

Future Districts and Council Operations

Public Comment Report

April 2024

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC) hosted a preliminary engagement period to inform their draft recommendations on district offices and council operations. This report summarizes the feedback received from this engagement period. The feedback will be used to inform GTAC's draft recommendations that will be disseminated for a more extensive engagement period in summer 2024.

Below summarizes the central themes and takeaways from the community's feedback. This summary does not reflect all the themes heard in this engagement period or reflect all of Portlanders view on these topics. The report later explores the feedback from each method of engagement in much greater detail.

1. Challenges Accessing City Council and Staying Informed

Community members shared their experiences with City Council and their challenges accessing or staying informed about council operations. Much of the feedback reflected that council members are inaccessible and unresponsive to community input. Two key takeaways emerged from these shared experiences. First, the need for clearer communication, and centralize information about council and committees. Second, further community outreach and communication is needed to increase public awareness on how to engage with council and who is responsible for what decisions at the city.

2. District Specific Representation and Citywide Outcomes

Community members shared varying perspectives on where future councilors should focus their time and attention between districts and City Hall. The majority of voices we heard in this limited engagement period want to see councilors spending time outside City Hall, in their districts, actively engaging residents. Engagement includes events like district specific townhalls, newsletters, and offices hours. Community members also expressed their desire to see collaboration and coordination amongst councilors to improve citywide outcomes.

3. Considerations for Council Committees' Structure and Processes

Finally, the feedback reflects several themes about future council committees. First, community members shared their desire to see council committees have equitable representation of districts, power, subject-matter expertise, and marginalized communities. Second, there was a desire to not only give public input in council and committee meetings, but also have councilors gather input through engagement outside these meetings. Third, was common committee topics, which included houselessness, public safety, and other core functions of the city. Finally, there is a desire for committees to have a clear scope, measurable outcomes, and accountable mechanisms to ensure public input is considered throughout the decision-making process.

ENGAGEMENT TO DATE ON DISTRICTS AND COUNCIL OPERATIONS

Engagement efforts

To inform initial recommendations on district and council operations, GTAC and the Transition Team hosted a short engagement period. Between March 8- April 4, GTAC and the Transition Team hosted 3

listening sessions, 2 employee townhalls, 1 employee briefing, an online survey, and received public comments (seen in Table 1).

Table 1. Events and number of people engaged in the preliminary engagement period.

Method	March 8 – April 4
Listening Sessions attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.14 virtual session • 3.19 in-person session • 3.21 virtual session 	54 attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 people • 9 people • 22 people
Employee townhall attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.19 • 3.21 	1,491 attendees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 872 employees • 619 employees
Survey responses	157 responses
Public commenters	7 public comments
Briefings	1 city briefing, with 30 employees
Total	1,744 people

Who we heard from

Demographic data was collected from the online survey and the participants of the listening sessions that completed a closing survey. These two inputs represent 10.4% of the feedback received. Additionally, people who participate in government engagement processes are traditionally a specific subsection of the larger Portland community. This report’s data should not be used to represent all communities in Portland. Instead, this feedback represents just one way GTAC members are hearing from communities and informing their recommendations. Finally, this community feedback data is subject to both sampling and non-sampling errors.

Table 2. Demographic information from survey responders and listening session attendees in comparison to Portland.

	Portland Population	Survey Responses (#)	Survey Responses (%)	Listening Sessions (#)	Listening Sessions (%)
Total		N=157		N=25	
District 1	24.4% ¹	26	16.56%	3	12.00%
District 2	24.6%	49	31.21%	12	48.00%
District 3	25.7%	25	15.92%	1	4.00%
District 4	25.2%	45	28.66%	6	24.00%

¹ All District data sourced from: U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 Census Block Enumerations—Total Population. Accessed from the Independent District Commission’s District R online mapping tool.

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0.60% ²	3	1.91%	0	0.00%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.7% ³	4	2.55%	1	4.00%
Asian	8.0% ⁴	8	5.10%	3	12.00%
Latine/x or Hispanic	11.1% ⁵	9	5.73%	0	0.00%
Black or African American	5.7% ⁶	5	3.18%	0	0.00%
White	66.40% ⁷	117	74.52%	18	72.00%
Middle Eastern/ North African	1.02% ⁸	4	2.55%	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	-	20	12.74%	1	4.00%
People with disabilities	23.5% ⁹	32	20.38%	2	8.00%
Immigrants and refugees	13.5% ¹⁰	12	7.64%	1	4.00%
Non-English speaking	8.1% ¹¹	5	3.18%	1	4.00%
People under age 24	23.92% ¹²	0	0.00%	1	4.00%
Houseless Portlanders	1% ¹³	4	2.55%	0	0.00%

²Census Bureau. 2020 Census Block Enumerations—Total Population by Race/Ethnicity. Accessed from the Independent District Commission’s District R online mapping tool.

³ Census Bureau. 2020 Census Block Enumerations.

⁴ Census Bureau. 2020 Census Block Enumerations.

⁵ Census Bureau. 2020 Census Block Enumerations.

⁶ Census Bureau. 2020 Census Block Enumerations.

⁷ Census Bureau. 2020 Census Block Enumerations.

⁸ Portland Insights Survey: Report of Findings. 2022.

⁹ Oregon Disability & Health Data and Statistics. Oregon Office on Disability and Health, Oregon Health & Science University. Available at: <https://www.ohsu.edu/oregon-office-on-disability-and-health/oregon-disability-health-data-and-statistics>

¹⁰ Portland Insights Survey. Report of Findings. 2022.

¹¹ Language Pay Differential. Portland Bureau of Human Resources, City of Portland. Last accessed 4.15.2024.

