

## CHAPTER V

## SOUL SEARCHING AND DECLINE—1990s

The 1990s were a time of “soul searching” (Witt) and some decline in Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system. A number of different processes examined the purpose and functioning of the system and recommended ways to expand and strengthen it. At the same time, important community involvement programs, which had been part of the system since it was founded in the 1970s, were ended. Community members increasingly complained that city leaders and staff just gave lip service to community involvement and were not involving community members in ways that would allow them to meaningfully affect city government priorities and decisions.

At the beginning of the decade Bud Clark’s community visioning process know as Portland Future Focus (PFF) developed a number of goals and action steps that would influence city government thinking for many years. These included calls to strengthen civic leadership, increase the diversity of people involved in civic life and the neighborhood system, and ensure healthy and vigorous neighborhoods.

In 1992, at the request of ONA Commissioner-in-charge Gretchen Kafoury, former city commissioner Margaret Strachan led a series of focus groups that discussed adapting neighborhood association activities to fit the PFF agenda. Strachan’s final report offered a number of recommendations to strengthen the neighborhood system and strengthen community involvement in Portland. Strachan went on to work with other neighborhood activists to create 1993 Neighborhood Congress at which neighborhood leaders identified their own set of priorities for the system.

A year after the Neighborhood Congress, the City Council created the Task Force on Neighborhood Involvement (TFNI), which undertook the most extensive review of Portland neighborhood involvement system since it was created in the mid 1970s. The TFNI submitted its report to City Council in 1996. The report presented a valuable assessment of what was working well and what was not and recommended many different actions to improve the system. At the same time that the TFNI was doing its work, city bureau staff, neighborhood and community activists, and ONA staff worked together to develop a set of public involvement principles for city government and a community outreach handbook to help city staff more effectively involve the community in the city's work.

In 1998, the City Council adopted a revised set of ONA Guidelines that implemented some of the TFNI recommendations, including changing the name of the Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA) to the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI).

Despite all the good work of these different review processes to identify how to strengthen and expand the neighborhood and community involvement system, little progress was made during the 1990s to implement many of these recommendations. At the same time these processes were examining how to strengthen community involvement in Portland, some key programs that had given community members a voice in important city government decisions since the founding of the system in the mid 1970s were discontinued, including the Budget Advisory Committees, the Neighborhood Needs

Process, and City staff and funding support for neighborhoods to create neighborhood plans.

Community members repeatedly complained that city leaders and staff were just giving “lip service” to community involvement and not involving community members in ways in which they could meaningfully affect government priorities and decisions. Long-time neighborhood activist and former ONA employee Lee Perlman was angry enough about what he saw as the deterioration of the neighborhood system to compose a strong critique of the system for the delegates who came from all over the country to Portland for the 1998 Neighborhoods USA conference.

Important themes that emerged from the “soul searching” processes of the 1990s were the need to strengthen support for the existing neighborhood system, the need reach out to and involve a greater diversity of people and community organizations, and the need to improve the willingness and capacity of city leaders and staff to work with the community.

This chapter describes and reviews the processes mentioned above and closes with an overview of the key themes and priorities of Portland Mayor Vera Katz mayor’s budget messages from 1993 to 1999, especially as they relate to community involvement and Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system.

### 1990 Portland Future Focus

In his second term, in 1990, Bud Clark initiated a broad and inclusive strategic planning process for Portland called “Portland Future Focus.”<sup>28</sup> A committee of 55

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<sup>28</sup> Mayor Bud Clark served as the vice chair of Portland Future Focus.

community members led what the group's final report billed as "the city's first community-wide strategic planning process" to plan for Portland's future in the face of the community's changing role in the state and region" (Portland Future Focus 6).

Portland Future Focus had five objectives:

- "Educate the community about what the future holds...unless we change current trends."
- "Create a vision of what Portlanders want their community to be in the next decade. "
- "Identify the major changes needed to achieve our community vision. "
- "Forge partnerships between governments, businesses, community organizations, and other interests to find solutions to common problems. "
- "Build an action plan for the next three to five years to be implemented by the community organizations most suited to accomplish necessary changes" (Portland Future Focus 6).

The Portland Future Focus planning process recognized a number of changing dynamics in Portland—rapid population and economic growth in the region, increasing diversity in Portland's population, including rapid growth in "minority, elderly, and special needs populations," growing concern about protecting quality of life and Portland's livability, high levels of hate crimes and gang crime in Portland, and the need to diversify the local economy and prepare for and attract new jobs in the community (Portland Future Focus 6).

After 16 months of work and broad community input, the Portland Future Focus committee adopted a final plan that included 25 strategic goals. The goals included reducing crime and violence and better supporting victims, embracing diversity and eliminating bigotry, capitalizing on Portland's Pacific Rim location to increase trade, seeking family-wage jobs and training people for them, graduating all children from high school "with the ability to read, write, compute and reason," and managing regional growth to provide services efficiently, improve the environment and enhance quality of life, and strengthen citizen leadership in Portland (Kiyomura. *Oregonian*, August 3, 1991).

Portland Future Focus built on a number of different values, some of which related directly to community involvement and Portland's neighborhood involvement system. The plan affirmed that facets of the community need to work together to achieve the community's goals, emphasized the right of all Portlanders to "physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing," and affirmed Portland's civic culture as "a city of healthy, vigorous neighborhoods where residents participate in community life and feel a sense of belonging and involvement" (Portland Future Focus 21).

The PFF Committee issued its final report in August 1991. The committee listed ten community values it had developed from input from a community survey. The three values that relate most directly to this study include:

- **Diversity:** "We value an open and friendly community that is free from bigotry and intimidation. We value a community that welcomes and respects the individuality, unique talents, and contributions of all people

regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental ability, or financial means” (Portland Future Focus 20).

- **Good Government:** “We value open, honest government that is responsive to its citizens. We value strong, create leadership by elected officials and private citizens willing to empower and work with the entire community to shape Portland’s future. We value cooperative approaches to problems that extend beyond Portland’s boundaries.”
- **Sense of Community:** “We value a city of healthy, vigorous neighborhoods where residents participate in community life and feel a sense of belonging and involvement” (21).

The PFF report presented twenty-five strategic goals. The three PFF goals that relate most to this study include:

- **“Build stronger, innovative, more responsive elected and citizen leadership.** Effective leadership at both grass roots and institutional levels is vital to healthy communities. Leadership talent must be consciously nurtured in community organizations as well as city and regional governments. To do this, civic and political organizations must provide leadership opportunities and training. This training should be an ongoing process that begins in the schools” (30).
- **“To embrace and celebrate diversity and eliminate bigotry, enhancing the sense of community.** Existing diversity in the people of Portland and continuing changes in the demographic makeup of its work force will

require that the people who live and work here accept and value the differences in their fellow citizens and workers. It will be important to the economic health of our city for us to get along with one another and to work well together. Our world is increasingly a ‘global village.’ If we want to adequately prepare our children to operate effectively within that village, we must prepare them to live and work with people different from themselves. To do this, we must make a concerted effort to alter those attitudes about differences which create ill will and conflict. Portland should be known as an open and friendly community that welcomes and respects the individuality, unique talents, and contributions of all people regardless of age, race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, physical or mental ability, or financial means” (31).

- **“Ensure that each neighborhood is healthy and vigorous.** The well-being of the city starts with the condition of its neighborhoods. City and community leaders should support healthy neighborhoods by promoting safe and decent housing, economic activity that provides well paying jobs, crime prevention and control and community policing, quality schools and children’s services, successful small businesses in neighborhood commercial zones, accessible social services for all ages, transportation alternatives to the automobile, recreation opportunities through parks, park programs and open space, diversity of the resident population, and strong neighborhood-based organizations” (33).

The PFF Committee established action plans for six topic areas—Crime, Diversity, Economy, Education, Leadership and Managing Growth. A number of the action items in these plans specifically were directed to or required action by neighborhood associations, community groups, and ONA. The PFF Committee saw that the successful implementation of the plan would require broad participation and insisted that “Every citizen and group can and should have a meaningful role in implementing the action plans” (30).

**Crime Action Plan:** The Crime Action Plan recognized that “Crime is a community problem which can best be prevented and reduced by the entire community pooling and coordinating resources.” “Neighborhoods and individuals” must be empowered and provided tools” so that communities can “help themselves” (40). “The City and its citizens must enter into a contract under which the citizens are empowered to participate in defining and addressing problems and in helping to develop strategies for solving crime” and develop a “working partnership between citizens and government. “The Crime Action Plan recommended the full implementation of Portland’s [at that time new] community policing program, a core element of which was “close cooperation among police, citizens and neighborhoods to identify and prevent potential crime problems” (42).

The Crime Action Plan also recommended that ONA and the neighborhood district coalition boards join with the mayor’s office to identify and inventory the factors in each neighborhood that contribute to crime and to “develop a neighborhood plan to deal with those factors.” The plan also recommended that neighborhood groups

participate in a Community Safety Steering Committee that would recommend priorities for the justice system and recommended that all city and county employees receive training to help them understand and appreciate social and cultural differences—Southeast Uplift neighborhood district office’s “Unlearning Racism” training was cited as a model.

**Diversity Action Plan:** The Diversity Action Plan stressed that the “celebration of diversity should be infused throughout the six action plans.”<sup>29</sup> The action plan recommended that city policies and practices be revised “to make the City of Portland a leader in embracing diversity.” Related action items included changing the city government workforce to better reflect the demographics of the community and “aggressively” reaching out “to diverse populations in the community” and including “them in all City activities.” Some key objectives of this overall strategy included:

- “Establish an on-going watch dog group to monitor action item[s] of this plan.”
- “Examine government policies to determine if they are consistent and fair to all groups.”
- “Provide tools for government to evaluate their policies impacts on all populations in Portland.”
- “Equip organizations with tools to deal with discrimination and bigotry more effectively” (Portland Future Focus 57).

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<sup>29</sup> The PFF’s finding that the “celebration of diversity” should infuse all six PFF action plans was similar to the determination in another Portland citywide strategic planning process 30 years later, known as the Portland Plan, that asserted that achieving greater “equity” in Portland should be an overarching value and influence all the other elements of that strategic planning effort.

Implementation actions included the establishment of a “Diversity Focus Group” made up of “advocates and members of each diverse community” to “monitor and update” the action tasks; study of the “feasibility of establishing human impact criteria for evaluating program, policy, budget, and comprehensive planning decisions at City Council, commission, and bureau and neighborhood levels;” broadening “mediation training in such community institutions as the Police Bureau, neighborhood offices, businesses, and schools.....” implementing “a revised affirmative action” and was to include “guidelines for hiring and appointing all levels of City and County staff and volunteer boards” specially noted were “neighborhood coalitions and organizations” and “citizen steering committees, boards, and commissions” and evaluations of city managers “regarding diversity” (Portland Future Focus 57).

The plan also recommended the expansion of “anti-racism training like that used by Southeast Uplift” and an increase in “awareness of community resources available” to support diversity including sharing and expanding existing “cultural and social diversity training programs” in Portland (Portland Future Focus 58). Other action recommendations included: publishing a resource guide “for and about diverse groups” and encouraging “city ethnic associations and other groups to inform the public of their groups goals and activities,” annual progress reports, expansion of the role of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission to include “documentation of hate crimes, action alerts and education programs,” and creation of a “public relations and media campaign to help Portlanders build a strong community that understands and celebrates the diversity of its citizens” (58-59). ONA, neighborhood coalition offices, and

neighborhood organizations were identified as responsible parties or resources for many of these action items.

**Building Leadership Action Plan:** The other action plan area that included major roles and responsibilities for ONA and neighborhood organizations was the “Building Leadership Action Plan.” PFF proposed a vision of “strong, accountable leaders” and “innovative partnerships between government, schools, business and community organizations” that would “help the community set priorities and direct limited resources to solve the most pressing problems.” This action plan also emphasized that “Portland’s leaders will come from all segments of its population” (Portland Future Focus 108).

The Building Leadership Action Plan argued that “Leaders must also recognize that the nature of community decision-making is shifting from a centralized, hierarchical structure to a collective citizen base. Power is widely held in Portland rather than concentrated in a handful of elected or corporate leaders.” Without leaders who “understand these realities and possess leadership skills, Portland will struggle with the problems and opportunities it faces in the coming decade” (Portland Future Focus 108). The Plan recognized Portland’s history of active community participation in civic and government affairs and stressed that providing “adequate training for and access to leadership” would allow the community to “help ensure a healthy future.”

The plan identified critical guiding principles. These include the importance of leaders being “responsive to and accountable to their constituents,” “person-to-person interaction” as vital to “accessing and securing diverse citizen participation and

ownership of a community vision,” active involvement in shaping the future as critical source of new leaders, the importance of direct participate of “all socio-economic, cultural, racial and ethnic groups, to the success of a community vision and the need for the vision to “speak to the needs of these groups,” and the need for “training, support, and removal of structural barriers to leadership” to empower and encourage new leaders” (Portland Future Focus 108).

The plan also highlighted obstacles that would need to be overcome to achieve the goal of building “stronger, more innovative, more responsive citizen and elected leadership.” These included:

- “A reluctance to share power with those who are not currently empower.”
- “Cynicism about the ability to affect change.”
- “Distrust of those in power.”
- “Lack of training, experience and resources to attain positions of leadership” (Portland Future Focus 108).

The Building Leadership Action Plan proposed strategies and actions focused on leadership training, youth involvement, reducing barriers to involvement in leadership in government bodies and neighborhood associations, increased participation in leadership by “ethnic, cultural and social” groups, and the use of community dialogues.

The plan called for a greater awareness of regional coordination of leadership training opportunities, especially for “age groups and populations that aren’t typically identified as sources of leaders.” The plan recommended that existing training resources—including organizations, individuals and leadership opportunities—in the

community be inventoried and that a list of leadership trainings offerings be produced semi-annually. The plan also called for the development of stronger “curriculum on local and state government for grades K-12” (Portland Future Focus 110).

A special focus on bringing more young people into leadership included proposed actions such as increased support for involving students on government “advisory boards and commissions,” the creation of a “mentor program for new and emerging leaders,” scholarships for training programs, and the establishment of “the Youth Leadership Forum to allow people under 30 to become involved in relevant community issues.”

The action plan emphasized the need to reduce barriers to elected office—including the financing of city council campaigns and the city-wide election of council members, but also specifically raised the need to periodically evaluate and improve the outreach by neighborhood and community organizations. The plan called for periodic evaluation of neighborhood associations based on the Standards and Guidelines adopted in 1987 and the original ordinance that created the neighborhood system. The plan recommended that these evaluations focus on:

- “Democratic process of decision making;”
- “Public awareness of neighborhood issues and activities;”
- “Public awareness of other groups involved in neighborhood issues;”
- “Regular disclosure of the results of these evaluations;” and
- Neighborhood association focus on responding to the “needs of residents rather than those of City government” (Portland Future Focus 110).

