
- Those left blank receive zero stars.

Score Candidates:	**Worst** 0	1	2	3	4	**Best** 5
Abby	⓪	①	②	③	●	⑤
Ben	●	①	②	③	④	⑤
Carmen	⓪	①	②	③	④	●
DeAndre	⓪	①	②	③	●	⑤
Eric	⓪	●	②	③	④	⑤

The two highest scoring candidates are finalists.
Your vote goes to the the finalist you prefer.

Scoring

The two highest scoring candidates are finalists.

Candidates:	Totals:
Carmen	624,057
Ben	509,742
DeAndre	387,143
Abby	37,708
Eric	2,789

Carmen and Ben advance to the Automatic Runoff.

Runoff

Your vote goes to the finalist you prefer.

Candidates:	**Worst** 0	1	2	3	4	**Best** 5
Abby	⓪	①	②	③	●	⑤
Ben	⓪	●	②	③	④	⑤
Carmen	⓪	①	②	③	●	⑤
DeAndre	⓪	①	②	③	④	●
Eric	⓪	①	②	③	④	⑤

This vote goes to Carmen because she was scored higher than Ben.

Results

The finalist preferred by the majority wins!

Carmen 58.9%
Ben 41.1%

Whether or not your favorite can win, your vote goes to the finalist you preferred!

Counter Arguments against STAR

- Too difficult to administer on a large scale.
- Too hard to communicate how to use to voters.
- Voters may not vote all the way down candidate list, because they don't have an opinion on some candidates (not scoring gives a candidates a zero vote).
- Possible expense in updating voting systems to run necessary programming for new voting method.
- Worries about this system being untested at large scale, with campaigns trying to game this new system and voters:
  - A candidate could tell supporters to rate me a "5" and everyone else a "0" to increase my score?
  - A candidate may try and lower opponents score by running negative attack ads?
  - A candidate may have donors fund untraceable communications to opponent's supporters telling them to rank their favorite a 5, but me as a 4 as a "backup choice" to increase my average on the other side?

Breaking Consensus: why RCV?

- STAR voting fails the "later no harm" criterion for voting. That is, expressing a preference beyond the voter's favorite candidate, may harm the favorite candidate.
- RCV, on the other hand, passes this test. There is also some evidence that STAR voting would fail to elect the candidate that would beat every other candidate head-to-head and that STAR voting could lead to a candidate preferred by the majority to lose the election. These are just a few examples of how STAR voting can be manipulated by special interests or lead to outcomes inconsistent with fundamental democratic principles.
- RCV is simple, intuitive and tested.

The Team

Comm. Avalos   **Comm. Mozyrsky**   **Comm. Chimuku**   **Comm. Lewis**

THANK YOU!

Questions?