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table ACSST1Y2022.S0101 - Age and Sex for Portland, Oregon. Retrieved from <https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2022.S0101?q=age%20population%20portland%20oregon>

¹³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2023). 2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress - Part 1. Available at: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2023-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

People who live east of 82nd Avenue	27% ¹⁴	24	15.29%	3	12.00%
LGBTQIA+	6% ¹⁵	47	29.94%	6	24.00%
None	-	42	26.75%	12	48.00%
People who served on a City advisory body	-	23	14.65%	4	16.00%
People who have interacted with Portland's City Council	-	92	58.60%	20	80.00%
City Employees	-	37	23.57%	3	12.00%
Candidates for City office	-	3	1.91%	3	12.00%

METHODS

Qualitative data was collected from all online surveys, listening sessions, public comments, and employee townhalls and briefings. The data was coded and analyzed for key themes. The employee townhalls and briefings were analyzed based on the frequency and type of questions posed at each presentation. The feedback from the listening sessions, online survey, and public comments were analyzed by predetermined codes (see Table 3).

The codes were developed with a deductive approach drawing from the [City of Portland Charter Commission Values](#) and [City Organization Project: Community Outcomes](#). The values and outcomes were previously identified by the Charter Commission and various methods of community input as the desired outcomes for charter reform and the city. The codes are used to continue holding the city accountable to these identified values throughout the transition.

Table 3. Code definitions used for qualitative data analysis.

Comment Codes	Description
Anti-racist	Comments that mention the City of Portland being an anti-racist institution, addressing issues concerning anti-Blackness, institutional and systemic racism.
Equitable	Comments that mention city leadership being representative of the residents. Resources, services, and policies are prioritized and invested to benefit people from systemically oppressed groups, especially Indigenous people, Black people, immigrants and refugees, people of color, and people with disabilities.

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 Census Block Enumerations—Total Population. Accessed from the Independent District Commission's District R online mapping tool.

¹⁵ Portland Office of Equity. (2024). LGBTQIA2S Strategic Plan. Available at: <https://www.portland.gov/officeofequity/documents/lgbtqia2s-strategic-plan/download>

Accessible	Comments that mention information and resources being available and improving Portlanders’ connection to their government. Accommodation for people with disabilities is addressed; language access for immigrant and refugee community members is provided.
Communication	Comments that mention disseminating information to the public, the City of Portland’s website, newsletter, or other forms of communicating with residents.
Collaboration	Comments that reflect elected officials, city employees and residents co-creating knowledge, programs, and policies.
Fiscal Responsibility	Comments that mention being fiscally accountable to the public, using taxpayer dollars efficiently, and ensuring the economic sustainability of our city.
Transparency	Comments that mention transparent and accountable decision-making and maintaining trust through information sharing and integrity.
Accountable	Comments that mention systems and decisions are transparent to the public. Processes for evaluation and improvements are used to measure progress, focus on customer satisfaction, and are compliant with governing laws.
Coordinated	Comments that mention a unified in leadership, working to advance a citywide vision, break down silos, and improve coordination of goals, policies, and programs. Stakeholders will have ready access to information and opportunities to provide input.
Responsive	Comments that mention leadership, systems, and processes addressing and responding to emerging issues that impact Portlanders, including social, economic, and public health challenges impacting neighborhoods and communities.

ONLINE SURVEY CONTENT ANALYSIS

From March 8- April 4, the Transition team collected feedback through an online survey, collecting **157** responses. This survey included a recorded educational presentation on district and council operations (see Appendix A) and then posed 6 key questions to community about City Council’s work.

The questions include:

1. What is your experience accessing or contacting city council members?
2. What are some challenges you face when trying to engage in or stay informed about topics you care most about?
3. What are your hopes for how your future city council members improve your district’s outcomes and show up for your district? Consider the balance between time spent at city hall and in your district.
4. What opportunities do you see for how and when public input is received by the future city council including future council committees?
5. Council committees will be created to focus on specific policy areas or themes. What do you think is the most important thing for council to consider when creating a committee?
6. Is there anything else you’d like to share?

The feedback was analyzed and is summarized by question.

Survey Question 1: What is your experience accessing or contacting current city council members?

Based on the survey responses, the experiences of accessing or contacting current city council members vary widely. First, 36.3% of the survey respondents (57 people) did not have experience interacting with Portland City Council. 58.6% of survey respondents (92 people) had previous experience interacting with Portland City Council. The remaining survey responders preferred not to say. Below summarizes the varied experiences access council members.

Themes

Unresponsive to Community

31% of survey respondents noted a general unresponsiveness when they tried to access or contact current city councilors. These people shared their experiences where action was slow to be taken, and they often receive no response or only automated acknowledgments with minimal feedback. Several respondents felt that council members were disengaged from the community and expressed frustration that citizen input was so disregarded. Some individuals mentioned challenges in accessing council members due to the perception of having to navigate through layers of their staff first. Some small business owners also expressed frustration with the lack of response from council members when seeking support or assistance.

Varying Experiences with Accessibility

5.7% of respondents (9 people) specifically indicated having a positive experience accessing a council member because they were a city employee. Others that reported having no challenges accessing City Council mentioned their membership with neighborhood associations or other special interest groups helped their voices be heard. However, a much larger 27.4% of the survey responders (43 people) indicated challenges interacting with city councilors because of accessibility. As seen in Table 3, Portlanders with marginalized identities largely shared their experiences with city councilors and City Hall being inaccessible. These comments expressed the challenge of attending council sessions held during work hours at City Hall, requiring individuals to take time off work and travel far from their homes if they want to participate or testify. Others noted the long wait time to register to testify to council. Finally, many commented on the high effort required to stay engaged with city government due to the manual process of following up on meetings, watching recordings, and tracking topics.