The Building Leadership Action Plan also reinforced the Diversity Action Plan recommendations by recognizing a “lack of participation by African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, native Americans and other ethnic, cultural and social groups in community affairs.” The plan maintained that the “community loses by not taking advantage of the full potential, diverse perspectives, and varied approaches to problem solving from all members of the community.” Changing demographics made the “need for diverse participation even more important.” Barriers cited to this increased participation included “a reluctance among entrenched leaders to share power, racial, ethnic and cultural prejudice; and cynicism of members of minority communities” (Portland Future Focus 111).

The proposed actions included:

- Evaluation of the “extent and effectiveness of outreach to diverse groups by community organizations.”
- Promotion of “outreach by organizations that are not successful in gaining diverse participation.”
- Encouragement of “businesses, governments, colleges, foundations, and non-profits” to “appoint members of diverse groups to board and advisory bodies.”
- Measurement of the “degree of change in diversity in subsequent years.”
- Creation of an “annual award program that recognizes leadership by organizations in social and community issues” (Portland Future Focus 111).

This action plan also recognized that increasing participation and building leadership skills in advanced by involving community members in dialogue and

deliberation processes and building community leadership leaders skills through opportunities to discuss, debate, build consensus and implement a community vision.

Portland Future Focus provided Portlander leaders and activists with an important assessment of challenges and opportunities facing the city. The final report identified particular challenges, strategic goals, and action items related to improving community involvement in civic life and local decision making in Portland. One of the related themes was the need to work toward creating a shared governance culture in Portland with broad involvement in setting priorities, development solutions and leveraging community energy and resources in implementing them. PFF recognized that achieving this would require strengthening the leadership capacity of individuals and organizations across the city through expanded and better coordinated leadership training opportunities. PFF also strongly called for increased recognition of the growing diversity in Portland and the need for special efforts by neighborhood associations and other community organizations and by city government to more effectively reach out to and involve the community as a whole and especially historically underrepresented communities.

While the good work of the PFF committee did not lead to many immediate changes in Portland neighborhood and community involvement system, many of the PFF issues and recommendations were re-identified and validated by future review efforts. The PFF recommendations also helped provide valuable context and direction to two particular review processes—a 1992 focus group analysis by Margaret Strachan and the work of the 1995-1996 Neighborhood Involvement Task Force.

### 1992 Margaret Strachan Report

Following the release of the Portland Future Focus report in 1991, Witt reports that Portland's neighborhood system went through a period of tension and "soul searching" from 1991-1993. Witt describes efforts by City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury and ONA director Rachel Jacky to establish greater control by ONA over the district coalitions and to redirect the focus of the neighborhood system toward Commissioner Kafoury's and Jacky's agenda of "assisting dis-enfranchised groups" (Witt 167) and implementing the goals of Portland Future Focus related to crime prevention, diversity and leadership.

Witt documents that these efforts met significant resistance from the neighborhood district coalition boards (DCBs). He describes tensions between ONA and the DCBs over contract negotiations in 1991 and 1992 as ONA attempted to centralize ONA's control of the system and to increase the consistency of expectations across the district coalitions and neighborhoods. A particular point of contention related to the DCBs use of their crime prevention staff positions. DCB staff chose to have these positions to support a number of other neighborhood support functions. Portland Police wanted these positions to focus more exclusively on crime prevention (Witt, "Chapter V—Retrenchment").

The ONA Bureau Advisory Committee (BAC) reviewed the Portland Future Focus goals related to the neighborhood system at the request of Commissioner Kafoury. Witt reports that the ONA BAC members said the "PFF goals were laudatory, and that several of them were already being undertaken in accordance with previous and existing

ONA program objectives, especially those pertaining to crime prevention.” The ONA BAC, however, did not support adding any new priorities that would require shifting funds from existing priorities to implement the PFF goals (Witt 172).

In the winter of 1992, Witt reports that DCB activists from around the city joined together to define for themselves the purpose of the district coalitions within Portland’s neighborhood system. Witt writes that ONA Director Jacky, in response to pressure from DCB activists, distributed a survey in January 1992 to the six DCBs then operating. The survey was followed up by a retreat for all DCB Chairs and district coalition directors in February 1992. The survey results showed that DCB activists felt that the DCB relationships with citizens, neighborhood associations, and other community-based organizations were good but that “DCB relationships with City bureaus (other than ONA) ‘tended to be reactive and adversarial’” (Witt 175). The survey results showed that DCBs felt that ONA was not providing enough technical assistance to district coalitions at their request and was “spending too much time in ‘fiscal oversight of the contracts’ and ‘performance oversight of (DCB) contract(s) and workplan(s)’” (Witt 176). ONA Director Jacky, who attended the retreat, according to Witt, responded that “ONA spent most of its time providing technical assistance to neighborhood associations and citizens making various requests, whereas relatively little time was spent by the agency on both DCB fiscal and performance oversight.” Jacky attributed these perceptions to the fact that “a primary function of the DCB/ONA relationship in fact has to do with contract compliance” (Witt 176).

Witt reported that it was in this context of discord between the neighborhood district coalitions and ONA that City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury enlisted the help of her friend Margaret Strachan—former neighborhood activist, former office coordinator for the West-Northwest District Coalition, and former Portland City Council member—to navigate “between the rock of DCB intransigence and the seeming hard place of Future Focus goals and mandates.” Kafoury “hired Strachan on contract to perform focus group research to assess the suitability of adapting NA efforts to fit with the Future Focus agenda” (Witt 177).

Strachan analyzed the “Tufts University report on citizen participation, the Future Focus report, [ONA’s] Guidelines and a summary of the District Coalition Board Chairs’ retreat...” Strachan also conducted six focus group sessions that included 32 individuals active in and grouped by “neighborhood associations, representatives of other community-based groups, neighborhood business groups, representatives of city bureaus, and present and former staff from neighborhood offices” (Strachan 1).

Strachan presented her report, “Strengthening Citizen Participation Through Neighborhood Associations: Future Focus Goals,” in October 1992. Witt notes that it provided measured support for the Future Focus agenda (Witt 177). The report also provided additional insights into the elements or strategies focus group participants believed were important to and/or were needed to strengthen Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system.

Strachan identified five major themes that emerged from the responses of the focus group participants. These included:

1. “Neighborhood associations and the neighborhood association system are important assets to the city of Portland and its citizens though there are some concerns.”
2. “Other organizations and methods are needed to broaden citizen participation. Neighborhood associations are not and cannot be the only mechanism for participation.”
3. “Neighborhoods can provide good opportunities for citizens to gain experience and confidence as leaders.”
4. “Improved communications are vital for better citizen participation.”
5. “Neighborhood associations must maintain their grassroots orientation. The city cannot use them as another service delivery network without risking co-optation of their independence, credibility, and ability to get things done by pulling neighbors together and speaking with an independent voice” (Strachan 1).

**Theme 1: Neighborhood Associations and the City.** Focus group members consistently recognized that neighborhood associations and the neighborhood system were valuable and important assets to Portlanders and to city government. They also raised concerns about the representativeness of neighborhood association. Many questioned the extent to which it is realistic to expect volunteer neighborhood associations to truly represent every neighborhood resident and interest. Some said that neighborhood associations “are participatory rather than representative organizations.” Many felt that “if the membership is open, communications within the neighborhood

allow easy access to decisions.” Clear processes for elections and decisions, and “fair and open rules and good communication” would go “far to reduce this concern about representation” (Strachan 2).

The participants questioned the city’s true commitment to meaningful citizen participation. Strachan reported that “most participants feel the city gives lip service to participation and wants it on the city’s terms; or worse the city listens but does not pay attention.” The focus group members universally recognized the need to “improve city-neighborhood relations” and to implement the Portland Future Focus goals.

Focus group members suggested “more training for bureau staff in how to work with citizens in general and neighborhood associations in particular.” They urged that, to be effective, “both city employees and neighborhood people should be involved” in designing the trainings. The trainings should make clear that disagreements are a normal part of participation and “emphasize how disagreements can be resolve.” The training also should build respect among city staff for the opinions of citizens, because a perception of respect is “vital to the city’s credibility with citizen participants” (Strachan 2).

Participants also stressed the “need for a strong advocate for neighborhoods within the city structure” to help ensure that neighborhood viewpoints would receive “a fair hearing and responsible responses.” Strachan reported that “the majority of neighborhood association members feel there is no one in city hall that advocates for their inclusion and the value of the participation except in a cursory way” (Strachan 3).

Participants felt that, “over time, the Office of Neighborhood Associations has become too inflexible and bureaucratic.” They stressed that neighborhood associations at the time had very diverse cultures and capabilities, and that ONA needed to be flexible in working with “such a wide range of individuals and associations.” They urged ONA to use “more personal intervention” and fewer legalistic approaches. ”Participants recognized that sometimes “no matter how well guidelines and contracts are written, some volunteers may ignore the rules, control their district offices, excluding other neighborhoods, and/or disrupt the flow of neighborhood activities or promote dissension among members.” The participants said that “in these cases, personal and informal intervention from ONA staff may be appropriate rather than stringent enforcement of the guidelines and contract or additional rules.” They stressed that neighborhood associations should not be allowed to “become captive to a small group of volunteers to the exclusion of a broad neighborhood membership” (Strachan 3).

**Theme 2. Broadening Citizen Participation:** Participants across the focus groups agreed that citizen involvement in Portland needed to be broadened to include more people and a greater diversity of people and perspectives. They suggested that “too much is being expected of neighborhood associations,” and that neighborhood associations cannot be all things to all people. They argued that a number of organizations and avenues of participation were needed that could include a range of options from “neighborhood associations to budget advisory committees to environmental groups and community development corporations.”

Participants reported that neighborhood association volunteers “may organize around a few specific issues,” such as land use planning or park development that are important to them, but then “the city may expect them to review and respond to a number of other issues from crime prevention to bureau budgets to providing volunteers for committees.” They noted that many residents are not interested in these activities causing these additional responsibilities often to a few neighborhood association board members who then “feel they are being misused by the city.”

Neighborhood associations “can provide a forum for dialogue between the city and neighborhood residents” but focus group participants cautioned that they “cannot force participation.” They noted that when city staff ask community members for input and community members do not respond, “city employees end up feeling that citizen participation is a waste of time.” City staff need to value community participation and recognize that community volunteers “volunteer significant amounts of time and resources to improve their neighborhoods and hence the city.” This recognition is “basic to a good relationship between neighbors and staff.” Focus group members again recommended that “training for city staff may reduce this problem” (Strachan 4).

Focus group members also recognized the need for neighborhood associations “to recruit a more diverse membership,” including people of “all races, ages and income levels.” They suggested special efforts to involve youth in neighborhood associations. They recognized that different areas of Portland differ in the makeup of their residents and recommended that each association “look at the demographics of their area and work to see that the membership reflects the residents.” They said this kind of diverse

membership would broaden “the appeal of neighborhood associations and generate enthusiasm” for broader participation (Strachan 4).

The group also recommended that neighborhood associations incorporate more “events and celebrations” into their activities to “reach out to everyone and keep neighborhood associations lively and fund at least some of the time.”

“Working with other groups in a neighborhood” also could help “reduce stress and prevent burnout” and help neighborhood volunteers “achieve more.” Participants saw value in community members in a neighborhood creating an “informal group” to represent “all the active community-based non-profits in a area.” This “informal network” could help reduce duplication, improve scheduling, and allow for “information-sharing in neighborhoods with a high level of activity” (Strachan 4).

Group members recognized that small businesses also are “an important group in most neighborhoods” and said that “neighborhood associations and small business have many similar goals.” Group members suggested that “business representatives need to be involved in the neighborhood association either as individuals or through an organization of their own.”

The two individuals who participated in the business association focus group complained that neighborhood associations were not representative of the community and that the city should require neighborhood associations to meet standards as a requirement of formal recognition. They also complained that city processes often ask for input from neighborhood associations but not from business district associations. They recommended that the city provide resources, funding and support to business

associations as well as neighborhood associations but suggested that ONA was not the appropriate agency to oversee and provide this support. They suggested that the Portland Development Commission, which already had a focus on supporting business districts, should play this role.<sup>30</sup> These focus group participants also identified the need for greater dialogue between neighborhoods and business associations and suggested that the city should take the lead in facilitating these discussion (Strachan, “Focus Group #2 summary”).

**Theme 3: Leadership.** Most of the participants said that “neighborhood associations provide a good opportunity to gain experience and confidence.” They believed that “people who become active in neighborhood groups already have the potential to be leaders” and that their leadership skills are honed by “activities requiring decision making, public speaking, mediation, volunteer recruitment and management as well as a knowledge of how local government works” (Strachan 5).

All the focus group participants agreed that training should be a high priority. They said that “training should be available to everyone at minimal or no charge and be easily accessible.” Training topics they identified as particularly needed included: “how to run a meeting,” “land use concepts and hearing processes,” “fund raising,” and “organizing techniques.” They especially emphasized the need for mediation training. Strachan reports that the participants noted that “as urban life has gotten more complex,

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<sup>30</sup> It turns out that the assessment of these two business association representatives, in 1992, of the needs and preferences of the business district association community would remain valid over the following twenty years. Despite ONI’s subsequent efforts to bring business associations under the ONI umbrella, no business association ever applied for formal recognition offered by ONI. In the 2010s, business district associations ended up being served directly by the Portland Development Commission, as originally suggested by these two focus group participants.

the need for mediation training becomes even more important for both volunteers and staff' (Strachan 5).

Participants urged that trainings be jointly designed "by neighborhood people in conjunction with city employees and professionals in various fields" and that training be provided for both city employees and community members. They suggested that the trainings could be "sponsored by individual neighborhood associations or coordinated in a city-wide conference setting." They recommended "programs designed for neighborhood associations members with a wide range of topics" and suggested that "city-wide conference settings" would "allow for better sharing of skills, ideas and information" (Strachan 5).

**Theme 4: Communications.** All the participants recognized that communications are "the single most important factor in organizing and maintaining strong, representative associations." They stressed the important of good communications "within a neighborhood organization," "among associations," "between the city and neighborhoods," and "with the general public" (Strachan 5). Participants generally accepted communications "as the best buy for tight budget dollars" (7).

Participants stressed that the content, medium, and the distribution method all are important to successful communication. Regarding the content, they said that "simple, straight-forward information is best" and that it is "crucial that the information be complete." Participants said training is needed "in the art of newsletters, both in terms of content and layout."

Participants identified a neighborhood newspaper as the ideal method of communicating with residents. They noted that many neighborhood associations were looking for better ways to distribute newsletter, because mailing newsletters, while generally guaranteed to reach the recipient is not always timely and is expensive if a “mass mailing to every household” is planned. Door-to-door delivery of newsletters can be used occasionally “but as a regular system...is too volunteer intensive.”

