



Portland Transition

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Monthly Community Engagement Status Update: March 2024

Purpose

This monthly status update gives an overview of community engagement activities related to the government transition, highlighting progress toward engagement goals, themes from public comment, activities by the Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC), and upcoming milestones.

Summary of engagement activities

Table 1: Engagement activities to-date

Engagements	March 2024	Total to-date (since Nov. 2022)	Transition projections to March 2025
Community survey responses	77	702	600
Transition newsletter signups	32	3271	3,665
Community listening sessions & workshops	3	9	7
Participants at listening sessions	54	513	250
Public comments received	11	2,658	2,000
Hours of verbal public comment	0	19.61	37
Public meetings and hearings	6	120	100
Briefings and presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those done by GTAC 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8/10 	107 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 67/107 	126 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 126
Policy discussions with community organizations	0	40	60
Employee townhall meetings	2	8	18
Employee attendance per townhall topic	1,491	1,558	1,100
Media coverage	13	278	200



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Public comment

The public is invited to comment through our online comment form, email, and verbal public comment. From March 1 to 31, 2024, the Portland Transition Team received **11** public comments.

This month's public comments were driven by the launch of the Portland Votes 2024 program, future districts and council operations engagement efforts, and GTAC's Budget Work Group meeting.

Topic	March 2024 (% of comments received)	Total to-date (since Nov 2022)
Community education & engagement	55%	7%
Service delivery & bureau management (including city organization chart)	36%	34%
Form of government (including roles and responsibilities of elected officials)	36%	20%
City budgeting, resource allocation, participatory budgeting	18%	7%
Geographic districts	18%	42%
Other	18%	2%
Rank-choice voting	9%	3%
Transition management	9%	4%
Salaries of city leaders	0%	18%
Number of comments	11	2,658

Big questions raised and themes

The following themes emerged from public comment, public meetings, and community briefings and presentations in March 2024. Note that all public comment is available in the [March 2024 public comment report](#).



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Public comment. The comments received in the month of March advocated for in-district offices for District 1, improved constituent engagement efforts, suggestions for GTAC's Budget Work Group and City Council operations improvements.

Two of the comments strongly advocated for in-district offices for District 1, emphasizing the importance of equitable representation and accessibility for residents, particularly those in traditionally underrepresented areas. Two comments were inquiring about the City's engagement processes. One comment was inquiring about the city's efforts to educate and prepare citizens for upcoming changes in the voting system. Concerns are voiced about the sufficiency of the announced grant program and whether additional initiatives are planned for comprehensive voter education. Another comment offered suggestions for implementing constituent management systems to improve communication and responsiveness from elected officials.

Two of the public comments provided feedback to GTAC's Budget Work Group. Comments suggested broadening the scope of the working group to include onboarding new council members, providing public education on budget matters, and incorporating public input sessions in various districts. There is also a suggestion about the role of advisory boards and committees in facilitating public participation.

Comments regarding City Council Operations included recommendations for city council onboarding, the centralized council staff reporting structure, and council committees. Public comments advocated for comprehensive education and onboarding for new council members, particularly regarding budget development processes and city operations. One of the commenters advocated for defining policy roles across branches and specifying the functions and roles of council committees.

Another 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. Finally, one public comment advocated for greater 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.

Public meetings. There were five public meetings of the Government Transition Advisory Committee and one public meeting of city council.

GTAC meetings included the following:

- One special meeting (topic included scoping recommended improvements to community engagement).



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- One meeting of the Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee (topics included public feedback on ranked choice voting; review of the new City website on voting; RCV outreach and messaging before the May primary; and subgrant outreach).
- One full regular meeting (topics included scoping recommended improvements to community engagement; onboarding recommendations; and district offices recommendations). As a result, GTAC approved three sets of recommendations:
 - [Onboarding recommendations](#)
 - [District offices recommendations](#)
 - [Recommended improvements to community engagement](#)
- One meeting of the Budget Workgroup (topics included community engagement goals; peer city research; and stakeholder engagement).
- One meeting of the Districts + Council Operations Subcommittee (topics included next steps for existing recommendations; community engagement update; and reflections on engagement).

City Council actions included the following:

- Assign certain program functions to Commissioners-in-Charge in anticipation of the future service area realignment to support transition to the mayor-council form of government (Emergency Ordinance) (Passed).

Community briefings and presentations. The Government Transition Advisory Committee held seven community briefings and presentations including three Parkrose High School government classes, two neighborhood serving groups – Friendly House and Boise Neighborhood Association, Venture Portland, residents of Terwilliger Plaza, and one presentation in Spanish to Oregon Child Development Coalition staff who work with Spanish-speaking families.

Two presentations were conducted by transition staff for the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization and North Tabor Neighborhood Association.