Table 4. Demographic data of survey responders that shared their experience accessing Portland City Council.

	Total Survey Responses	Accessible	Inaccessible
	N=157	N=8	N=43
District 1	26	1	11
District 2	49	2	14
District 3	25	0	4

District 4	45	4	11
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	3	1	0
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	1	1
Asian	8	1	1
Latine/x or Hispanic	9	1	5
Black or African American	5	0	0
White	117	7	32
Middle Eastern/ North African	4	1	0
Prefer not to say	20	0	5
People with disabilities	32	0	10
Immigrants and refugees	12	0	8
Non-English speaking	5	0	2
People under age 24	0	0	0
Houseless Portlanders	4	0	1
People who live east of 82nd Avenue	24	1	13
LGBTQIA+	47	1	14
None	42	2	7
People who served on a City advisory body	23	0	8
People who have interacted with Portland's City Council	92	5	30
City Employees	38	9	3
Candidates for City office	3	0	2

Survey Question 2: What are some challenges you face when trying to engage in or stay informed about topics you care about most?

Themes

Lack of Centralized and Accessible Communication

57% of survey responses indicated that communication was a challenge to accessing and staying informed. Participants expressed difficulty in accessing centralized and up-to-date information regarding city policies, ongoing research, and opportunities for public input. Current council communication channels were perceived as fragmented, with information scattered across multiple platforms, leading to difficulties in staying informed. Participants also felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information available. 19% of survey responses specifically indicated the lack of a centralized communication platform for City Council was a barrier. The city's website was additionally criticized for being outdated, difficult to navigate, and lacking visual aids.

Many respondents found the language used in council communications to be filled with jargon, making it challenging to understand important information. There were concerns about digital accessibility, particularly for older adults and those without reliable internet access. Participants expressed skepticism towards media coverage, citing bias, lack of coverage on local affairs, and difficulty in finding non-partisan sources of information. Finally, respondents felt overwhelmed by the amount of information present in city council agendas and struggled to navigate through it. Others shared the difficulty wading through extensive city council agendas and overwhelming amounts of data without a clear way to filter out relevant information.

Uncoordinated efforts

Coordination was the second greatest challenge named by 36% of the survey responses (57 people). It was challenging for participants to understand who is responsible for various tasks within the city government and was often described as random and lacking uniformity. Bureaus were perceived as working in silos, with little cross-training or collaboration on similar tasks, leading to inefficiencies and redundancies. This also made it challenging to track the activities and progress of long-term projects. To contextualize this data further, it is interesting to note that 68% of these responses are from community members (39 people), 28% from city employees (16 people), and the remaining 3.5% is from people who preferred not to say (2 people).

Insulated Decision-Making Process

35% of survey responders (55 people) feel that council members are insulated, decisions are made behind closed doors, and public input is not impactful. This is exacerbated by the lack of meaningful dialogue in council meetings and limited opportunities for input in decision-making processes. Some of the comments noted their perception that council members prioritize the interests of specific groups, such as the nonprofits they fund or those with greater financial resources, over those of the broader community. These comments shared their concerns about the equity and integrity of decision-making processes. Related experiences were expressed through concerns about marginalized voices being sidelined or ignored in council discussions, with some feeling that their concerns are not considered or represented by council members.

Lack of Transparent Processes

33% of survey responses (57 people) expressed their frustration about the lack of transparency from council members. Commenters highlighted the frustration of engaging with council when agenda items change last-minute without sharing the reasoning for changes. The perceived lack of transparency was also attributed to council votes being announced with insufficient lead time or information shared.

Survey Question 3: What are your hopes for how your future city council members improve your district’s outcomes and show up in your district? Consider the balance between time spent at city hall and in your district.

Suggestions on councilor priorities and time spent on district-specific concerns varied greatly in the responses. While the survey question did not directly ask responders to indicate their preference on in-district offices, many explicitly shared their opinions. To capture the varied responses on these inductive themes, responses to this survey question were coded with 3 additional codes: district offices, in-district presence, and citywide perspective.

Table 5. Additional codes used to capture inductive themes.

Additional Q3 Codes	Description
District Offices	Responses that specifically advocated for or against in-district offices.
In-District Focus and Presence	Responses that advocated for future city councilors spending their time in their respective districts but did not mention an opinion on the location of their offices.
Citywide Perspective	Responses that suggested councilors focus on addressing citywide concerns or advocated they spend 50% or more of their time at City Hall.

Themes

District Offices

15 people specifically advocated for in-district offices and 14 people specifically said they did not want in-district offices. Acknowledging District 4 and parts of District 2 and 3’s existing disproportionate access to City Hall, it is important to consider who is advocating for district offices and why. Therefore, Table 6 breaks down the survey responders who indicated a preference on district offices.

Table 6. Demographic data of survey responders that expressed their opinion on district offices.

	Total Survey Responses	In Favor of District Offices	Opposed to District Offices
	N=157	N=15	N=14
District 1	26	5	0
District 2	49	3	2
District 3	25	3	3
District 4	45	2	6
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	3	0	0

American Indian or Alaska Native	4	0	1 ¹⁶
Asian	8	1	1
Latine/x or Hispanic	9	1	1
Black or African American	5	0	0
White	117	11	13
Middle Eastern/ North African	4	0	0
Prefer not to say	20	2	1
People with disabilities	32	3	5
Immigrants and refugees	12	4	1
Non-English speaking	5	1	1
People under age 24	0	0	0
Houseless Portlanders	4	1	1
People who live east of 82nd Avenue	24	6	0
LGBTQIA+	47	5	4
None	42	1	4
People who served on a City advisory body	23	4	1
People who have interacted with Portland's City Council	92	11	7
City Employees	38	3	2
Candidates for City office	3	1	1

In Favor of District Offices

9.4% of the responses (15 people) specifically advocated for in-district offices to increase accessibility, engagement, equity, and accountability with city councilors.