Participants saw potential in “handing out newsletters at neighborhood banks and/or grocery stores” but did not have enough follow-up information to determine whether this method was effective at reaching a broad segment of the community.

Cable television was suggested again (at it had been in previous reviews of the neighborhood system) as worthy of further exploration as a communication method. Participants recognized that community members would need training and access to the necessary equipment but thought cable television had great potential and could be used to broadcast “live neighborhood meetings” and to develop “training tapes for neighborhood activists.”

City-community communications, according to the participants, needed to be improved by ensuring “earlier, more complete information from the city, with specific contact people identified for additional information of questions” (Strachan 6).

Participants wanted “more positive press coverage” for neighborhood activities. They said the “media tends to emphasize ‘bad’ news or controversy” and that “more ‘good’ news helps create a more favorable climate for neighborhood associations.” They suggested a strategy of contacting the media more often through press releases and press

conferences. They recommended that ONA produce a media contact sheet “listing both news agencies and the appropriate contacts” and distribute this list to neighborhood activists along with the ONA Neighborhood Directory.

Strachan reported that focus group participants suggested that ONA should review and keep neighborhood associations informed about “the use, availability, and cost” of new technologies that neighborhood associations could use “to improve services to their members.”

Participants discussed the value of a city wide newsletter focused on neighborhood associations and involvement opportunities with city government. They missed the ONA Newsletter, which ONA no longer produced. They felt it had “provided an informational flow between the city and the associations and also increased communications among neighborhood associations” (Strachan 7).

**Theme 5: Grass roots Character and Independence:** Strachan reported that the interviewees unanimously expressed “great concern that the neighborhood associations remain grass roots organizations.” They were concerned that “the city is coming dangerously close to co-opting the associations” and that tight city budgets increased the temptation for city government “to use neighborhood associations as another service delivery system.” Some focus group participants said the city should not place any additional expectations on neighborhood associations and that, while this “brave experiment in democracy” had been largely successful, “that success is threatened by overly restrictive rules and additional responsibilities.” They stressed that “to remain effective, neighborhood associations must maintain their independence from the city,”

and ‘must not be viewed by Portlanders as another arm of city government.’” City programs relying on neighborhood associations, such as crime prevention, “must be curtailed to allow neighborhood associations the freedom to choose the best way in which to serve their constituents” (Strachan 7).

Strachan’s report recommended that district coalitions establish working groups around “training, communications, and diversity” to “expand and further refine” the report’s suggestions. The report suggested that membership of these working groups not be limited to district coalition and neighborhood association representatives, but also include “other citizens and city employees selected by the district coalition chairs.”

Strachan’s report raised many issues and recommendations heard in past reviews of Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system. She reported that focus group members found that Portland’s neighborhood system was valuable but needed improvement. The system needed to broaden the diversity of people involved, by reaching out to and including people from different ethnic and income backgrounds, incomes and ages. The system also needed to reach out to and involve other types of community organizations and use different outreach strategies and methods.

Focus group members acknowledged concerns that the membership of many neighborhood associations did not represent the diversity of people in the neighborhood, but they cautioned that people needed to have realistic expectations for what neighborhood volunteer could accomplish. They again emphasized that neighborhood associations are “participatory” not “representative” and cannot be all things to all people.

Focus group members also again identified communications and early notification and leadership training as very high priorities. They also suggested having more community events and celebrations and way for community organizations to network and share information.

Strachan's report also reported participants' questioning of the city government's commitment to community involvement. Participants stressed that city leaders and staff needed to genuinely want to involve the community and have the skills listen and work with community members, rather than just engaging in "lip-service." Participants suggested offering community involvement training for city staff and possibly including community members in the design and delivery of the training. They also identified the need for a strong political champion and political support for community involvement in city government—which they said was lacking at the time of the report.

Focus group members also again stressed the importance of neighborhood associations being independent from city government. They stressed that community and neighborhood volunteers should focus on the priorities and needs of their community, not work on the priorities of city agencies or act as an arm of city government. They also called on ONA to focus on supporting community organizing and involvement rather than what many saw as ONA's focus at the time on regulation and administration of the system.

### 1993 Neighborhood Congress

Margaret Strachan followed up on her 1992 report by joining with other neighborhood activists to plan a two-day citywide gathering called Portland

Neighborhood Congress, which was held in October 1993. Witt reports that Strachan used “her political contacts to City Hall, including recently elected Mayor Vera Katz” to push “hard to frame the Congress effort as a citizen-led charge to revitalize Portland’s commitment to neighborhood-based citizen involvement, and to break the deadlock between ONA and the DCBs that had emerged over the previous years” (Witt 180).

Strachan and other neighborhood activists reached out to other neighborhood activists to identify several themes for the Congress. The plan was that congress participants would gather in subcommittees on these themes and “craft ‘resolutions’” that participants would rank in importance on the last day of the event. The intention was that the “votes would then be tallied and presented to City Council for adoption by resolution. In this way, Congress planners hoped to establish a mandate for revamping the NA program” (Witt 180).

An *Oregonian* editorial in February 1993 supported the idea of a neighborhood congress that would look at the layers of management that had been added to the Portland’s neighborhood system since its founding and “see how close to the ground the grass roots of the city’s 89 neighborhood associations really lie.” The editorial quotes Strachan as saying “There was a lot more neighborhood-to-neighborhood sharing of problems. We need to get back to those kinds of partnerships.” The *Oregonian* supported “making sure residents have a strong voice” in deciding how city budget cuts affect services and programs in their neighborhoods. The editorial quoted Strachan as saying “I want citizens to quit being the fifth wheel and start being the steering wheel” (*Oregonian* 10 February 1993)

Strachan strongly defended the grass-roots, neighborhood driven character of the Congress. When Mayor Katz included a budget note in the city budget expressing support for a “neighborhood congress” “to improve citizen participation in government and to contribute to the ‘empowerment of neighborhoods,’” Strachan responded “It shouldn’t be in the budget.” “We’re not asking for anything” from the City. The budget note also directed ONA to “re-examine the missions and goals, and assess the current and future role of ONA and citizen participation” (Ellis. *Oregonian* 10 April 1993).

An article by Peter Mazza ran in the *NW Examiner* community paper just prior to the congress with the headline “What’s happening to the neighborhood movement?” The article began by stating that “a consensus seems to be emerging that the Portland neighborhood system must change—yet there is little agreement on what shape the 20-year-old, city-sanctioned system should take.” The article noted that “the most basic of questions are on the table” given that the system was facing “a new mayor [Vera Katz], a new commissioner in charge of neighborhoods [Charlie Hales] and a new director of the Office of Neighborhood Associations [Diane Linn].” The article quotes City Commissioner Charlie Hales as saying “I want to rethink the whole neighborhood system” and reported that Hales was asking questions such as: “Do we need an office downtown at all? Do we need to put more resources out in the district coalitions? Do we just do grants to each neighborhood and let them spend it as they want? I’m open to any number of options.” (Mazza. *NW Examiner*, October 1993)

Mazza’s article said the upcoming Portland Neighborhood Congress would be a “crucial step” toward answering important questions about the system and would

“provide an unusual opportunity for activists to join in a conversation on the future of the neighborhood movement in Portland.” The article said the event was called a “Congress” because the intention was that the participants would develop and agree on resolutions that would influence City Council action on the future of the system.

Mazza highlighted some of the tensions within Portland’s neighborhood system and shared some of the critical comments citizen activists made during focus groups aimed at designing the selection of workshops at the event. These comments included:

- “Coalitions are a waste of money for the city to fund...They are bureaucratic and interfere with the functioning of the neighborhood associations.”
- “There is not trust between neighborhood associations and the city as well as between neighborhood associations themselves.”
- “The Office of Neighborhood Associations was an advocate. Now it is a watch dog that gives little direction except budget constraints.
- “Presently neighborhood associations are frustrating. One troublemaker can destroy an association.”
- “Coalitions are not productive enough to justify their existence and sometimes reinforce unproductive behavior.”
- “The Office of Neighborhood Associations serves the city bureaucracy more than the neighborhood associations.”

People also had good things to say about neighborhood associations, including that they helped build community and provided a permanent structure that gives people a “means to address issues as they arise, rather than having to organize from scratch.”

Mazza quoted Strachan as citing two major concerns from her 1992 review of the neighborhood system, including concerns about whether neighborhood associations are representative of their residents and the nearly universal questioning of the city's commitment to citizen participation. The article also quotes former ONA director Rachel Jacky at a recent City Council meeting sharing her perception that "there has been too much of a parental relationship between the city and the district coalitions for too long. We have been hearing it from the coalitions for a while."

A companion article in the same issue of the *NW Examiner* reminded readers that Strachan had been the first coordinator of the West/Northwest neighborhood coalition after it was formed in 1976. In the article, Strachan reflects back on the early years of the neighborhood system, "There was much more communication and exchange of ideas from neighborhood to neighborhood across the city. Everybody viewed themselves as pioneers... You knew who the people were in other neighborhoods without looking it up." "We had citywide events: training sessions for the public and potlucks or other events twice a year. People are hungry for that kind of cross-pollination" (*NW Examiner*, October 1993).

Mazza also spoke with Ken Thomson, a member of the Tufts University team that had studied Portland's neighborhood system and other similar system in cities across the country in the mid and later 1980s. (Thomson also was the keynote speaker for the Congress.) Thomas said his study looked at concerns about "whether city funding co-opts the independence of coalitions and neighborhood associations." Thomson said while city funding can be a concern, it also can enable the "city to insist that the organizations be

open” and it can promote “continuous outreach” to the community. Thomson warned that in the absence of pressure for outreach cliques can form in neighborhood associations within a couple years at least. He said if no city money is available, neighborhood groups often will form only in response to a “hot issue” and then “fizzle again in three years or so.”

Thomson went on to assert that, whatever the future of ONA, “There definitely needs to be some people working full time at city hall who act as liaisons between neighborhoods and city hall.” He also said Portland was missing a cutting edge practice in some other cities of having a “citywide coalition of neighborhood associations as a complement to city hall.” Thomson said that “such a group would be elected by all neighborhood associations to act as a collective voice for the neighborhood movement on citywide issues.” Mazza reported that Thomson saw the neighborhood congress “as a potential starting point toward such a coalition.” The article quotes a neighborhood activist representing an organization that was sponsoring the congress as saying that the congress could “be the seed for a citywide association of neighborhood associations.” Mazza wrote that congress organizers hoped the event would “begin a profound level of communication among neighborhoods” and serve as the “beginning of an ongoing conversation” (Mazza, October 1993).

A day before the start of the Congress, the Oregonian ran an editorial arguing that the question of the representativeness of neighborhood associations should be high on the Congress agenda. The editorial said that the question of “how board members can best represent neighbors was not answered” back in the 1970s when the system was created

and still needed to be answered twenty years later. The editorial urged neighborhood board members to not overlook the concerns and possible contributions of less assertive residents. The editorial asserted that if anything came out of the discussions at the Congress it should be a commitment by neighborhood board members “to do a better job of informing and involving more residents” (*Oregonian* 7 October 1993).

Witt reports that 400 people participated in the Portland Neighborhood Congress. During the event, five workgroup discussed and developed resolutions for the consideration of the larger body. The five workgroup theme areas were:

- “Planning: Land Use, Environment & Transportation”
- “Neighborhood Associations: Roles, Rules, & Regulations”
- “Neighborhoods & Community Policing”
- “Broadening the Base of Citizen Participation & Diversity”
- “Regional Communications Technology” (Witt 181).

Witt reports that the workgroups developed 39 resolutions. Congress participants voted on their top priorities among the resolutions. The top resolutions they chose offer an interesting look at what neighborhood activists at that time thought were the most pressing issues. (Witt notes that it is interesting that the resolution that Thomson supported that would have instituted a citywide coalition body “received zero votes from program participants”(Witt 181-2).

A list of the top 15 resolutions from the ONA/ONI archives shows that the Congress participants most supported resolutions that involved crime prevention, neighborhood planning, public involvement in capital improvement and land use

planning processes, broad outreach and diversity, timely and centralized notification, a citizen board to govern ONA, a streamlined process to involved neighborhoods in “E” zone processes, and increased funding for neighborhood communications. Highlights of the most popular resolutions are included below (Portland. Office of Neighborhood Associations. *The Top 10 Resolutions from the 1993 ONA Neighborhood Congress*. [no date]).

**Crime prevention:** Crime prevention and community policing topped the list. The top resolution asked the city to make public safety its top priority and to “allow the Police Bureau to fill all vacant positions” and to ensure and maintain crime prevention staff positions in all of the coalition offices. The second most popular resolution supported the creation of a “pro-active community policing program.” The ninth most popular resolution (75 votes) supported strategies to “improve communications between citizens, crime coordinators and police.”<sup>31</sup>

**Neighborhood Plans:** The third most popular resolution (139 votes) called on the City to “create a process that requires neighborhoods to create their own viable and enforceable neighborhood plans in partnership with the community. These plans shall incorporate land use, transportation, ecosystems, and historical preservation that meet intergovernmental requirements.”

**Capital Improvement and Land Use Planning:** The fourth most popular resolution (134 votes) called for neighborhood associations to be “formally involved in all aspects of capital improvements, current and long range planning.” The resolution sought “early and continuing” opportunities for “significant neighborhood participation”

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<sup>31</sup> The document in the ONA/ONI archives did not list separate vote totals for the top two resolutions.

in “any regulation or regulatory review process...” and supported the retention and full city endorsement of the “neighborhood and community planning process” “as vehicles for planning and city involvement.” The resolution also advocated for increased “communication between citizens, local, and state governments and developers.”

**Broader Outreach and Diversity:** The fifth most popular resolution (125 votes) advocated for a “commitment to increase social and cultural diversity within neighborhood associations by extending outreach to our schools, businesses, churches, and other community stakeholders....” The resolution proposed to accomplish this through training in diversity and interpersonal skills; technical support from ONA and the coalitions to help neighborhood associations strengthen their organizations and identify goals; the establishment of “relationships and common goals with liaisons from targeted community groups;” and the facilitation of “information sharing between neighborhood associations, community organizations” and other groups.

#### **Timely and Centralized Notification of City Citizen Involvement**

**Opportunities:** The sixth most popular resolution (105 votes) sought the development and maintenance of “a cross referenced multi-modal information system (e.g. clearing house) listing timely notices from all agencies/entities seeking citizen involvement from community groups,” and the development of two way communications with city agencies that would allow neighborhoods to “set or influence agency agendas and timelines” and not merely react to agency determined actions.

**Citizen Board to Govern ONA:** The seventh most popular resolution (94 votes) called for the created of a “broad-based citizen board to govern ONA” to “increase the

neighborhood associations' direct authority, control and management of resources....”

The board's role would be to include “re-evaluation of the role and function of district coalitions.”