Community Listening Sessions & Survey. There were three identical community listening sessions on future council operations. Initial data analysis, based on the listening sessions and first 44 surveys, shows the following themes:

- Challenges engaging with city council or staying informed about topics: responsiveness and accessibility of the councilors; transparency and meaningful engagement in the decision-making process; and lack of centralized platforms, leading to information overload and inconsistencies.
- Hopes for future city councilors improving district outcomes and showing up in their districts: active presence in the district, addressing district-specific challenges; and citywide perspective and collaboration with other district councilors.



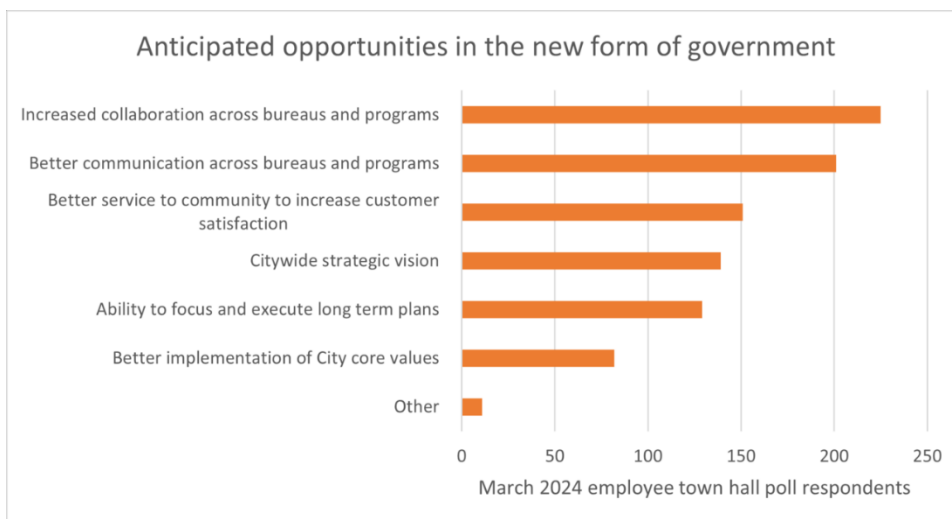
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- Opportunities for how and when public input is received by the future city council and committees: diverse community engagement events; accountable and meaningful public input in committees; and transparent decision-making.
- Considerations for developing council committees: committee composition; transparent and clear committee scope and processes; and effective communications.

Employee Townhalls. There were two identical townhalls focused on council operations, transition ambassadors program, and opportunities of change. Key questions from employees included: (1) role clarity and expectations – questions about city employees running for council and the roles and responsibilities of various positions; (2) 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 day-to-day operations; (3) transition and implementation – employees asked about the intended outcomes of the transition and seeking clarification on the hiring timeline for key personnel like the city administrator and the impact on existing staff; and (4) community engagement and participation – questions about public participation, digital tools for engagement, and the role of neighborhood associations.

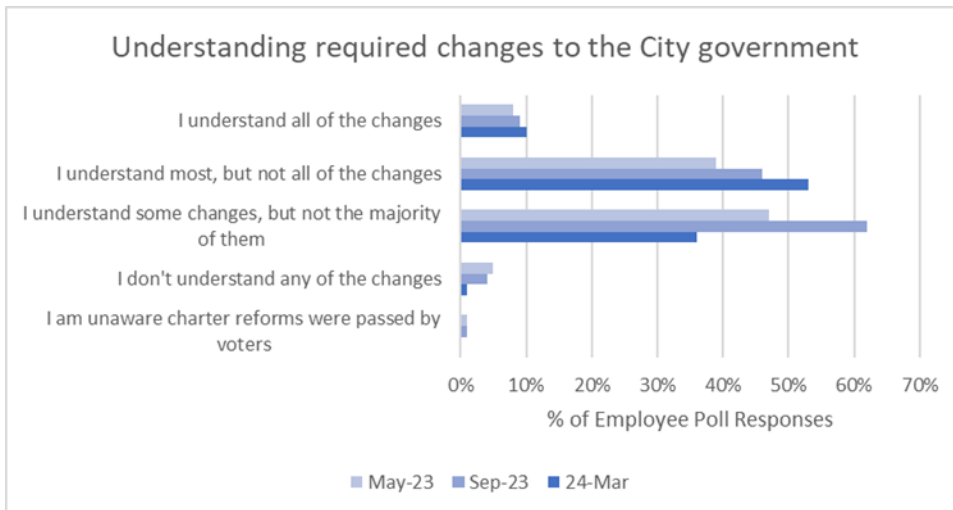
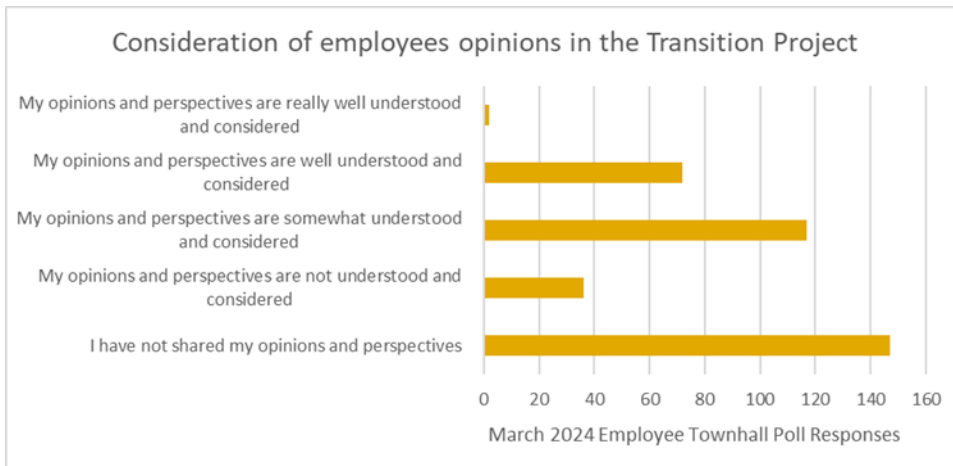
There were several poll questions with results below.