- Accessibility: 12 people supported in-district offices because of the access to city councilors and decision-making it provides constituents. These responses echoed similar sentiments to the accessibility challenges named the responses to questions 1 and 2.

¹⁶ Note: This reflects one person indicating their mixed-race identity as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Latine/x or Hispanic. Not three BIPOC people responding to this question.

- Increased Council-Community Collaboration: 8 people believe in-district offices will help build relationships among council members and constituents, improving effective governance. Survey responders emphasize the importance of council members engaging directly with the community in their districts to understand their needs and foster pride. These responses advocated for in-district meetings that foster collaboration between councilors and community on district-focused initiatives and proactive envisioning the future of their communities.
- Focusing on District-Specific Needs: 5 people who supported in-district offices expressed their desire to see their representatives prioritizing district-specific needs, such as implementing transportation plans, addressing gentrification, and housing issues, and improving the economic opportunities for marginalized communities.

Opposed to District Offices

8.8% survey responses (14 people) noted their opposition for in-district offices. There are varied reasons for why responders suggested this. It is interesting to note that 8 of these 14 people still indicated they wanted councilors to be actively engaged in their district, citing other reasons for why they opposed in-district offices.

- Access: 10 survey responses believe that in-district offices may not be easily accessible to all in a district and that council members should instead focus on meeting residents where they are. Some suggestions included participating in local events and going to community spaces like community centers, schools, elderly care facilities and business districts. It was also noted that to some, access can mean being responsive to phone and email. However, it is interesting to note that nobody from District 1 was opposed to in-district offices, potentially indicating different degrees of accessibility.
- Coordination in City Hall: 6 people believe that council members should primarily focus on their duties at City Hall, working with peers, the Mayor, City Administrator, and agencies. There are concerns that the new district-based system may lead to fragmentation and less focus on city-wide issues. Some respondents prefer at-large council members who have responsibility for the entire city, rather than focusing solely on their districts. Finally, there were differing opinions on how much time should be spent in City Hall vs in-districts. Some of the suggestions included monthly in-district engagements, workdays spent at City Hall and evening events in districts, or lastly, 80% of the time in City Hall and 20% out and about.
- Online Communication: 5 people believe that online communication channels are sufficient for keeping constituents informed and engaging with council members without the need for physical offices in the district. The communication methods noted include email, newsletters, social media, and online videos. Some folks highlighted the accessibility benefits of online materials for people at home and younger residents in Portland.
- Fiscal Responsibility: 4 people were concerned about the cost-effectiveness and efficient use of resources. Some respondents argue that in-district offices would be an unnecessary expense, and resources could be better utilized elsewhere, such as hiring more staff to support council members in their duties. Others suggested council members could potentially rent district when there are particularly important issues being worked on or utilize community spaces for office hours specific days of the week, rather than having dedicated in-district offices.

City Councilors Focus and Presence

While many of the survey responses did not speak directly to offices, more responses expressed their opinions on where the councilors should focus their time and attention. 86 people advocated for councilors to focus and advocate for district specific needs. 24 people advocated that councilors maintain a citywide perspective.

Table 7. Demographic data of survey responders that expressed their preference for where city councilors should focus their time and attention.

	Total Survey Responses	District Specific Focus	Citywide Perspective
	N=157	N=86	N=24
District 1	26	16	5
District 2	49	24	5
District 3	25	15	2
District 4	45	24	11
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	3	2	1
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	3	0
Asian	8	5	2
Latine/x or Hispanic	9	6	2
Black or African American	5	3	0
White	117	61	19
Middle Eastern/ North African	4	3	0
Prefer not to say	20	8	1
People with disabilities	32	21	1
Immigrants and refugees	12	8	2
Non-English speaking	5	3	0
People under age 24	0	0	0
Houseless Portlanders	4	2	1
People who live east of 82nd Avenue	24	17	4
LGBTQIA+	47	30	4
None	42	19	3

People who served on a City advisory body	23	12	7
People who have interacted with Portland's City Council	92	27	15
City Employees	38	23	7
Candidates for City office	3	1	0

District-Specific Focus

54% of responders (86 people) indicated a strong desire for city councilors to be actively engaged in their district. The most common depiction of what this looked like included councilors being engaged, accessible, responsive, and transparent.

- District Engagement: 55 people emphasize the importance of council members actively engaging with the community by attending neighborhood association meetings, public events, and holding regular town hall meetings.
- Responsive: 35 survey respondents expressed a desire for to be responsive to their input and the needs of the needs of their neighborhoods. Suggestions include establishing district-specific communication channels, and being present at local businesses, neighborhood associations, and community groups.
- Communicating with the community: 15 survey responders emphasized the need for transparency in government and effective communication from council members. Suggestions on what this could look like included providing regular updates on legislation, hosting informational townhalls, and utilizing various communication platforms such as neighborhood newsletters, social media, and websites. It was also suggested that the three district representatives should have coordinated roles and divisions of interests that are clearly communicated so community knows whom to contact about what.

Citywide Perspective

15% of survey responses (24 people) indicated their desire for councilors to spend 50% or more of their time at City Hall, focus on citywide concerns and be actively engaging with other councilors.

- Collaboration: 15 survey responders emphasize the importance of council members working together to address major citywide issues and prioritize the overall well-being of Portland. Collaboration among council members and a focus on citywide benefits and services are seen as essential, regardless of geographic boundaries. This includes developing relationships among themselves and with city agencies to foster a sense of collective responsibility for the city's well-being. Additionally, these responses expressed a desire for council members to engage with constituents across the city, not just in their own districts. This includes attending other district's town halls, partner events, and neighborhood association meetings to understand other district's concerns.

