

**This
is**



MANY COMMUNITIES





In these challenging times, community involvement matters more than ever. The global pandemic has highlighted serious issues in our city—lack of basic support for our unhoused neighbors, families living in precarious financial realities, and xenophobia and racism. It also highlights our best qualities as Portlanders—eagerness to offer mutual aid, solidarity in staying at home to flatten the curve, and supporting all our communities during a difficult time.

There is no better time than now to build a more inclusive form of government. We can do this, together.

This is your Portland.

A more inclusive city government is possible when all communities have a voice in decisions that affect them; but where do you start? It is our hope that this zine will be a back-pocket tool and a refresher on the different ways to organize and advocate for a city that works for YOU.

The origins of our City's democracy aren't all roses—they include colonialism, white supremacy, economic exploitation. But they also include native sovereignty and the striving for self-determination by all communities. A city works best when it listens to the people most impacted by its programs and decisions. Here are some ways to stay involved and activate your voice!

Vote

If you are 18 years or older, an Oregon resident, and a U.S. citizen, you have the right to vote in Oregon. Thanks to Oregon's Motor Voter Act, anyone who is issued (or renews) an ID or license through the DMV is automatically registered to vote! You can update your voter registration and learn about upcoming elections by visiting [Multnomah County Elections](#).

There are four scheduled election dates each year in Oregon: the 2nd Tuesday in March; the 3rd Tuesday in May; the 3rd Tuesday in September; and the 1st Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Special Elections can also occur at other dates.

The City of Portland's elected government is made up of six elected positions (more on that below). These positions have four-year terms, no term limits, and are non-partisan. To avoid the potential of City Hall having all new elected officials starting at once, the elections are staggered by year—the Mayor and Commissioners No. 1 & No. 4 are elected one year, and the Auditor and Commissioners No. 2 & No. 3 elected two years later.

FUN FACT: If no candidate wins more than 50% of the vote during a May primary, the top two vote-getters face off in a November runoff election.





Portlanders shape city government by voting.



Commissioners and mayor manage city bureaus.

Auditor ensures government transparency and accountability.



Bureaus and departments work together to deliver services to Portlanders.

Commission Form of What?

Portland's current governmental system is called a commission form of government. The five members of City Council serve as legislators and administrators of individual government agencies (called "bureaus").

Each City Commissioner is in charge of multiple bureaus. The Mayor is considered the fifth City Commissioner who holds two distinct powers: (1) they assign bureaus to each Commissioner and can reassign them at any time; and (2) they propose the annual budget.

The Auditor conducts independent and neutral reviews on City of Portland programs and policies. They serve to support an accountable government.

FACT: Galveston, TX was the first city to have a commission form of government, but they voted to lose that system in 1960. In 1913, eligible voters in Portland—which excluded African Americans, Native peoples, first-generation Asian immigrants, people under 21 years of age and most women—reduced the size of City Council from 11 to the model we have today. Portland is the only major city in the United States that retains its commission form of government.

Be Counted

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau embarks on a massive civic endeavor, with the sole purpose of counting everyone who draws breath in the U.S. That means everyone must be counted so that we can fund schools, healthcare, and more, and make better planning decisions.



Sign up for Civic Life Updates

It's the type of email that you actually want. The Office of Community & Civic Life ("Civic Life" for short) connects the people of Portland with their city government to promote

the common good. [Sign up for Civic Life Updates](#) for regular emails that share ways for you to be involved in your city government.

Know Your Neighbor

Did you know that one-third of people living in this country don't know their neighbors? Let's change that. When neighbors know one another, they can look out for each other, share resources, and borrow a cup of sugar. One great way to get to know your neighbors is by throwing a block party. Once our State of Emergency is over, and we can begin physically interacting again, you can [apply for a block party permit](#) with the Portland Bureau of Transportation. Once approved, you will receive an official "Street Closed" sign to block off your street for a given day and time. BYOB (Bring Your Own Beverage) Neighbors!

Join an Advisory Body

City decision-makers rely on Portlanders to inform their policymaking. One way to provide advice and input is by joining an advisory body. There are over 65 advisory bodies in the City of Portland, engaged in issues ranging from historic landmarks to public campaign finance. Boards and commissions mostly advise city bureaus and some county agencies. [Check out the list](#) and discover your committee of choice.

Testify at Council Meetings

Tap, tap, tap...is this microphone on? Every Wednesday, and sometimes Thursday afternoon, the City holds Council meetings in City Hall Chambers. Each Friday, the Council meeting agenda for the following week is posted on the [City Auditor's website](#). Is there something that Council is discussing that impacts you, your family, and your community? Here are two ways to share your thoughts:

- 1) Public testimony on resolutions and ordinances is a way to respond to an existing City issue being discussed during a council meeting. Sign up by 4:00pm the Tuesday before the meeting by clicking on the [council agenda](#). On the day of the meeting, you'll have three minutes in front of the microphone. You can also [email your testimony](#).

- 2) Communications are three-minute timeslots held at the beginning of Wednesday morning council meetings. There are five timeslots available each week. This time is used to talk to Commissioners about any City topic that is near and dear to your heart. You need to sign up in advance with the Council Clerk, [learn more about the process here](#).

And of course, anyone can come to the City Council meeting to observe. If you can't make it down to City Hall, you can always [watch it on the City's website](#).

FACT: City Hall is temporarily closed to the public due to our current State of Emergency and City Council meetings are currently being held remotely via teleconference. Find out how to participate and provide public testimony during [this temporary closure here](#).



Reach Out, I'll Be There

Another way to get the ear (pun intended) of your elected officials is by contacting their office by phone or sending them an email. They welcome your thoughts! You can find each of their contact information on the front page of the

[City of Portland's website](#).



Become Involved in Your Community

Civic Life began writing this Zine before the pandemic. We have since had to rethink how we connect and become involved in our community. We won't sugarcoat it; this has been a very challenging time. But luckily there have been silver linings behind those dark clouds: we have loved the daily 7:00pm communal banging of pots and pans to celebrate essential workers, social media emerging as a tool for providing mutual aid, and having to look into strangers' eyes to communicate smiles hidden behind our facemasks. We have also seen an incredible outpouring of support through government and community resources. Here is a small sample:

[The City of Portland has a new webpage](#) that is updated daily with information on the City's response to

COVID-19 including first response, economic relief, housing, utilities, and more.

If you are in the position to offer help, the [Joint Volunteer Information Center](#) is coordinating a regional response to COVID-19. Organizations and individuals that can offer their time and goods to help slow the spread of the virus should contact the Center for more information.

Portland has 95 neighborhood associations and they are providing timely support and important resources to their neighbors. Find out more about your [neighborhood association and how to get involved here](#).

If you are looking for ways to volunteer your time and resources, [The Nonprofit Association of Oregon](#) can help connect you to thousands of local nonprofits.

The Oregon Health Authority has created the multilingual website, [Safe + Strong](#), to provide daily updates, resources, and information about COVID-19.

Access to nutritious food is paramount for staying healthy and virus free. [Oregon School Districts](#) are offering free lunch to students in need and Portland Parks & Recreation will continue to operate its [free lunch program](#) this summer.

Thank you for your commitment to creating a better, more connected Portland. #WeGotThisPDX

City of Portland's Primary Responsibilities

The city provides a range of basic services, including transportation, fire and rescue, housing, planning, development, water and sewer, emergency management and communications, police, parks and recreation, and community and civic life.

Do you have a question about our City or County and its services? Call 503.823.4000, and an actual human being will answer and will help answer your question.



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FIRE & RESCUE



WATER BUREAU



PARKS & RECREATION



TRANSPORTATION