**Streamlined E-Zone Approval Process:** The eighth most popular resolution (86 votes) called for the City Council to adopt an ordinance that would streamline the process “that mandates sign off on all development applications in ‘E’ zones” by affected neighborhood associations and coalitions.

The next five resolutions included: increased funding of neighborhood communications (70 votes), formation of an ONA advisory board with neighborhood association representatives—not coalition board members—from each district, redefinition of ONA role to shift more power to neighborhood associations “by offering more support better information, less regulation, and less control” (67 votes); development of a simplified substitute for Roberts Rules of Order for use by “neighborhood associations and other citizens groups (67 votes); ONA promotion of citywide communication within and among neighborhood organizations (63 votes); and recognition by neighborhood associations and district coalitions that they “are a reflection of the community—they are not the community itself” (41 votes).

The resolution to have ONA promote citywide communication suggested examples such as a “citywide newsletter, cable access, training sessions, resource library, e-mail, I&R.” The resolution advocated a search for solutions to overcome challenges neighborhood associations face to producing and distributing printed communications, such as “affordability, distribution, one way flow, labor intensive.” The resolution

supported finding ways to “promote and foster partnerships with schools, business, and community organizations. It also called for an assessment and identification of currently used communications channels, including “newsletters, cable, and bulletin boards,” and “serious” support for “a pilot project in computer, cable, fax, and other electronic communication for citizen involvement.”

The resolution that called on neighborhood associations and district coalitions to recognize that they “reflect” but “are not” the community suggested a number of community outreach strategies and ways to make the organizations more open and inclusive. These included:

- “Proving they have contacted all segments of the community.”
- “Go to the places where people congregate – develop personal relationships / trust.”
- “Honor diverse styles of communication and use them to get in touch.”
- “Keep challenging and changing neighborhood associations to accommodate the needs / issues of the people you want to involve.”
- “Open up the “definition” of involvement (e.g., contribute talent, \$\$, ideas) how to work together – not just meetings; celebrate together, find small ways people can contribute.”
- “Recognize individual and family commitments so all feel valued (reward must be meaningful to the person).”
- “Use incentives (i.e., donated by businesses) to recruit citizens and business.”

- “Find out what’s important to various segments of the neighborhood so they will be willing to be involved over something they feel passionate about.”
- “Support the events and businesses of other cultures so over time they get to know you and may become willing to support you activities.”
- “Link with other organizations to perform services (i.e., AARP, & district coalitions offer free tax preparation).”

Witt notes that the success of the Congress was limited in part by a “reticence to ‘rock the boat’ and make major changes to the neighborhood system.” As an example, Witt reports that the resolution that could have altered the dynamic of power struggles between ONA and the district coalitions—the creation of a citywide body coalition of neighborhood associations (as suggested by Ken Thomson)--“received zero votes from program participants.”

Witt reports that the “more ambitious aspirations of the event—to induce City Council and ONA to adopt the resolutions produced by the Congress—would not materialize” but asserts that the Congress still served as a “significant historic marker for Portland” because it demonstrated that a “fervent interest in sustaining and renewing the NA program” still existed. The Portland Neighborhood Congress would be referenced only two years later when another major review of the neighborhood system—The Neighborhood Involvement Task Force--was initiated (Witt 182).

The top priorities identified by the Congress participants raised familiar issues. They supported the city making crime prevention and implementation of the City’s new community policing program high priorities and supported called additional police

officers and maintaining crime prevention staff positions at the neighborhood coalition offices. They also called for processes to assist neighborhood associations to develop neighborhood plans and strong community involvement in capital improvement planning and long-term land use planning (all of which had been important elements of Portland's original neighborhood system structure).

Congress participants continued the call for efforts to “increase the social and cultural diversity” of people involved in neighborhood associations and for greater neighborhood association involvement with other community organizations to identify shared goals and to share information. They called for ONA and district coalition offices to support neighborhood associations in these efforts and in increasing the effectiveness of neighborhood association outreach to the community in general. Participants also called for increase support for neighborhood association and district coalition communications.

Another priority that echoed similar calls since the 1970s was the Congress participants call for timely and centralized notification of City public involvement opportunities. Such a system would allow neighborhood associations to get involved in City projects and decisions early when they could influence agency agendas and timelines instead of just reacting to decisions that already had been made.

While Thomson tried to draw attention to the value of a citywide body of neighborhood associations “to act as a collective voice for the neighborhood movement on citywide issues”—an issue that had come up a number of times during the 1970s and 1980s—Congress participants did not find this to be one of their priorities in 1993.

### 1995-96 Neighborhood Involvement Task Force

In October 1994—one year after the Portland Neighborhood Congress—the Portland City Council directed ONA to launch a new “comprehensive assessment of the neighborhood network/citizen involvement system.” The City Council stated that the purpose of the assessment was to “assure continued effective, assertive citizen involvement programs” and should “include but not be limited to a thorough examination of the structure, effectiveness, funding needs and distribution of the citizen involvement system” and that the process identify “options for enhancing citizen participation and citizen/government communication” (Portland. City Council. *Resolution 35318*. 19 October 1994).

The City Council directed ONA to hire a consultant to help facilitate the process. Community members were to be involved in the process through “regular communication about the progress of the assessment” through methods such as “newsletter, focus groups, key informant contributions” and other opportunities. The City Council anticipated that the assessment would take one year (Portland. City Council. *Resolution 35318*. 19 October 1994).

The *Oregonian* reported that several neighborhood activists strongly objected to City Council’s grant of the power to select the task force members to Charlie Hales, the City Commissioner in charge of ONA. They feared that Commissioner Hales would “stack the deck” and wanted community groups to be able to select their own representatives on the task force. Hales and other city council members “defended the selection process, saying the task force ‘needs to have broad representation from the

community.’” The *Oregonian* reported that despite the sharp criticism, “most neighborhood leaders agree that an objective examination of the neighborhood structured is warranted” (Kiyomura. *Oregonian* 20 October 1994).

The *Oregonian* quoted ONA Director Diane Linn who argued that “We have a great system in place. The question now is do we have the guts to make it better.” The article also recorded Commissioner Hales, referring to Socrates saying “an unexamined life is not worth living” said “I think an unexamined neighborhood association may not be worth keeping. Let’s do this now when we are strong [rather] than at a future time when we would be doing damage control and critical repairs” (Kiyomura. *Oregonian* 20 October 1994).

One week later, on October 26, 1994, the City Council passed a resolution that appointed twenty-four people to serve on the “Task Force on Neighborhood Involvement” (TFNI). The TFNI final report states that Commissioner Hales’ appointments to the TFNI reinforced his desire to broaden the TFNI’s review to include perspectives beyond just those of neighborhood activists. The TFNI members included 25 community members from all over the city, from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives, some with “extensive experience working with Neighborhood Associations and District Coalitions” and other with “little or no previous contact with the current neighborhood involvement structures” (Portland. Office of Neighborhood Associations. *Report and Recommendations of the Task Force on Neighborhood Involvement*. February 7, 1996 3-4). The appointees included eight district coalition representatives and four neighborhood association representatives—together they constituted half of the task force

membership. The other half of the task force members represented a variety of community interests, including a general community activist, three individuals from culturally diverse communities, and individuals from the non-profit, business, philanthropic communities, and representatives of district coalition staff, business district associations, community development corporations and one city bureau outreach specialist (Portland. City Council. *Resolution 35322*, 27 October 1994).

The task force members got right to work on what would become the most in-depth review and evaluation of Portland's neighborhood association since its founding in the 1970s. After a year of hard work including "hundreds of hours looking at the way Portland's neighborhood association program work," they shared a draft of their report and recommendations with the community in November 1995. The *Oregonian* reported that the draft was "not a report to scare your socks off. But it is a document demanding attention, at least because most recommendations involve putting more money into the Portland neighborhood association system." The "thoughtful...findings and recommendations" did not "overthrow the current system" but, in addition to calling for an estimate \$1 million in increased funding, also recommended a number of changes to expand the system and make it more inclusive, responsive, and effective (Christ, Janet. *Oregonian*, 13 November 1995 and *Oregonian*, 4 December 1995).

The TFNI's formal charge from City Council and Commissioner Hales was to "Conduct an assessment which includes but is not limited to 'a thorough examination of the structure, effectiveness, funding needs, and distribution of the citizen involvement system; and the identification of options for enhancing citizen participation and

citizen/government communication.” Commissioner Hales and task force members expanded the scope of the TFNI’s charge to include responsibility to:

1. “Examine the Neighborhood Association (NA)/District Coalition (DC)/Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA) structure in relation to citizen involvement with the City of Portland and other governmental entities;” and to
2. “Look beyond the current ONA structure to find opportunities to broaden citizen involvement and to encourage participation by the full diversity of our communities;”

Commissioner Hales asked the TFNI members to “Look for opportunities to make significant improvement in citizen participation” (Portland. Office of Neighborhood Associations. *Report and Recommendations of the Task Force on Neighborhood Involvement* 1).

TFNI members began by adopting a shared definition of “citizen participation/neighborhood involvement” to guide their work:

“Citizen participation/neighborhood involvement includes efforts by residents, business owners, service providers, and others to improve the quality of life in their shared neighborhood. It includes, but is not limited to efforts to improve air and water quality, transportation, safety, appearance, and overall livability of the neighborhood” (1).

This definition echoed the purpose statements for neighborhood associations in the original 1974 and 1975 ordinances that created Portland’s neighborhood system. The

TFNI members further clarified in their report that their use of the term “citizen” was meant to include all individuals in a community—regardless of their formal citizenship status in the U.S. (1).

The TFNI members also created a framework of principles and characteristics of good community involvement to guide their work. Future reviews of Portland community and neighborhood system also would call for and recommend similar statements of principles and elements to define and guide effective community involvement, both within the neighborhood and community involvement system and by city staff and officials.

The TFNI “Framework for Citizen Involvement” included the following:

1. Promote Problem Solving in an Atmosphere of Mutual Respect
  - a. Build trust
  - b. Promote win/win, not win/lose resolutions to issues
  - c. Reduce adversarial relationships between neighborhoods, City and others
  - d. Provide opportunities for civil adversaries to deal effectively with differences
  - e. Bring decision-makers face-to-face with citizens
  - f. Encourage early participation in development planning
  - g. Provide ways for neighborhoods to related to other communities
  - h. Provide base for developing long term solutions
  - i. Encourage folks working for government to feel part of the community and vice versa
2. Be Responsive and Inclusive
  - a. Provide a framework for involvement which is visible and understandable to the general public
  - b. Be welcoming, nurturing, and allow participants to have a good time.
  - c. Promote active involvement of diverse communities
  - d. Contribute to a greater sense of community
  - e. Be representative of communities
  - f. Overcome apathy
  - g. Proactively reflect needs/concerns of communities

3. Be Effective
  - a. Meet citizen needs quickly and effectively
  - b. Result in improved livability
  - c. Build community partnerships
  - d. Involve minimal waste
  - e. Be able to impact laws and challenge the status quo
  - f. Be accountable
4. Develop Leadership Skills of Participants
5. Be Respected and Utilized by the City and Other Governmental Units
  - a. Build and support government respect for the wishes/values of neighborhoods
  - b. Be utilized by governments to involve neighborhoods in key decisions

(Portland. Office of Neighborhood Associations. *Report and Recommendations of the Task Force on Neighborhood Involvement* 3).

Many of these same elements were included in a set of public involvement “guiding principles” for city government, which the City Council adopted at the same time it formally accepted the TFNI report in February 1996.

The TFNI members reached out to the community in many ways. The TFNI report states that TFNI members engaged in a variety of outreach efforts to the district coalitions, neighborhood associations, different parts of the city, and city staff from different bureaus and city officials. They interviewed representatives of business and civic organizations that operated outside the City’s neighborhood involvement system. They also examined citizen involvement models from other cities (3-4).

The TFNI members reported a number of findings. They emphasized that the current neighborhood system was working well for many people and was nationally famous as “a model for encouraging citizens to work together to improve their neighborhoods and the city as a whole.” They asserted that any changes “must build on the strengths of the current system.” They said they heard about many strengths of both

neighborhood associations and district coalitions. Neighborhood associations were “excellent at receiving and discussing information;” “Getting results on issues neighbors identify;” “Creating a sense of neighborhood and community;” Linking businesses and residents;” and “Supporting diversity in the community.” District Coalition were successful in their effort to: “Provide strong support to meet neighborhood needs”; Provide effective advocacy with the City”; “Make good use of limited resources”; “Communicate information throughout their districts through newsletters”; and “Effectively support neighborhood efforts in crime prevention, growth, transportation, and planning issues” (4).

They also reported that they heard about problems and lack of effectiveness in the neighborhood association, district coalition, and ONA system. Some neighborhood associations “Involve a very small portion of the people in their neighborhood;” “Do not reflect the diversity of the residents of their community;” and “Experience conflict and interpersonal communication problems which discourage participation.” Some District Coalitions were “More focused on administrative and staff management issues than on [neighborhood association] concerns,” “Limited in their effectiveness by difficulty dealing with conflicts,” and “Staff driven rather than neighborhood driven” (5).

Many people suggested to the TFNI that inadequate funding was a least partly to blame for the problems. Neighborhood associations did not have the resources to reach all their residents. District coalitions did not have the staff capacity to support the “education and outreach” needed to engage the community. Low pay and benefits led to high turnover rates in some district coalitions (5).

City bureau managers saw the neighborhood associations and neighborhood district coalitions as valuable avenues by which the City can “engage in dialogue with its citizens,” recognized their same limitations listed above, but emphasized the important of “maintaining ongoing structures” that “bring neighbors together to work on issues of mutual interest” (5).

The TFNI members recognized that many challenges impeded the involvement of community members at the neighborhood level. Many “individuals lack the time and energy needed to develop a sense of community.” However, what they heard consistently from people was that “the benefits of strong neighborhood involvement are worth the effort” (5).

Overall, the TFNI members did not find that the neighborhood system structure needed major changes. They did find that “additional investment” was needed to increase the effectiveness of the system. This investment “should be directed to improving functioning and building structures which promote greater participation, of a wider diversity of neighbors, with increased citizen satisfaction and a higher success rate....” They wrote that success should be “measured by needs addressed, problems solved, community satisfaction, and cohesiveness” (5).

The TFNI members grouped their recommendations in eight topic areas:

- “Value of Neighborhood Involvement,”
- “Structure for Neighborhood Involvement,”
- “The Role of the Current Office of Neighborhood Associations,”
- “Key Neighborhood Involvement Initiatives,”

- “Collaborative Approach to Accountability,”
- “Operational Recommendations,” and
- “Budget Recommendations”
- “Policies and Procedures Needed to Implement Initiatives and Recommendations”

**Value of Neighborhood Involvement:** TFNI members highlighted the overall benefits of citizen participation and neighborhood involvement and described some of the characteristics and roles that would characterize a strong system. They argued that community involvement “plays a central role in improving the quality of life for all Portlanders and in promoting an effective and responsive government.” Portlanders received substantial “public benefit” for the public funds spent to support this involvement. TFNI members stressed that they intended their recommendations to strengthen the existing system and to increase its “openness and effectiveness” and to increase the “already strong City commitment to the value of citizen participation” (6).