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Demographics

Collecting demographic data allows us to understand the representation of historically underrepresented communities in City Hall and decision-making processes. We gather this data with a commitment to collecting only necessary information, ensuring its value to the City and the communities we serve.

The City collects zip codes from public commenters, but this information is optional and **3** commenters provided this information.



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Table 3: Public comments received by geography

Location	March 2024 Public Comment	Total Public Comment (Since April 2023)	Portland Population
North/Northeast Portland	0%	23%	28%
Southeast Portland	0%	43%	25%
East Portland	67%	7%	24%
West Portland	33%	18%	23%
Portland-Metropolitan area	0%	7%	N/A
Other Oregon cities outside metropolitan area	0%	2%	N/A
Outside of Oregon	0%	0%	N/A
Number of commenters with geographic data	3	1,162	
% of comments sharing geographic data	27%	44%	

Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC) engagement

GTAC is the primary public engagement body for the transition, advising on the Transition Plan's development and implementation. Committed to augmenting the City's engagement strategy, members actively engage with the community by providing at least two education or engagement opportunities each quarter outside of City-hosted events from June 2023 to March 2025.

Individuals and groups engaged

GTAC members reported engagement with the following individuals and groups in March 2024:

- Friendly House
- Terwilliger Plaza
- Government classes (3) at Parkrose High School students
- NW District Association
- Venture Portland



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- Oregon Child Development Coalition staff
- Individuals
 - Nanci Champlin, SE Uplift
 - Allison Stoll, Central Northeast Neighbors

Transition team members reported engagement with the following groups in March 2024:

- Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization
- North Tabor Neighborhood Association

New opportunities for engagement or barriers to engagement

GTAC reported the following reflections as new opportunities for engagement or barriers to engagement identified as part of their outreach efforts this month:

- Opportunities
 - NW Place, possible presentation with new contact
 - Asking Parkrose high school students if they'd want to get out the vote activity if the county and city are interested in high schools
- Future presentations
 - Voter education presentations at Terwilliger Plaza, Boise Neighborhood Association, Venture Portland, and Oregon Child Development Coalition staff who work with Spanish-speaking families
 - Presentations at businesses like US Bank

Big Themes or Questions

- Voting and 2024 election
 - How a large number of candidates would appear on the ballot
 - Why the primary has been eliminated
 - Addressing overvotes and undervotes
 - Voter education plans including what channels the city will be using, funds being spent on underrepresented groups and mainstream
 - How multiple candidates are elected through the voting process
 - Background on the form of RCV in Portland
 - Concerns people will question the validity of ranked-choice voting tabulations
 - Interest in peer cities using ranked-choice voting
 - High school students excited to vote, don't have to unlearn single-vote system and understand ranking their choices
- Mayor / City Administrator



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- Difference between a manager and an administrator
- Hiring and appointments of executive-level positions
- Civic Life and District Coalition Offices (DCOs)
 - Future of DCOs including Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods
 - Some felt favorable forming neighborhood coalitions along district lines
- City Organization
 - How will reorganization impact homelessness and substance use disorder (SUD)
- Districts
 - How to find your district
 - Implications of redistricting on bylaws of neighborhood organizations and other regulatory processes

Upcoming transition decisions

The following actions and milestones serve as a reference to promote early engagement.

- Development of the Mayor's proposed budget to support the implementation of ballot measure 26-228. Community listening sessions will be hosted by the Citywide Budget Office, on April 10, 13, 15. Mayor releases proposed budget on May 2, 2024.