5 people from District 1 that advocated for councilors to maintain a citywide perspective. Though some of their suggestions emphasize collaboration to resolve the disparity in community outcomes. These responses highlighted the need for councilors to work together to ensure resources and decision-making power was distributed equitably throughout the city and council.

- Accountability to the City, Not Special Interests: 4 responses emphasize the need for council members to be representative of the city's diverse interests and accountable to the community at-large rather than to special interests or developers advancing projects in specific areas around the city.

Specific Policy Priorities

20% of responses (32 people) to question 3 were advocating for specific policy priorities they want to see prioritized. Priorities included infrastructure projects focused on bike lanes, transit services, road maintenance, garbage removal, and emergency response. Policy priorities also include continuing efforts towards environmental sustainability, such as promoting green initiatives, technological progress, and supporting programs like Vision Zero and Climate Action. Finally, the responses also advocated for rapid response to the crisis of homelessness, public safety, and sanitation. Suggestions included calls for holistic and evidence-based approaches to addressing addiction, mental health, and crime issues.

Survey Question 4: What opportunities do you see for how and when public input is received by the future city council including future council committees?

Themes

City Council Engages Community for Input

31% of survey responses (48 people) wanted council to receive community input through engaging the community through events, forums, surveys, and social media platforms. Respondents highlight the importance of two-way communication between council members and residents to build trust and legitimacy in the decision-making process. The responses suggest that community engagement should not only involve soliciting input but also providing follow-up communication on how residents' feedback has been considered and acted upon. Respondents advocate for various forms of community engagement, such as holding neighborhood meetings, town hall sessions, and office hours, to make it easier for residents to participate in the decision-making process.

Public Input at Both City Council and in Committees

8% of responses (13 people) believe that providing input to both the full council and committees increases the opportunities for engage at various stages of decision-making. Additionally, providing input to both the full council and committees increases the forums where residents can provide feedback directly to decision-makers.

Public Input Through Council Committees

7.6% of responses (12 people) desire to give input directly to committees. These responses indicated that providing input in committees allows for public input to be received earlier in the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of meaningful consideration and impact on outcomes. A few expressed that committees provide a structured platform for information and testimonies on specific issues, enhancing transparency and accountability on the decision-makers. Additionally, responses noted that having separate committees dedicated to specific areas makes it easier for residents to access information and contribute opinions and suggestions on topics of interest. Finally, respondents advocate for the use of various channels for public input, including digital tools, surveys, and participatory budgeting, to accommodate diverse schedules, preferences, and communication needs of Portlanders.

Public Input to the City Council

4% of responses (6 people) noted their preference for providing input to the full council. Some responses emphasize the importance of providing input to the full council to ensure that all council members are aware of public perspectives and considerations when making decisions. There is a concern among some respondents that opportunities for public input might be limited if potential agenda items are not cleared by committees before reaching the full council agenda. Providing input to the full council ensures that public perspectives are considered even if they were not addressed in committee meetings. Despite recognizing the value of committees, some respondents highlight the significance of the full council in making final decisions. They advocate for providing input directly to the entire council to ensure that all members are informed and engaged in the decision-making process.

Survey Question 5: Council committees will be created to focus on specific policy areas or themes. What do you think is the most important thing for council to consider when creating a committee?

Themes

Representation on Council Committees

55% of survey responses (87 people) commented on the committee who should be represented on the future council committees. 26% of the survey respondents (40 people) advocated that committee membership is representative. This included geographic representation, where each committee has a mix of members from all four districts with diverse perspectives and lived experiences to ensure comprehensive decision-making. This also included representation of power, where each committee is equally empowered to produce politically viable recommendations. 15% of the respondents (23 people) suggested council committees should include key stakeholders with subject matter expertise. A few survey responses suggested committee membership be based on the councilor's expertise, while other responses suggested councilors should rotate committees to promote collaboration and unified approaches. An additional 15% of the respondents (24 people) believe committees should include community members most directly impacted by the issues. An elective process for nominating culturally specific leaders was suggested.

Equity and Anti-Racism

29% of the survey responders (46 people) indicated the importance of equitable representation, decision-making and policy outcomes when considering council committees. Most of these responses spoke to the importance of empowering marginalized groups to have meaningful representation and decision-making power on committees. This included ensuring individuals most impacted were members of the committee. Some of these comments expressed concern that agendas and decision-making could be dominated by the interests of the wealthy or powerful. Some of the comments suggested councilors should exemplify fair and ethical decision-making and suggested training or processes to achieve this. Finally, some of the comments suggested committees focus on achieving equitable outcomes. For example, equitable access to economic opportunities for marginalized communities.

Clear Criteria, Scope, and Guidelines for Committees

26% of the survey respondents (41 people) expressed the importance of committees having clear, measurable goals, outcomes, and timelines to ensure effectiveness and accountability. This included having well-defined scopes of work and expertise to avoid duplication of efforts between committees as well as between jurisdictions. Many commenters specifically noted that committee themes should focus on challenges within the city's responsibility and jurisdiction. They should avoid debating issues outside the city's influence and focus on areas where public input can make a meaningful impact. Commenters also noted committees should remain focused on policy outcomes rather than administrative implementation.