The report established a goal of achieving a “participatory government” that “provides a direct link between neighbors and their government.” It envisioned the “highest level of involvement” as “the full diversity of neighbors sitting face to face with those planning and implementing public policy” and actions, “participating in decision making” and “allocating resources” (6).

The report stated that neighborhood associations should function as “forums’ for people from common geographical areas and with common interests to “come together to discuss issues of concern, resolve conflicts, achieve consensus, and communicate with

their government.” While TFNI members believed that community involvement structures should give people the opportunity to “participate in government decisions” that “affect their quality of life,” they emphasized that the primary purpose of neighborhood associations is to “promote community” not just to “communicate with government.” To play this role effectively, the report asserted that neighborhood associations must remain independent and without constraint, but that neighborhood associations that follow basic guidelines should receive support services, if they need them, “to enhance their effectiveness as participatory groups.” District coalitions were found to “provide a practical structure to support NA’s with training and technical assistance” (6).

**Structure for Neighborhood Involvement:** TFNI members recognized that neighborhood associations are driven by individuals and their needs and views. Given this they asserted that neighborhood associations “should remain and be revitalized as the cornerstone of Portland’s structure for neighborhood involvement.” They also supported the value of district coalitions as a structure that allowed the City to fund support for neighborhood associations while they acted as a buffer between the City and neighborhood associations to help preserve their “essential independence” (7).

TFNI members departed from tradition in a major way by recommending that neighborhood associations have the option to ask ONA to create a “neighborhood [district] office” staffed by city staff to provide support services to them instead of the traditional independent non-profit district coalition model. ONA already had created one city-staffed “neighborhood office” in 1992 to serve neighborhood associations in north

Portland after the north Portland district coalition board (the North Portland Citizens Committee (NPCC)) had disbanded because of major conflicts between its board members. Under this alternative, ONA would hire the office staff, and the neighborhood associations in the district and ONA mutually would agree on the procedures by which these staff people would support the neighborhood associations. Instead of a non-profit board of directors made up of representatives of the district's neighborhood associations that set policy and directed the office, the neighborhood associations would send "their Chair or designee to regular meeting to discuss common problems and issues and to express needs and priorities for staff assistance." The neighborhood associations "would participate in the hiring, evaluation, and firing of staff including developing the job descriptions for each position." ONA would be accountable to ensure that the office staff members were effective and responsive to the neighborhoods. The TFNI members recommended that ONA consider proposals from NA's for other district structures as well (7).<sup>32</sup>

The TFNI members determined that the ONA Guidelines should be changed to clarify the district structure options and to establish a measured process through which "such proposals for alternative structures" could be examined, but only when the affected communities were in "substantial consensus" in favor of a structural change (8).

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<sup>32</sup> Witt provides a fascinating and detailed account of the conflict that led to the dissolution of the north Portland district coalition in Chapter V of his dissertation. In Chapter VI, Witt documents similar conflicts on the board of the east Portland district coalition that led ONA (then ONI) to create another city-staffed neighborhood office in east Portland in 1997. Since that time none of the five remaining independent non-profit district coalitions has shifted to the city-staff neighborhood office model or any other model. While some east Portland neighborhood leaders have advocated for a return to the independent non-profit model, others do not want to take on the work of running a non-profit organization and prefer having a city-staffed neighborhood office.

The TFNI members emphasized that consideration of any alternative district structures should ensure that: neighborhood associations continue to play the central role in involving their community members and continue to provide a structure for community members to communicate with the City and for the City other government entities to communicate with community members. The TFNI members wrote that “it is extremely important that the City be responsive to the needs and views” of neighborhood associations and respect the “volunteer time and energy of the NA participants” and that the neighborhood associations remain independent. They also re-emphasized an important value held since the founding of the neighborhood system that community members “always have the right to communicate directly with the City,” and that neighborhood associations should not “close off opportunities of citizens/neighbors to speak directly with the City when they choose to do so” (8).

**The Role and Name of the Current Office of Neighborhood Associations:**

The TFNI members also recommended a major expansion of ONA’s role. In addition to supporting neighborhood associations, TFNI members recommended that ONI also support “neighborhood Business District Associations and other civic organizations in their efforts to work effectively with neighbors and with the City.” In keeping with this expanded role, the TFNI members recommended that the name of ONA be changed to the “Office of Neighborhood Involvement.” The TFNI members intended that the name change would eliminate the misperception that neighborhood associations were part of city government rather than independent community organizations. The name change

also would reflect the broader role that TFNI members recommended that ONA/ONI play in extending its support network to other types of community organizations.

The TFNI members affirmed the importance of and need to continue ONA's existing functions, which included: "recognition and support of NA's"; funding of support for NA's through contracts with district coalition and neighborhood offices; "training for NA and DC participants;" information and referral services; coordination of and support for the DC crime prevention efforts; coordination of immigrant and refugees services; coordination of City bureau outreach to neighborhood associations and neighborhoods; "promotion of communication and collaboration among NA's, neighborhood Business District Associations, ethnic and civic organizations, major employers, and institutions"; and mediation and facilitation services provided through the Neighborhood Mediation Center (9).

The TFNI members also recommended a major change in the role of ONA in relation to the rest of city government. They recommended that ONA be put in charge of community involvement for all of city government and be given the "responsibility and authority for coordinating the efforts of the Bureaus to reach out to citizens/neighbors to involve them in key planning and implementation efforts" and discussion of "Bureau issues" (9-10).

**Key Neighborhood Involvement Initiatives:** TFNI members developed and recommended implementation of eight specific initiatives intended to respond to the challenges they identified during their study process.

Boundaries: TFNI members recommended that ONA complete a study of neighborhood and district coalition boundaries and adopt processes to resolve boundary disputes between neighborhood associations (10).

NA and DC self evaluations: TFNI members suggested that neighborhood associations and district coalitions consider evaluating their strengths and weaknesses “in meeting the needs of their communities within the criteria” set out in the TFNI Framework for Citizen Involvement. They suggested that neighborhood associations and district coalitions reach out to and solicit the views and preferences “residents, business, ethnic, and civic groups” within their boundaries. They also suggested that district coalitions reach to their neighborhood associations to discuss “the degree to which the DC is meeting the needs of each NA” as part of their self-evaluation. The TFNI member recommended that ONA should fund and support these processes (10-11).

Increased linkages between the neighborhood system and other groups: TFNI members recommended that NAs and DCs be encouraged to pursue communication with and invite participation from “community civic groups (including ethnic organizations) and business associations in their community.” They also recommended that the ONA Guidelines be amended to encourage communications between business district associations and DCs. They recommended that ONA should act as a clearinghouse of information on the neighborhood system for business and civic groups and assist NAs and DCs in forming effective relationships with these groups.

Recognition and support for business district associations: TFNI members recommended that ONA facilitate a process with the Alliance of Portland Neighborhood

Business Associations (APNBA)—the citywide organization of neighborhood business district associations—and neighborhood activists to establish criteria and procedures by which business districts could apply to ONA for formal recognition. Recognized business districts would receive the same City notifications received by neighborhood associations. ONA would provide funding to the district coalitions to support communications by recognized business districts in their areas. Recognized business districts would become the official representative of businesses in their area to the City (11).

Increased Outreach and Inclusiveness: TFNI members emphasized the need for NAs and DCs to “reflect the full diversity of their communities” as they had set out in the TFNI’s “Framework for Citizen Involvement.” However, they also recognized that achieving this goal would be very challenging, partly because “as volunteers,” neighborhood leaders faced many demands on their limited time.

The TFNI members recommended that ONA request additional funding from the City to “assist NA’s to increase and enhance their efforts to reach all members of their communities, particularly those segments of their communities which are presently underrepresented in their activities.” The TFNI members suggested strategies that including “mailings to all households offering an opportunity for involvement; training in effective outreach and building multicultural organizations; funding for newsletter production and distribution; and support for other initiatives designed and proposed by NA’s for approach specifically appropriate for their communities.”

TFNI members also recommended that ONA create a process to formally acknowledge community groups that represented communities that were not tied to particular geography (as were neighborhood associations and business district associations). They referred to these communities as “neighborhoods without boundaries.” Much of the task force’s thinking on this topic appears to have been driven by Charles Shi, a task force member who presented the Asian Pacific American Alliance of Oregon and the American Burmese Association of Oregon on the task force. Shi’ suggested that immigrant and refugee communities be allowed to form their own “non-geographic” organizations and that Portland’s neighborhood system be expanded to formally include them. This approach did not expect all residents to work through their neighborhood association, but recognized that people in some communities are more likely to be drawn to join together with people from their own community rather than traditional neighborhood associations.<sup>33</sup> A fuller description of Shi’s proposal below will help to reveal the origins and original form of his ideas.

Charles Shi’s Concept for “Neighborhoods without Borders”: TFNI member Charles Shi proposed that a new element be added to Portland’s neighborhood program that would recognize immigrant and refugee Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) as “neighborhoods without borders.” He also proposed that ONA develop a program to help

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<sup>33</sup> Shi’s concept continued to generate interest and more community discussion for a number of years, until a variation of his recommendations were implemented in 2006 under Mayor Tom Potter in response to advocacy from the Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Coalition Diversity and Civic Leadership Committee and in conjunction with another in-depth review of Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system known as “Community Connect.”

immigrant and non-immigrant neighbors who lived on a particular block work with their related MAAs and their local neighborhood association.

Shi's proposals rose out of his concerns about growing crime within different immigrant and refugee communities. He especially was concerned about youth in these communities who were being drawn into criminal lifestyles and then preying on people in their own communities. Shi noted that immigrant and refugee communities often were isolated from the regular sources of law enforcement and other assistance in the community. This isolation allowed cycles of serious problems, "such as home invasion and ethnic gangsterism" to grow "adding fuel to the growing social disorder and violence that are threatening to us all" (Shi. November 1994).

Shi said these problems were "...not solvable through the usual routine law enforcement action and procedure." No "effective law enforcement action" was being taken "due to lack of crime reporting by the victims." Shi maintained that "victims need to know how to access...the protection and redress provided by the law enforcement system available here" (Shi. December 1994). Shi explained that the social and cultural mismatch between immigrants and refugees and their next door neighbors "is the main cause of living in isolation for the immigrant/refugee families trying to resettle" in "this new homeland." Shi argued that legal immigrants have a right to expect "a safer and crime-free environment" (Shi November 1994).

Shi wrote that many immigrant and refugee communities, while not connected to the larger community, had created Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) to assist people within their own communities. These MAAs were not tied to any particular

geographic area, but were made up of people who were drawn together by their shared language and social and cultural backgrounds. Shi wrote that these new immigrants and refugees “trust and rely on former compatriots for help and support” instead of “nearby neighbors who are so near yet so alien.” Shi called these groupings “neighborhoods without borders.”

Shi wrote that differences in “the manner of communication and networking” also acted as a barrier between victims and sources of law enforcement and other assistance in the larger community. By involving “various ethnic-based new immigrant associations themselves” they could help develop and improve lines of communication between their community members and the larger community and its resources. He suggested that “many of the ethnic-based organizations, individually or organizationally are more than happy to get involved in this good cause if clear instruction and safety protection are provided” (Shi November 1994).

Shi suggested that an additional “dimension” be added to the “City’s Neighborhood Associations Program” by formally recognizing MAAs “as the neighborhood associations” for these communities—“neighborhoods without borders.” He also suggested that “MAAs from [the] same socio-cultural region of the world,” such as “Asian/Pacific Islanders” and “East Europeans,” could form and be recognized by the City as “coalitions” equivalent to the neighborhood district coalitions (Shi December 1994 and November 1994).

Shi envisioned a system in which “neighborhoods without borders” and traditional geographic neighborhood associations would “interact and work interwovenly

together without requiring extra law enforcement and other services resources...to fulfill the mission of community policing across the ethnic barrier with flying colors” (Shi November 1994).

Shi also proposed the development of a program of “infra neighborhood structure and inter-ethnic networking” that he called “Operation Community Tapestry.” The proposal included:

- Organization of Block Neighborhoods on every street with participation from “neighbors from both sides of the street.”
- Identification of one key neighbor in each Block Neighborhood to act as “neighborhood facilitator.”
- Outreach by the “neighborhood facilitator” to “all the neighbors within the block” to let them know about this role.
- Facilitation of communication between the block neighborhood and the neighborhood association for the area by the “neighborhood facilitator.”

One of the roles of the block neighborhoods would be to “find out the ethnic identity of the immigrant/refugee families residing” on their block. ONA then would help neighborhood facilitators organize “home and/or community place” visits with these families by the appropriate “ethnic MAA.” The purpose would be to “establish the vital link between the neighbors within the geographic border and gain access to the normal help and support from the local resources for security and well-being.”

Shi envisioned that the Block Neighborhoods would involve as much volunteer participation as possible with support from ONA, and from law enforcement and social

service agencies, local schools, and neighborhood businesses, banks, and insurance companies.

Shi's proposals got people thinking about whether Portland's neighborhood system should be expanded to include, not only the geographically defined traditional neighborhood associations and business associations, but also communities of Portlanders who share a particular identity, ethnicity, or culture but do not live in one particular geographic area.<sup>34</sup>

Increased Support for Conflict Resolution: TFNI members emphasized that community members "can craft solutions to perceived conflicts" in the community "more effectively than City Bureaus or City Council." They also recognized that resolving conflicts at the "local level—among neighbors and businesses at the neighborhood level and among neighborhoods at the district level" often required "mediation and facilitation skills" that many community members did not have. Interpersonal conflicts and conflicts over communication problems were two areas identified by TFNI members for particular attention. They stated that effective facilitation of "dialogue and issues resolution" was needed to overcome these problems.

TFNI members recommended that the City and ONA "invest new resources to assist NA's and DC's to develop conflict resolution skills and provide conflict resolution assistance when needed (Portland. Task Force on Neighborhood Involvement 12).

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Shi's proposal for helping neighborhood association and immigrants and refugees work together better was explored further starting in 2001 through the implementation of a three year project called "Interwoven Tapestry"—part of a national study funded by the federal government and the National Association of State Legislatures. This project is described in more detail in the next chapter.

Improve district coalition staff quality and stability by reducing pay disparities:

TFNI members found that differences in salary and pay benefits across the DCs and the city-staffed neighborhood office in North Portland had results in some staff moving “from district to district” for better compensation for “essentially the same levels of responsibility.” TFNI members recommended that the ONA contracts with the DCs, “set and fund salary levels” for DC positions “at levels equivalent” to those of the city employees in comparable positions and provide funding to “equalize benefit levels” across the DCs but not require parity with city employee benefits. TFNI members did not recommend setting benefit levels at those of city employees because those levels might not be appropriate for non-profit organizations and the resource to fund these higher benefit levels likely would not become available (12-13).

Increase resources to NAs and to strengthen DC services to NAs: TFNI members presented a number of recommendations for increasing and more equitably distributing the funding and resources available to the neighborhood system. One recommendation was to establish a “Neighborhood Grants Program” that would allow NAs to apply for additional funds to carry out projects and activities in their neighborhood.<sup>35</sup>

TFNI members also sought to give NAs more control over their DCs by requiring DCs to consult with their NAs on the “review of each DC’s proposed annual workplan, proposed performance measurements, and annual review of achievements.” TFNI recommended that ONA would assist in “problem solving,” if a DC’s NAs did not support the DC’s proposed or actual activities.

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<sup>35</sup> The creation of a neighborhood grants program was not funded for many years, despite additional attempts to establish the program. Mayor Tom Potter successfully established and funded Portland’s “Neighborhood Small Grants Program” in 2006.

Other recommendations sought to tie some of the funding allocation for DCs on the relative demand for services in their district, e.g. “the number of NA’s and citizen’s served.” TFNI members sought to put additional pressure on DCs to listen to their NAs by recommending that that, if a NA was unhappy with the services it was receiving from its DC, the NA be allowed to move to a different DC along with the NA’s funding allocation.

The TFNI members recognized that the current allocation per NA was “very low” and recommended additional funding to increase the amount received by each NA. TFNI members sought to ensure that any movement of neighborhoods would not endangered the ability of a DC to provide basic services. They recommended that each DC “receive a core allocation...sufficient to provide basic services” and that funding tied to the number and characteristics of its member neighborhood associations “would be in addition to this core allocation” (13).

The TFNI members recognized that establishing an equitable allocation of funding among the districts was “complex.” They recommended that a portion of the TFNI members continue to “work with the ONA BAC to develop an equity funding strategy which considers but is not limited to factors such as population, number of NA’s served, and area; and indicators of need such as rate of development, crime, poverty, and education and income levels.”<sup>36</sup> The TFNI members also called for standards to be set

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<sup>36</sup> Soon after the TFNI completed its report, SE Uplift Neighborhood Program, the district coalition for inner SE Portland, approached ONA and made the case that their coalition should receive significantly more funding than the other coalitions because nearly a quarter of the city’s population lived in inner SE. ONA subsequently increased SE Uplift’s allocation to nearly twice as much as the other district coalitions. While Portland continued to grow and change over the next twenty years, the distribution of resources among the district coalitions did not change, prompting increasing demands for the development of a more equitable funding formula. The strongest push for reworking the funding formula would come from East

within 90 days to guide funding allocations that would be tied directly to the number of residents in a district and related to the delivery of particular services, “such as newsletters and mailings” (13-14).

**Collaborative Accountability:** TFNI members heard calls for greater accountability with the neighborhood system. Some critics said “NA’s should be accountable for being inclusive and representing fairly the views of all participants.” Some said that DC’s needed to be held accountable— both by their NAs and by the DCs themselves—for supporting NAs as required in their ONA contracts. Some said ONA should do a better job of “enforcing the terms of its contracts” but not in a way that would interfere “with each Coalition’s right to set priorities and address community needs” (14).

TFNI members called for the City to “measure the public benefit being achieved through the investment of public dollars in neighborhood involvement”—a call that would be heard periodically over subsequent years in Portland and in other communities as community members and city government leaders sought to justify public expenditures on public involvement activities and systems (14).

The TFNI members stressed that any effort to respond to “problems and dissatisfactions with NA’s, DC’s and ONA needed to preserve “the independence of the NA’s and the DC’s from City control” as an “essential element in an effective system of neighborhood involvement.” They also found that the City needed to be more responsive to neighborhood concerns and found that “both NA’s and citizens” needed effective ways to hold the City accountable (14).

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Portland neighborhood leaders. By 2010, the population of east Portland had grown to nearly equal that living in inner SE Portland and represented the greatest population diversity in Portland and therefore some of the greatest challenges to effective community organizing and civic involvement.

To ensure “mutual accountability,” TFNI members recommended a “commitment to a collaborative rather than adversarial approach....” They recommended that participants at all levels of the neighborhood system be encouraged to: “ask for what they want,” “explain how they would know if they got it,” “not tell each other what not to do,” and “address problem in the context of larger goals” (14). TFNI members said that all interactions between parties to “themselves and one another accountable” should include: “focusing on goals,” rewarding desired behavior,” “training,” “modeling desired behavior,” “using mediation to resolve conflict,” “planning for improvement rather than blaming for past outcomes,” and agreeing on “principles rather than developing rules” (14).

TFNI members called on ONA to work collaboratively with the NAs and DCs to develop future contract agreements and “facilitate inclusive evaluation” of progress in meeting the agreed-on goals and lead the way in helping parties to clarify what they want and agree among themselves on the resolution of their path forward. TFNI members suggested some specific approaches:

- **Written expectations:** “Development by NA’s and DC’s of written expectations for NA and DC board members;”
- **Evaluation guidelines:** “Development of guidelines for action plans and performance evaluations, including reference to City, County and State benchmarks, and measureable as well as subjective outcomes;”
- **Public access to performance data:** “Increased public disclosure of performance indicators;”

- **Enforcement of the ONA Guidelines:** “Reassessment of options for enforcement of the Guidelines, including a clearer definition of the role of ONA and the establishment of the Citizen Advisory Committee;” and
- **Grievance procedure review:** “Reassessment of the Grievance procedure” (15).

**Operational Recommendations:** TFNI members presented seven additional goals with supporting strategies that provide very useful insights into what TFNI members believed needed to be implemented by ONA, NAs and DCs, and the City to achieve these goals. The goals and summaries of their implementation strategies are presented below.

Goal #1: Community members should be aware of and understand the work of the NAs, DCs, and ONA and know about the resources available through the neighborhood system. Strategies focused on actions by ONA including:

- Inclusion of elements in the ONA workplan that would “build visibility and understanding” of the neighborhood system.
- ONA development and distribution of “more understandable brochures and materials” about the neighborhood system, ways to get involved in NAs, and “services available from ONA and the DCs” and clarification for community members that the neighborhood system is intended to “help neighbors work together effectively” but not, in any way, to limit “the access of individuals to City officials” (15).

- Outreach and communication efforts that included a map of NA boundaries, advertisements on buses, utilization of “school, local, and ethnic newspapers”, and a pilot project to increase the use of electronic communication (e.g. computer, cable, fax, etc.) “between the City and residents.”
- ONA funding to assist NAs and DCs to communicate more effectively “with neighbors within their boundaries” (16).

Goal #2: Increased involvement in NAs and DCs by “low income residents, renters, ethnic minorities, younger people with young children, and other under-represented groups in NAs and DCs” to strengthen “the neighborhood involvement process” and benefit “individual neighborhoods and the City as a whole.” TFNI members recommended that ONA:

- Establish a process to acknowledge “neighborhoods/communities without boundaries” as proposed by Charles Shi (see above).
- Offer ongoing training for NA leaders on strategies to encourage diverse participation.
- Encourage NAs and DCs to work with other community organizations, including “civic groups, ethnic groups, schools, businesses, churches, and other community stakeholders” and strongly encourage NAs to “make proactive efforts to assure participation by the full diversity of their community.”

- Provide language translation and interpretation services to help NAs and DCs overcome language barriers and to encourage NAs and DCs to provide child care at their meetings and events whenever possible.
- Increase accessibility by encouraging general compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (16).

TFNI members recommended that the City help hold NAs accountable by asking, during decision making processes, whether the NA has a minority report, and how many community members were involved in the neighborhood's decision making process (17).

Goals #3 and #4: "NAs and DCs should be welcoming to all members of the community" and people who do not like attending meetings should have other opportunities to get involved in their neighborhood. TFNI members recommended that NAs and DCs be strongly encouraged to:

- "Use a welcoming process at each meeting" and "identify and welcome" new residents to their communities through devices as a "welcome wagon" (e.g. a packet of information and materials about their new neighborhood and how to get involved).
- "Hold meetings at times and locations" that are "convenient to as many neighbors as possible" and to hold meetings at "accessible locations," whenever possible.
- Host fun events and social opportunities, and offer opportunities for community members "to work on projects and activities," all in addition to standard meetings.

TFNI members recommended that ONA should:

- Offer ongoing training opportunities to NA and DC leaders “in meeting facilitation and effective meeting techniques” with a special focus on promoting the “expression of views by all participants and preventing “more vocal participants” from dominating the meeting time.
- Fund conflict resolution support and assistance to NAs and DCs in “dealing with difficult people” (17).
- Build greater awareness of its “telephone information and referral services.”
- Explore how to use electronic communication tools (like the Internet and the library’s data system) to “post information on City plans and provide opportunities for input” and on “NA activities.”

Goal #5: Support the “development of new and continuing leadership at all levels of NA’s and DC’s.” TFNI recommended that ONA should provide continuous leadership development training and support and offer multiple levels of training opportunities to meet the “needs of both more and less experienced activists.” TFNI members recommended that NA and DC leaders be encourage strongly to “attend trainings at least once a year” (18).

Goal #6: Experienced and knowledgeable staff should be available to support community members and NAs at all “District Coalitions and District Offices.” TFNI members recommended that ONA “facilitate regular networking meetings” for district staff to help them share strategies and information (18).

Goal #7: City bureaus should more productively involve community members and NAs in “developing and implementing policy through more effective, sincere coordinated efforts.” TFNI members recommend a long list of actions that City bureaus should take to help improve the quality and effectiveness of their involvement of the community in decision making. These included:

- Educate NAs about and involve them in “real choices” (this echoes the call for “genuine community involvement instead of “lip service” from the 1992 Strachan report).
- Require every city bureau to “allocate staff time to neighborhood education,” and then to use these “educated citizens effectively.” The TFNI members stressed that “Bureaus should ask NA’s for information only when it will be used in a meaningful way.”
- Use “neighborhood volunteers to assist” the City in its work “whenever possible.”
- Involve NAs early in project planning, “especially when infrastructure improvements are involved.”
- Schedule and locate meeting at times and locations convenient “to the maximum number of people” (18).
- Include sign-in sheets at hearings as part of the public record and formally count everyone who attended, not just those who came to speak (to more accurately record the level of public interest).

- Ensure that the most relevant staff person reaches out to the public and avoid assigning the responsibilities for managing the project and listening to neighbors to different staff people.
- Ensure that high-level bureau staff get out into the community and interact with NAs and DCS more often. More community members likely would come to these meeting because people with the authority to make decisions would be there, and NA's would be more "useful to decision-makers."
- Schedule and advertise bureau outreach activities "at least six weeks in advance" (rather than the 30 day notice required in City Code) as often as possible to allow community groups to get the word out to the public in their newsletters.
- Improve community outreach by using postcards more often because "They're easier to read, recycle, or post," and "phone/email notification of meetings" because it is more efficient and less wasteful.
- Use the "guiding principles and handbook developed by the District Chairs, Bureau outreach staff, and ONA" to "improve City/citizen communication."<sup>37</sup>

**Budget Recommendations:** TFNI members supported expanded funding for the community and neighborhood involvement system to implement the TFNI recommendations. TFNI members highlighted their recommendation that "a four-position

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<sup>37</sup> The City Council would adopt these principles for public involvement by resolution at the same Feb 1996 hearing at which it accepted the TFNI report. In the following years, while some city staff referred to the principles and the Handbook, developed in 1995, most did not. Continuing community concerns about inconsistent and poor quality community involvement by city bureaus would lead City Council to create the Public Involvement Task Force in 2003 to undertake a major review of city government public involvement. This process is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

core staff be provided for each DC or District Office” and that at least one of these positions should be devoted to “crime prevention activities.”

ONA estimated that implementation of the TFNI recommendation would require a funding increase of \$677,809 in the 1996-97 fiscal year. The increased funding proposed included:

Small Grant Program	\$200,000
Increased “Linkages and Outreach”	\$142,499
Neighborhood Association Mediation and Facilitation	\$ 50,000
Business District Association Recognition and Support:	\$ 50,000
Establishment of Salary Ranges	\$137,005
Core Staff of 4	\$ 98,305
Working toward equity in the future	\$ 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$677,809</b>

#### **Policies and Procedures Needed to Implement Initiatives and**

**Recommendations:** TFNI members recommended that, after the City Council adopted the TFNI recommendations, the TFNI should continue to review and develop policy and procedure changes that would support the implementation of the TFNI recommendations. In keeping with the spirit and values of the TFNI report, the TFNI members recommended that a thorough community involvement process be used to consider and develop any changes to City policy and the ONA Guidelines.

#### **Public Involvement Principles and City Employee Outreach Handbook:**

During the time the TFNI was working on its report, community members and city staff were working together on two other products: a set of “Citizen Involvement Principles” to guide public involvement for city government, and an *Outreach and Involvement Handbook for City of Portland Bureaus* to help city staff improve community involvement and communication practices in their bureaus.

In February 1996, the City Council adopted Resolution 35494 by which the council formally adopted the new public involvement principles and directed City agencies “to integrate these principles into their programs,” and to use the “outreach and Involvement handbook and other resources available to ensure that the City and its citizens reap the benefits of effective, high-quality citizen involvement” (Portland. City Council. *Resolution 35494* 7 February 1996). (The full text of the principles is reproduced in Figure 3 below.)

The new public involvement principles stated that the “elected officials and staff of the City of Portland...believe that effective citizen involvement is essential to good governance” and that a “respectful and informed exchange of ideas between the City and citizens will result in the best policies and decisions” The resolution committed the “City of Portland” to “promote and sustain an environment that creates and responds to citizen involvement.”

By adopting the resolution, the City Council also committed themselves and city staff to: “value civic involvement,” “promote on-going dialogue with citizens,” ensure that City “communications and processes are understandable;” reach out to and encourage participation from all of Portland’s diverse communities; design citizen involvement process to fit the goals of the particular projects; “seek early involvement of citizens in planning, projects, and policy development;” respond in a timely way to citizen input; coordinate City bureau outreach efforts to best use “citizens time and efforts;” promote ongoing citizens, City officials and staff “in community organizing, networking, and collaboration;” and to “Provide financial and technical support to

Portland's neighborhood association network as the primary channel for citizen input and involvement."