Accountability and Transparency

Accountability and transparency were similarly important to survey responders. 24% of the survey respondents (37 people) indicated the importance of accountability and 21% of survey responders (33 people) expressed the need for transparent decision-making. To achieve these outcomes, these responses emphasize the importance of establishing clear goals, measurable outcomes, and mechanisms for reporting progress to the public for the committees. Some of the suggestions included seeing how public input is used to inform decision-making, specifically in the budgeting process, and minimizing the influence of lobbyists with special access to the decision-making process. Many suggested adopting standard practices to link public comments to a policy as it goes through committees along with a transparent log of the decision-made and why. 5 people specifically noted that additional staff support, and dedicated council resources would be needed to ensure councilors could fulfill the community's expectations for transparency and accountability measures.

Responsive

22% of survey respondents suggested committee themes focus on responding to different needs around livability, public safety, and sustainability. Commenters expressed concerns that committees would get entrenched in bureaucratic processes. Instead, these comments would prefer committee topics to adapt and re-structure to respond to a public crisis like the state-wide housing emergency, the pandemic, or future natural disasters.

Coordination

30% of the survey responders (30 people) noted the need for coordination between the committees to ensure efficiency, transparency, and avoid becoming information silos. Survey responders noted the

inevitable policy area overlap of committees and the need for organized coordination between committees and policy areas. Ensuring a coordinated and accountable approach to disseminating public comments outside committees was also suggested.

Efficiency and Action

20% of the responses indicated the need for efficiency in the committees, ensuring they have the power and resources to make meaningful policy decisions that result in timely action. Some responses indicated their concern that too many committees would make council harder to engage in and lead to long decision-making processes. Others expressed their desire to see committees empowered with the financial resources and authority over relevant policy areas.

Committee Suggestions

18.5% of the surveyors' (29 people) suggested specific committee topics. Most of these suggestions focused on housing, public safety, and homelessness, which included sanitation and mental health. Additional suggested committee topics include labor, public relations, policing, and education. There were a few suggestions advocating for committees to be organized by services areas and a few advocating against this. Finally, multiple comments suggested committees organized by the city's day-to-day responsibilities.

Survey Question 6: Is there anything else you would like to share?

59% of survey responders reiterated their concerns, hopes, and suggestions related to the transition. Some of the main themes included reducing taxes and ensuring the new government is simple and efficient. Other suggestions were advocating for district offices, improving community engagement, and ensuring equitable representation and actions to address district needs. Some expressed concerns about feeling powerless through existing channels and emphasized the importance of educating the public on how to effect change in the new structure and how their input will be considered. One suggested deemphasizing service areas to the public to not confuse the public further on how to engage.

Concerns were raised about the budget process and staffing levels, particularly regarding the capacity of councilors to respond to constituents' needs effectively. Several respondents called for action on homelessness and public safety issues, advocating for solutions such as providing housing and rehabilitation services rather than criminalizing homelessness. There were also calls for cooperation with other entities, such as the county and Metro, to address these complex issues effectively. Finally, these survey responses provided feedback on the survey. This included a suggestion to improve the English captions of the recorded presentation video. Additionally, adding an Other option to the demographic's questions, as they noted seniors on fixed income and people living in multi-generational or multiple roommate/housemate settings are not included in the listed demographic groups.

COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS CONTENT ANALYSIS

On March 14, 19, and 21, 2024, the GTAC and Transition Team hosted three Community Listening Sessions for **54** people. During the Community Listening Sessions, participants got the opportunity to listen to an educational presentation on district and council operations (see Appendix A). Following the

presentation, participants joined small breakout groups to discuss their lived experience with the Portland City Council and hopes for the future council processes.

While listening session participants were asked the same 6 questions posed in the online survey, the type of feedback is slightly varied based on the method of engagement. The listening session format often fosters group brainstorming and problem solving around issues that are brought up. It is important to note that these suggestions are not based on consensus and, again, do not reflect the opinions of all Portlanders. The Community Listening Session revealed the following key themes.

Question 1: What is your experience accessing or contacting current city council members?

Themes

Accessibility and Responsiveness

The listening session participants described an inconsistency in the responsiveness of council members, both in terms of acknowledging communication and providing substantive responses. The participants shared a wide range of experiences communicating with council members, some receiving generic replies and others had detailed responses. The lack of opportunity to express concerns effectively was a source of frustration to some participants.

Accessibility to council varied based on factors such as the councilor's personality, election cycle, and willingness to engage. This experience was shared by those who have served on a city advisory body as well. A few participants noted the specific challenges accessing city council for immigrants and non-English speakers, like not knowing their voices are valued in decision-making processes and how to navigate the councils' processes of operations. Participants noted the need for a shift in the culture of city council operations towards greater transparency, consistency, and engagement with the community. This includes initiatives like consistent office hours, neighborhood-focused meetings, and clear communication channels. It was also suggested that council should provide clearer explanations of the city council structure and improving access to information and representatives.

Communication

The participants had various methods for contacting councilors, some included emails, public comments, attending meetings, and virtual options. Some participants noted their perception of in-person participation, like testifying, being more effective than virtual communication. Overall, limited communication was acknowledged as a challenge by participants and discouraged engagement. This included difficulty in finding information on council agendas, events, and how to engage with council. There were many suggestions on how council could improve their communication. Some of these suggestions include modeling communication strategies after access to state legislatures, with defined periods for council engagement, such as legislator days or office hours. These should be offered in-person and virtual to accommodate diverse preferences and circumstances. This could help increase transparency and ensure that residents know when councilors will be available for discussion, especially during the budget process or policy-heavy seasons. Finally, efforts should be made to improve access to information on council agendas and meetings.

Neighborhood Engagement

There's a perceived shift in community engagement, with concerns about the disassociation between neighborhood associations and the city. There's a desire for more two-way communication, akin to successful past initiatives like the Good Neighborhood Project. It was also noted that meetings should be held closer to where people live to increase attendance and engagement, making it easier for residents to participate in civic affairs.