The *Outreach and Involvement Handbook for City of Portland Bureaus* (Fall 1995) originally had been developed by a group of city staff and neighborhood and community activists in 1995. The authors characterized it as "a distillation of the collective wisdom of many citizens and City staff with years of experience in citizen involvement." They stated that the Handbook was intended it to "shape how City staff think about, plan and carry out citizen involvement efforts." They said they intended the handbook to be a guide and resource, not a "'cookbook' with hard-and-fast rules." They also stated that the handbook for city staff was intended to be a companion to the "Citizens Handbook" created by ONA to guide community members in organizing and interacting with City government (Portland. Office of Neighborhood Involvement. *An Outreach and Involvement Handbook*, Fall 1995 1).

The *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* did a good job of describing many public involvement best practices. It emphasized that effective community involvement strengthens the legitimacy of government and leads to better solutions that can help City staff "implement effective policies and programs for Portland" (2). it also offered a checklist to help City staff scope out a project by asking about the projects goal, who in the community will be impacted most, what information staff need to share with the community, what involvement and/or input staff want from community members, who else in City government might have undertaken a similar project in the same target area, and the resources and time the project will require (3-5).

The *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* offered process design tips and emphasizes process design guiding values, such as, “Allow enough time. Communicate openly. Listen carefully.” The *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* offers specific tips that encouraged city staff to: clearly explain to community members the “process, expectation, and time lines *up front*” [emphasis in the original]; minimize scheduling conflicts with other events and processes; use up to date mailing lists, look for meeting locations “convenient to the people in the impacted neighborhoods;” represent city government not just your bureau (i.e. “be knowledgeable of activities by other bureaus that relate to” your project); actively listen to questions and comments from community members to be able to identify and respond to underlying problems or needs; “Respect both your own and the citizen’s’ expertise;” explain city policies—don’t just quote them; make meeting minutes and other materials available to community members; and document and communicate back to community members the impact community input had on the project.

The *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* also stressed that City staff need to recognize the impact that each City community involvement process can have on other City community involvement processes. The *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* stated that “Every involvement effort builds either a bridge or a barrier for the next one.” The Handbook stresses that:

“When citizens see that City staff are truly listening to their concerns and working to gain the most benefit from the involvement effort, those citizens are more likely to treat the next involvement effort as credible. Conversely, if citizens believe their time was wasted or disrespected—that the involvement effort was only to put a veneer of

endorsement on set decision—those citizens are more likely to approach the next involvement effort with suspicion or apathy” (15).

The *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* notes that citizen activists say that two “most common mistakes the City makes when implementing citizen involvement efforts” are: “Using the ‘wrong’ approach for the outreach process and not allowing enough time for outreach and development.”

The *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* goes on to describe: different methods to identify and reach out to different groups in the community; technical assistance and support available to City staff from ONA; how to use and support committees effectively; a flow chart of the “typical components of a citizen involvement process;” tips on improving day-to-day contacts with the public; profiles of and tips on working with community members who are effective advocates or angry or apathetic; a profile of an effective city staff person; contact information for neighborhood district offices; and contacts for local media and district coalition and neighborhood association newsletters (15-20).

Together, the public involvement principles and the *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* did a very good job of capturing values and best practice of community involvement. Many of these same values, strategies and methods would be “re-discovered” by future efforts to identify what good city community involvement should look like and to create best practices guides and support materials for city staff.

**Figure 3: Portland Public Involvement Principles, 1996**

*City of Portland*  
*Citizen Involvement Principles*

As elected officials and staff of the City of Portland, we believe that effective citizen involvement is essential to good governance. We believe a respectful and informed exchange of ideas between the City and citizens will result in the best policies and decisions for all of Portland. To this end, the City of Portland commits itself to promote and sustain an environment that creates and responds to citizen involvement.

We hold that the success of citizen involvement depends on:

- Mutual respect of all parties;
- Broad-based outreach to inform and involve citizens;
- Commitment and skills to effectively facilitate, receive, and respond to citizen input and involvement;
- Coordination of outreach and involvement efforts of all City bureaus.

To carry out our commitment, we adopt these guiding principles of citizen involvement:

1. Value civic involvement as essential to the health of the city.
2. Promote on-going dialogue with citizens by maintaining relationships with neighborhood and community groups.
3. Respect and encourage citizen participation by ensuring that City communications and processes are understandable.
4. Reach out to all our communities to encourage participation which reflects Portland's rich diversity.
5. Think creatively and plan wisely, using citizen involvement processes and techniques to best fit the goals of the particular project.
6. Seek early involvement of citizens in planning, projects, and policy development.
7. Consider and respond to citizen input in a timely manner, respecting all perspectives and insights.
8. Promote the coordination of City bureaus' outreach and involvement activities to make the best use of citizens' time and efforts.
9. Promote ongoing education of citizens in neighborhood and community groups and City officials and staff in community organizing, networking, and collaboration.
10. Provide financial and technical support to Portland's neighborhood association network as the primary channel for citizen input and involvement.

*(City of Portland Public Involvement Principles, adopted by the Portland City Council through Resolution 35494, February 7, 1996).*

On February 7, 1996, the TFNI members presented their final report to the City Council along with the proposed Citizen Involvement Principles and the Outreach and Involvement *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* developed for city bureaus by community members and city staff. Commissioner Hales—the Commissioner in Charge of ONA—noted that these documents “work together.” He thanked neighborhood activists and the TFNI members for “helping the City reexamine its successful neighborhood program” which he said was “a national model of how citizen democracy ought to work.” Hales said that, rather than resting on its laurels, the City had reviewed its program, recognizing changes in society, to see “if the City is working as effectively as it can with the neighborhood organizations” and to see whether the City “really means it when it says it values citizen participation.” The City Council proceeded to consider first the resolution to adopt and public involvement principles and direct city bureaus to use the *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* and then the “transmittal” of the TFNI report (Portland. City Council. *Public hearing minutes*, Feb 7, 1996).

It is important to note that the City Council adopted the principles and directed city bureaus to use the Handbook by “resolution” and voted to “accept” the TFNI report—a common practice for this type of task force report. While an “ordinance” passed by the city council “carries the binding force of law,” a “resolution” adopted by the City Council is a statement of City policy or values but does not carry the same weight as an “ordinance.” City bureau compliance with a “resolution” or an “accepted” report depends much more on the willingness of city staff and managers to follow the policy set out in the resolution or recommendations in the report and willingness of City

Council members to hold them accountable for doing so. The City Council did not take any formal action to require further action on either the principles, the Handbook, or the TFNI report recommendations (Portland. Office of the City Auditor. *Drafting Manual: Ordinances, Resolutions, Reports*, May 2013 1-2).

While all the city council members made positive remarks at the hearing about community involvement and the task force report, the most telling comments were made by Mayor Vera Katz, who would have significant influence on whether the many TFNI recommendations that required additional funding would be included in the City budget that would be developed in the coming months. Mayor Katz noted that the city budget note that had prompted the creation of the TFNI had raised the question of “how to organize the community-outreach people found in every bureau.” She recognized that the TFNI had not “gotten to the final answer” on this but congratulated the TFNI members for developing their report.<sup>38</sup> While Mayor Katz said she supported the TFNI report, she maintained that the city council needed to revisit particular recommendations and decide which ones the council wanted to move forward. The hearing minutes record Mayor Katz as adding that “while this is a wonderful report,” she did “not know yet how much will actually be acted upon” (Portland. City Council. *Public hearing minutes*, Feb 7, 1996 15).

The TFNI report included many recommendations and action steps that help illustrate what TFNI members believed were the necessary elements to achieve and support an effective city-wide community and neighborhood involvement system. TFNI

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<sup>38</sup> The concept of whether city bureau community involvement activities or staff could be somehow consolidated or centrally organized was raised again in 2000 during Mayor Katz’s Administrative Services Review (ASR), which looked at opportunities to centralize and consolidate a number of administrative services across city agencies. The ASR is discussed in the next chapter.

member started their larger vision of a creating a “participatory government” in which neighbors and their government are directly linked and in which a “full diversity of neighbors” work face-to-face with city leaders and staff to plan and implement public policy and allocate resources. Many of the TFNI recommendations echo recommendations from earlier reviews of Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system, including more resources to support the system, more training for community members, increased support for communications, outreach and conflict resolution, greater accountability throughout the system, and a genuine commitment by city leaders and staff to value and utilize early involvement and guidance and support to help them do so.

TFNI emphasized the important of some basic values, including the importance of building trust and respect between city leaders and staff and community members, the creation of processes that are transparent and welcoming and that involve and respond to the diversity of people, organizations, and perspectives a neighborhood or community; the need for community involvement to lead to results for the community, the need to strengthen the leadership and other skills of participants, and the need for leaders and staff need to respect the wishes and values of neighborhoods and involve them in making key government decisions.

TFNI found that the neighborhood system was working well and provided significant value, but also could be improved. TFNI members recognized that some neighborhood associations only involved small number of people and often did not reflect the diversity of people in their community. Conflict and interpersonal communication

problems in neighborhood associations and district coalitions sometimes led to conflict and discouraged participation. TFNI members asserted that additional funding and support for the system could help improve the functioning of the system, promote greater and more diverse participation, and increase the effectiveness of community involvement.

TFNI members recommended allowing alternatives to the non-profit model for district coalitions, including the city-run office in place in north Portland. They recommended expanding the system to support and involve other types of community organizations including business district associations and organizations that represent immigrants and refugees and other historically underrepresented groups in the community. They supported the continuation of ONA's role in providing support to neighborhood associations through the district coalition offices including training, information and referral, coordination of crime prevention efforts, coordination of community outreach by City bureaus, promotion of communication between NAs, DCBs, and other community organizations, and mediation and facilitation services. They also recommended a new, significantly expanded role for ONA, in which ONA would be given the "responsibility and authority" to coordinate the outreach efforts of all city agencies.

TFNI members recommended specific actions and strategies to strengthen the neighborhood system including a study of boundary issues and develop of a process to resolve boundary disputes; self-evaluations by NAs and DCS, increased communications and linkages between the neighborhood system and other community groups and organizations; formal recognition of business district associations; and support to help

neighborhood association reach out to and involve groups not well represented in their organizations and activities—such as support for mailings, newsletters, and other outreach tools, training for neighborhood volunteers on effective outreach to these groups and how to create inclusive organizations, and resources to help neighborhood associations provide translation, interpretation, and child care. TFNI member Charles Shi introduced the ultimately very influential concept of formally recognizing non-geographic communities (“neighborhoods without borders”) and integrating them into Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system.

Other important recommendations included increase support for conflict resolution, and a reduction in staff pay disparities across neighborhood coalitions and an increase in the amount and equitable distribution of resources among the neighborhood coalitions. TFNI members also called for greater accountability of neighborhood associations to their community members and district coalitions to their member neighborhood associations, including a stronger role for NAs in reviewing the workplans, performance measurements, and annual achievements of the district coalition and an increase in the responsiveness and accountability of the City to neighborhoods and the community. TFNI members also called for a significant increase in leadership training and capacity building and networking among neighborhood volunteers and district coalition staff.

TFNI members recommended a number of approaches and action to increase the quality and effectiveness of City government community involvement efforts, including ensuring that community members can have a real affect on the outcomes of the

processes, that involvement processes are adequately staffed and are given enough time to be successful, and that city agencies involve neighborhood associations early in project planning. TFNI members recognized that many city staff may need help in learning how to design and implement better community involvement processes and hoped that the new public involvement principles and the *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* developed by city staff, community and neighborhood activists and ONA staff would provide some of this needed support.

The TFNI also recognized that additional work would be needed after they submitted their report to ensure that their recommendations would lead to changes in City policy and the ONA Guidelines and to changes in practices both in the City and in the neighborhood system.

#### 1998 ONI Standards and formal name change from ONA to ONI

In January 1998, the City Council adopted Resolution 35667, which formally adopted the 1998 update of the ONA/ONI Guidelines and changed the name of ONA to the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI). Major changes in the 1998 Guidelines included the addition of processes by which business district associations and “ethnically-based communications” (“Communities Beyond Neighborhood Boundaries” (CBNBs)) that met certain requirements could apply for formal recognition by ONI and become eligible to receive notices, be listed in the ONI Directory, and receive other support from ONI.<sup>39</sup> The 1998 Guidelines also created the opportunity for district coalitions to choose

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<sup>39</sup> The next chapter includes a more detailed description of the new provisions in the 1998 Guidelines for the recognition of business districts associations and “communities beyond neighborhood boundaries” and the response of these communities to these new opportunities.

alternative governance models, such as the city-run office model, used by the North Portland Neighborhood Office at that time.

1998 – Lee Perlman statement to Neighborhoods USA Conference

Despite the work of the TFNI, many neighborhood activists continued to be very concerned about what they saw as the shift in ONA away from community empowerment and more toward rule making and administration. They also were alarmed at what they saw as a lack of support—and sometimes active hostility—from City Council members toward Portland’s neighborhood system and community involvement in general. A formal statement prepared by one long-time neighborhood activist offers a window into these concerns.

In May 1998, Portland hosted the national conference of Neighborhoods USA.<sup>40</sup> Lee Perlman, a long-time neighborhood and community activist in Portland prepared an overview of the evolution of Portland’s neighborhood association system for the “Neighborhoods U.S.A. delegates,” titled “Welcome to Portland, A Neighborhood Unfriendly City.” Perlman, who worked as a free lance journalist covering neighborhood news for a number of community newspapers and served as an informal historian of Portland’s neighborhood system, criticized the direction the system was taking and particularly criticized Portland Mayor Vera Katz, former ONA Commissioner in Charge

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<sup>40</sup> According to the Neighborhoods USA website: “Neighborhoods, USA is a national non-profit organization committed to building and strengthening neighborhood organizations. Created in 1975 to share information and experiences toward building stronger communities, NUSA now continues to encourage networking and information sharing to facilitate the development of partnerships between neighborhood organizations, government and the private sector” (NUSA website, <http://www.nusa.org/contactus.aspx>, downloaded Sept. 23, 2013).

Gretchen Kafoury and current (at the time) ONA/ONI Commissioner Charlie Hales<sup>41</sup> (Perlman. *Welcome to Portland, A Neighborhood Unfriendly City*. 1998 1).

In the document, Perlman examines the evolution of Portland's neighborhood system in light of Frances Fox Piven's description of the life cycle of grass roots movements in her book, *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail* (1977). Perlman writes that the ability of grass roots movements to "bring about lasting change is based on the fact that they are outside the system, and have the ability to disrupt it." He notes that "After a time, such movements are offered an 'official' place within the established order," which he says Piven identifies as the "beginning of the end" for the movement. Perlman argued that "official acceptance" comes with limitations on the movement's "actions and obligations that limits its ability to act." The movement takes on "a top-heavy organizational structure, the maintenance of which saps their energy. Their official leadership positions become prizes that the power-hungry fight over. They fade away when they become so weak that no one can pretend they are still relevant." Perlman goes on to suggest that "Portland might well be a case study for much of Piven's theory" (2).