Question 2: What are some challenges you face when trying to engage in or stay informed about topics you care about most?

Themes

Centralizing Communication

Similar to the online survey, a strong theme was the need to centralize communications and provide consistent updates to streamline information and reduce confusion. Some participants suggested periodic reports on priorities and progress from individual councilors and/or as a collective. Another suggestion was consolidating all the policies, policy directives, and how they relate on one website.

A concern was shared that without clear communication, the new committee structure might be too slow and complicated for community to follow the issues they care about. People suggested streamlined policy updates and culturally responsive guidelines for engaging with council. Additionally, including more explanations on how the system and procedures work, shared via website, newsletters and on social media to reach broader demographics. Finally, neighborhood associations and community organizations noted their desire for more equal support to stay informed and have meaningful impacts on city processes.

Addressing Accessibility Barriers

Addressing accessibility barriers was a theme of many break out conversations. Participants noted that the time and location of the council meetings makes it hard to participate. City Hall itself, with security guards, signs only in English, no welcoming staff make it very inaccessible. Additionally, the traveling and parking in downtown for East Portland residents makes it difficult to access. A challenge in the immigrant and refugee community is knowing that they can engage, and that the city wants their input. It was noted from two participants that even when their communities are interested, navigating the system is very difficult and intimidating, especially with language barriers.

To address these barriers, it was suggested that councilors should go into existing spaces where people gather instead of relying on people coming to City Hall. It was also noted that culturally responsive engagement should not be left up to the competency of the councilors. Instead, it was suggested that the council have a policy that standardizes competency and effort for all councilors. Also, providing summaries of council meetings, not just meeting notes to help people identify relevant information.

Question 3: What are your hopes for how your future city council members improve your district's outcomes and show up in your district? Consider the balance between time spent at city hall and in your district.

Themes

In-district Offices

There were varying opinions expressed about in-district offices. Those in favor expressed their disappointment that district offices were even in question, as they believe it was fundamental to the charter reform passed by voters. People expressed a desire to see councilors spend 75% of their time in-district and 25% at City Hall. Those opposed to in-district offices still shared the importance of councilors spending time in-district and understanding specific needs. However, some noted their concerns about the costs of the offices and security concerns.

Equitable Representation

Equitable representation was another theme of the listening sessions. Many expressed their hope that previously underserved neighborhoods would finally get representation. However, there was a concern that certain parts of districts might still get more attention. A participant asked if councilors would have measures of accountability for different parts of a district, like areas with vulnerable communities or concentrated population. There were also questions on how each district's three councilors will coordinate these roles amongst themselves.

Engagement

Participants strongly expressed a desire to see increased community engagement and two-way communication from future city councilors. Neighborhood associations, advisory bodies, and other place-based groups desire increased opportunities to engage in public forums. One outcome expressed was improving the perceived power dynamics between council and community members. Increased engagement and representation will hopefully improve the "us versus them" culture often used to describe participants experiences engaging with the City Council.

Policy Process

Finally, improving the policy process was noted in the listening sessions. Some participants expressed a desire to see community voices integrated more meaningfully early in the policy formation phase. Some saw committees as a helpful tool in bringing in community voices earlier and promote collaboration between bureaus and districts.

Question 4: What opportunities do you see for how and when public input is received by the future city council including future council committees?

Themes

Community Engagement and Verification

Listening session participants emphasized that the community should have ample space and ability to engage on both agenda and non-agenda items. There was a desire for policies to be verified with the community before they are finalized. There's a call for increased education about civic engagement, both through formal education in schools and through public outreach efforts such as social media campaigns and suggestion boxes placed in districts.

Improving Public Comment Procedures

Some participants favor the idea of engaging with committees directly as it allows them to address the decision-makers on specific topics. However, there's concern about confusion regarding which committee to approach for cross-cutting issues. Some suggested the Clerk or council staff should play a bigger role in helping direct people to the right committee or opportunity to share input. Many participants appreciate the ability to give public testimony virtually, recognizing it as a game-changer that should be retained. They suggest using software to facilitate virtual comments and ensuring that online questions are brought into public conversations.

There's a need for clear and transparent processes for public input, including clear agendas, accessible avenues for giving input, and reliable channels for communication with council committees. Some participants express concerns about the opaque nature of written testimony and the limitations of the current public comment format. They emphasize the need for improved systems that ensure councilors read and respond to written testimony and provide opportunities for meaningful public engagement. Suggestions include revising the current format of public comment to allow for more flexibility, such as extending the time available for comments or allowing for reflections and additional comments on agenda items.

Question 5: Council committees will be created to focus on specific policy areas or themes. What do you think is the most important thing for council to consider when creating a committee?

Themes

Committee Subject Matter Expertise and Representation

Most participants shared the belief that council committees required resources and access to subject matter expertise. Some suggested committees require access to nonpartisan research staff to provide unbiased information and expertise. Additionally, council leadership and staff should assist in organizing committee structures and operations. Other suggested councilors need to have the necessary knowledge, background, and resources to effectively serve on specific committees. It was also suggested that each district should be represented on committees, ensuring diversity of backgrounds, opinions, and expertise.

Clear Topics and Purpose

Participants shared that committees should have well-defined topics and specific tasks, avoiding meetings for the sake of meeting. Committees should collaborate to avoid redundancy, with clear charters outlining mission, vision, and values. Finally, it was suggested that legislative questions should be evenly distributed among committees to prevent overload and ensure balanced focus.

Committee Themes

There were a few suggestions on committee topics shared at the listening sessions. Some participants prefer committees to be aligned with legislative needs rather than replicating service areas. Others brainstormed that committees can be organized around desired outcomes, such as affordable housing or sustainable infrastructure, to address interconnected issues effectively. Finally, it was suggested that

some committees may be short-lived, modeled after task-oriented groups that research specific issues and disband after completion.

Question 6: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Theme

Community Engagement

Emphasis is placed on providing ample opportunities for community engagement throughout the policy development process, beyond just interactions with the council. Views vary on the necessity of district offices, with some expressing concerns about cost and security, while others see them as valuable assets for community engagement. There's a desire for closer integration between neighborhood associations and City Hall, seeing them as conduits for engaging with councilors. It's emphasized that community stakeholders, particularly neighborhood associations, should be engaged early in the process to ensure they are informed and involved at each step. Suggestions include direct communication channels between the transition team and neighborhood associations.

PUBLIC COMMENT CONTENT ANALYSIS

The public is invited to comment through the Portland Transition Team's online comment form, email, and verbal public comment. From March 8 to April 4, 2024, the Portland Transition Team received **7** public comments on districts and council operations.

Themes

District Office for District 1

Two of the comments were advocating for a District 1 office for the future city councilors. These comments highlighted the importance of equitable representation and accessibility for residents, particularly those in traditionally underrepresented areas.

Council's Lack of Responsiveness, Communication and Transparency

One of the commenters echoed many of the other comments received in this engagement period, noting the general lack of responses from the Mayor and City Council. The commenter suggested the city council integrate a constituent management software to increase the accountability and coordination of responding to Portlanders. Another commenter shared the challenge with the lack of centralized communication on council agendas, policies, and long-term projects. Finally, the frustration with limited advanced warning before decisions are made.

City Council Onboarding

Two public comments advocated for comprehensive onboarding education on the budget development processes and city operations for future city councilors. Another comment suggested new council onboarding include "level-setting" information on all the deliberations and interactions the new council will face in their first few months. The commenter suggested covering topics like external factors/drivers,

interrelationships, trends, issues/challenges, etc. (e.g., population dynamics/migration, economic growth trends, etc.), the city's financial situation and multi-year sustainability projections.

Council Staff

One comment raised concerns about the proposed centralized council staff reporting structure, which would have council staff reporting to the city administrator. This comment advocated for council staff to report directly to the council, ensuring independence and separation of powers between the legislative and executive branches.

Council Committees and the Policy Process

One public comment advocated for greater operational specificity regarding council committees' scope and function, including how they guide and review policy proposals and interact with the mayor's office. Suggestions include leveraging committees earlier in the policy development process to build subject matter knowledge among council members and streamline decision-making. Another commenter advocated for defining policy roles across branches and specifying the functions and roles of council committees.

City Council Engages Community for Input

The final comment provided suggestions for how to raise Portlanders general awareness on council issues. The commenter suggested public engagement and input should happen beyond council and committee meeting. Boards, commission, and administrative hearings were suggested as other avenues to collect public input.

EMPLOYEE TOWNHALL AND BRIEFINGS CONTENT ANALYSIS

On March 18, 19 and 21, 2024, the Charter Transition Team hosted virtual town halls and one briefing to the Citywide Equitable Engagement group on transition updates. In total, these 4 presentations were given to 1,521 city employees. The themes and most asked questions from the events are summarized below.

Themes

Role Clarity and Expectations

There were multiple questions about city employees running for council positions and the roles and responsibilities of various positions.

"What are the mechanisms for accountability between Council and the Mayor that the Mayor and their City Administrator/Deputy City Administrators overseeing Directors and their Bureaus faithfully execute City policy set by Council? This is already an issue where the City does not follow its Core Values especially regarding Anti-Racism, Transparency and Equity." (12 votes)

"Often when people leave political office (at national level), they are barred from serving in lobbying or advocacy roles. Is something similar going to be in place for current City Hall staff? Particularly I'm

wondering about whether staff who are in political roles will be barred from moving to city admin focused roles for a period of time, to stay true to the intent of the voters?" (9 votes)

Council Committees: Policy Development and Decision-making Processes

There were questions about the structure and function of Council committees, including whether they will include non-councilors, how policies are identified, the timeline for approval and the potential impact on the day-to-day operations.

"How many committees may a policy need to go through potentially, if that is the route decided?" (8 votes)

"If a Bureau needs to bring code or ordinance changes to City Council for approval, does the new system mean that those changes will go through a specific committee and then to council for approval? If so, does this lengthen the timeline for items like fee changes or code changes? Or will those kinds of things be fast-tracked?" (9 votes)

Transition and Implementation

Employees were asking about the intended outcomes of the transition and seeking clarification on the hiring timeline for key personnel like the City Administration, and the impact on existing staff.

"The public will only be able to "come to the table" only after officials determine if an item is worth voting on? Doesn't seem transparent (core value)" (9 votes) "I'm still having trouble with the big picture. Everything in our agencies seem to be staying the same. We'll be in a group of agencies that also are staying the same. There doesn't seem to be any consolidation of services throughout the city like purchasing, communications, and business services. What I see is two new layers of high paid bureaucracy. Am I missing something? I also have heard a rumor that the Deputy City Administrators will be brought on for a single year with a \$200,000 severance at the end of the year, each. Is that actually true?" (11 votes)

Community Engagement and Participation

There were multiple questions about public participation, digital tools for engagement and the role of neighborhood associations.

"The public will only be able to "come to the table" only after officials determine if an item is worth voting on? Doesn't seem transparent (core value)" (9 votes)

"Historically, public input has been more of a lip service and input isn't seriously considered by the council. How can we guarantee that community voices aren't being dismissed?" (8 votes)

APPENDIX A: Educational Presentation

PowerPoint used for the educational presentation given the listening sessions, townhalls, briefing, and embedded as a recorded video in the online survey.