Perlman recounts how neighborhood associations had existed early on in Portland for many years, but that "with the turbulence and problems of the late 1960s and early '70s there were more of them active at one time than there had ever been before, and they because a sort of movement" (3). Perlman notes that "In some cases makeshift

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<sup>41</sup> Lee Perlman passed away in August 2013. This document was discovered by community volunteers and staff from ONI and the City of Portland City Archives who helped sort through the mountains of papers and documents—spanning the entire forty year history of the neighborhood system—in Lee's house after his passing. It is not clear whether or not Lee distributed this document at the conference. Nevertheless, the document sums up Lee's assessment of Portland's neighborhood system at the time.

government and private support systems were put in place,” such as the federally funded organization in North Portland, the PDC supported neighborhood offices in inner northeast and southeast Portland, and the inner southeast non-profit organizing group, Portland Actions Committees Together (PACT).

Perlman said neighborhood associations at the time “tended to be ad hoc organizations, with both the strengths and weaknesses of such groups. They were strong and active during times of crisis, fading away partially or entirely between crises.” He wrote that in the 1970s, citizen involvement requirements of many federal assistance programs and the citizen participation requirements of Oregon’s new statewide land use planning law led city of Portland officials to see “a need for a stable, dependable system to give citizen feedback to government proposals.” Perlman describes how Mary Pedersen, instead of creating a new structure, chose to build on the “existing grass roots neighborhood network” in Portland. He wrote that the system provided grass roots organizations with “enough staff support, and money for printing and mailing to sustain them during the non-crisis periods.” ONA provided this support through contracts for services with community-based and governed organizations. Perlman wrote that “The independent contract system was intended to give the city enough control to ensure that its money was used for the intended purpose, yet free local associations, and their staff, from day to day political interference”—“Coordination, but not control” (4).

Perlman relates how some “city leaders were suspicious of the idea” early on, but that over time, “Pedersen and her successor, Patti Jacobsen, won acceptance for the new system within and without city government. City bureaus that previously had refused to

acknowledge the existence of neighborhood associations now began to actively seek them out” (Perlman 4-5). Perlman asserts that “Neighborhood Associations were never the ‘revolution,’ but they became a force to be reckoned with” (5).

Perlman writes that the “long downhill slide” for the system began in the mid-1980s under ONA Director Sarah Newhall. He notes that “ONA administration took an increasingly heavy hand in regulating the neighborhood [district] offices, their staffs and the local associations.” ONA used problems “stemming from struggles for power” in some neighborhoods and district offices and charges that neighborhood organizations were not “fully representative of their communities” to impose “increasingly greater control over associations and coalitions...” (6-7). (Perlman notes that if these organizations had been “fully representative of their communities” they would have been the first “activist organizations in history to achieve this distinction.”) Perlman noted that, at the same time the City was pressuring neighborhood associations to “attract members of every conceivable special interest group,” the City simultaneously was “encouraging business associations and ethnic groups to seek an independent source by offering them “official recognition” (in the ONA Guidelines). Perlman predicted (correctly) that few of these organizations would apply for formal recognition because they would have to comply with many of the same city requirements that applied to neighborhood associations (Perlman 7).

Perlman directed his more intense criticism toward “mayor Vera Katz and commissioner Gretchen Kafoury” who he identified as the “hostesses of this NUSA conference.” He noted the irony, as he saw it, of having these two women host the NUSA

conference when they had “done their best to push local associations out of their positions of influence.” Perlman writes:

“Katz, once a neighborhood volunteer herself, plainly does not like people who talk back to her, and neighborhood volunteers are notoriously poor at towing anyone’s party line when they think it conflicts with their interests. Kafoury is a staunch advocate of low-income housing a[nd] social service providers – a laudable cause, to be sure, but one she is so single-mindedly devoted to that she judges everything else in relation to it. She seemed at one point to feel neighborhood associations’ function was to support her efforts in this regard, and she became annoyed when they didn’t seem to get it. Twice she has been given responsibility for ONA, yet she may hold a modern Council record for the fewest neighborhood meetings attended” (7-8).

Perlman charges that, while Katz and Kafoury often opposed each other politically, they shared a dislike of the neighborhood movement. He writes that “Kafoury, who is retiring from electoral politics, no longer feels any need to disguise her dislike for the neighborhood movement. Katz, knowing this, put her in charge of ONA as a way to weaken the neighborhood movement without having to bear responsibility for doing it” (8).

Perlman also criticizes City Commissioner Charlie Hales, the ONI Commissioner in Charge at the time, for manipulating the public process on projects, when the processes did not “match his preconceived conclusions.” Perlman also charged that Hales’ effort at the time to reorganizing city land use planning and development—known as Blueprint 2000—was seen by many neighborhood activists as “the latest step in efforts to increase development activity by removing opportunities for citizens to review it.”

Perlman notes that, earlier in the neighborhood systems history, “such assaults on the Portland neighborhood system would have mobilized volunteers citywide to deluge

Council with angry phone calls, letters, and more. That such an outpouring is not taking place is an indication of how impotent and divided the neighborhood movement has become” (Perlman 9). Perlman closes by predicting that “The death of the Portland neighborhood movement as currently conceived is a matter of when, not if” and states that “In some ways, the sooner it happens the better.” Perlman states that the demise of the current system would allow “concerned community members” to “begin the work of creating a replacement, which they certainly will do” (9).

Lee Perlman’s passionate critique of the neighborhood system likely reflected the frustration many neighborhood activists felt in the later 1990s. Perlman felt the system had lost its way and was being redirected away from its original community empowerment focus at the same time that mechanisms and programs to support involvement were being eliminated or undermined. The lack of support and active hostility toward the neighborhood system that Perlman saw from the city council caused some passionate advocates of neighborhood power to feel little hope for positive change.

Mayor’s Budget Messages—Katz—1993 to 1999

Vera Katz succeeded Bud Clark as Portland’s mayor in January 1993. She had early roots in Portland politics as a community activist in NW Portland. She ran for and was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives in 1972 and served in that body until 1990. She was elected as the first woman Oregon Speaker of the House in 1985 and served as Speaker for three sessions. In 1992, Portlanders elected Katz as their mayor.

During Katz’s first two terms in the 1990s, Portland’s economy was recovering and people from all over the county (and a number of immigrants and refugees as well)

were moving to the Portland and the region. City government concerns about economic revitalization soon began to compete with the need to effectively manage all the new population growth in the region and in Portland. During the 1990s, additional property tax limitations passed first by the voters and then the state legislature further restricted city revenues.

Katz's budget messages are the longest and most detailed since those of Mayor Goldschmidt. Katz's first budget message, in 1993, sets the tone for all her messages in the 1990s. In her opening paragraph, she establishes her primary focus as the ongoing effort to "make government more efficient, more innovative, more cost effective, more productive and more responsive to the needs of all Portland's citizens." She states that this city budget was "framed to meet the policy objectives set by the Council," which included: "A safe, peaceful community; economic vitality and security; community-oriented city government; a well-planned city with managed/balanced growth; affordable basic services; financial stability; quality urban life; decent, affordable housing; quality education; and families and children" (Portland. "Mayor's Message." *City Budget* FY 1993-94 i). All of Katz's budget messages include a primary focus on the provision of "high quality city services."

In her 1993 budget message, Katz describes city government as "a large, highly complex public corporation" and states that she and the City Council are "determined to reinvigorate it with a renewed entrepreneurial spirit, and a greater sense of thrift and service" (ii). She talks about a goal of creating "strong and healthy neighborhoods" and building "new partnerships with the community." The examples she uses to illustrate this

focus include the construction of facilities, increased code enforcement by building inspectors, traffic management and enforcement, job training programs for at-risk youth, and increased access for minority and female-owned businesses to City contracts (ii-iii). Katz also reports that the budget continued funding for the Outer Southeast District Plan and the retention of two planner positions to support “neighborhood planning programs.” Katz also mentioned that the budget “includes money for serving those areas of the city we have recently annexed...”(iii).

In the conclusion of her first budget message, Katz states that she wants to see, during her time as mayor, the emergence of “a reinvigorated government for Portland, one that is leaner, more decentralized, more flexible and less hindered by bureaucratic inertia and, most important, one that puts service to the citizen and taxpayer—the customer—first” [emphasis added] (iv).

**Public Involvement in the City Budget Process:** By 1994, Katz had instituted a new approach to involving the community in the city budget process. Katz created a new process she called “Your City, Your Choice” (YCYC) that used different strategies to ask Portlanders what they “believed to be the most pressing city-wide and neighborhood needs in an extensive public outreach process.” Katz asserted that YCYC was “the most comprehensive” outreach to the community related to the city budget “in two decades.” She stated that the YCYC process included a questionnaire sent out in FOODday newspaper, “which reaches nearly every household in the city,” “eight community forums in the neighborhoods,” and a “random-sample telephone survey” (Portland. “Mayor’s Message.” *City Budget FY 1994-95* i).

Katz reported that community members had told the City Council their highest priorities were “‘quality education,’ a ‘safe, peaceful community,’ and a good environment for families and children.” She also identified as “vital concerns” of community members as “increased public safety,” “effective anti-graffiti programs, better traffic management, and expanded youth recreation programs.” Katz wrote that the City Council considered this input in developing the final city budget, making the budget “not only the Mayor’s and the Council’s budget, but your budget” [emphasis in original] (Portland. “Mayor’s Message.” *City Budget* FY 1994-95 i).

The YCYC process—and the model of using a telephone survey, questionnaires, and community budget meetings—would become Mayor Katz’s primary method for obtaining feedback from community members on their priorities and needs. In 1997, when further property tax limitations reduced city revenues, Katz used this process to ask community members which government services they would cut. Katz reported that “Citizens told us they wanted their basic service protected as well as the services that support lower-income families.” “Economic development, the arts, administration and support, planning, and citizen and neighborhood services were all areas in both the workshops and the survey that citizens thought could be cut” (Portland. “Mayor Message.” *City Budget* FY 1997-98 vi).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> One of the criticisms of the YCYC process was that community members were asked to identify the city services they valued and which were a lower priority and could be considered for cuts without much context for the role and impact of these services relative to the overall work of city government and the implications of cutting them. For instance, I attended a YCYC community budget meeting in the late 1990s. Community members were asked to break into groups and identify programs and services to cut. At my table, community members voted to cut long-range planning to help save the City-provided fall leaf pick up services that cleared leaves off the streets in neighborhoods with a lot of street trees. They could directly see the value of the leaf pick service up but did not have any sense of the value of long-range planning.

The Budget Advisory Committee program, which had been a major program since the founding of Portland's community and neighborhood involvement system was phased out under Katz. Katz only mentions the BACs once briefly in her 1995 budget message as another source of community input that year in addition to the YCYC process<sup>43</sup> (Portland. "Mayor's Message. *City Budget* FY 1995-96 vi).

**Visioning and Policy Guidance:** Katz, in many of her budget messages, identifies goals set by the city council and the goals of Portland Future Focus as major guides for the city budget. In 1994, Katz identified the City Council's major focuses as "Quality education; public safety; families and children; customer service and government efficiency; economic vitality; and managed growth and livability" (Portland. "Mayor's Message. *City Budget* FY 1994-96 iii).<sup>44</sup>

In her budget messages in the later 1990s, Katz also referred to the Portland Multnomah Progress Board Benchmarks (the Progress Board was created in 1994 to monitor progress and measure success in meeting the Portland Future Focus goals) and the Metro 2040 regional growth management plan as overarching guides for the city council's budget decisions. In her 1998 budget message, Katz called for a process to

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<sup>43</sup> Witt, in his description of the overall history of the BAC program, describes the end of the program in the early 1990s as follows: "By 1992, support for the BAC program began to falter. By 1993, Mayor Vera Katz had instituted a biennial budgeting process. This stretching of the budget planning timeline would tax volunteer commitment to the breaking point, and would initiate a spiral of disinterest in maintaining ONA's commitment to staffing the BACC. By 1994, the ONA and the City's Office of Finance and Administration (OFA) agreed to support the BAC program in principle, but ONA would cease staffing the BACC. Without the BACC to serve steering committee functions, the BAC program would fall into disuse over the next few years." He noted that, by the late 1990s, few city agencies still had BACs (Witt Appendix B).

<sup>44</sup> It's interesting to note that Katz never mentions the Portland Future Focus "Good Government" "community value" that called for nurturing strong community leadership by offering ongoing leadership and skill building trainings to community members and that valued "elected officials and private citizens willing to empower and work with the entire community to shape Portland's future" (Portland Future Focus 1991 20).

examine which Portland Future Focus goals had been met and to set new goals, but this process never was implemented (15).

**Neighborhood Livability:** Katz placed a very high priority on preserving and enhancing neighborhood livability in her budget messages. Her primary focus in this area was ensuring strong city services in the community, especially police, fire, street repair, park facilities, affordable housing, job programs for at-risk youth and other similar services. Katz frequently mentions funding to hire additional police and to support Portland's community policing program (first started under Bud Clark). Katz also placed a high priority on growth management and planning to steer increased density in Portland, as much as possible, to areas designated for growth in the regional Metro 2040 growth management plan—these included designated Town Centers, Main Streets, transit corridors, entirely new neighborhoods (e.g. the very popular Pearl District and the still evolving South Waterfront District), and areas in and around downtown. Katz also stressed the need for good design in infill development. “We are determined not to allow Portland to ‘grow ugly’” (Portland. *City Budget* FY 1998-99 13). Katz believed that Portlanders were more likely to accept greater density in their neighborhoods if it was well designed and fit in with the existing character of their neighborhood.

Under Mayor Katz, the City stopped supporting the long time practice of working with community members to develop individual neighborhood plans. The last district planning effort that included neighborhood plans, the East Portland District Plan, was ended in 1997 in the face of budget cuts. Planning efforts shifted to larger district area plans, and then, after the intensive conflict between the City and community activists

over the Southwest Community Plan in the late 1990s (see Hovey and Irazabal) to targeted planning projects focused on accommodating growth in specific locations.

In 1996, Katz enthusiastically ended her mayor's message by stating "We live in a great city. Together, we can make it even better!" She also quoted "the late San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk":

The American Dream starts with the neighborhoods. If we wish to rebuild our cities, we must first rebuild our neighborhoods. And to do that, we must understand that the quality of life is more important than the standard of living. To sit on the front steps...whether it's a veranda in a small town or a concrete stoop in a big city...a[nd] talk to our neighbors is infinitely more important than to huddle on the living-room lounge and watch a make believe world in not so living color (xvi).

**ONA and Community Involvement:** Katz seldom mentioned ONA or community involvement in her lengthy and detailed budget messages (other than her frequent references to the YCYC process). The few times Katz does refer to ONA/ONI or community involvement it is often with regard to specific funding allocation to support a particular staff position, service, or program.

In her 1995 budget message, Katz reported that "We opened a new centralized information and referral service within the Office of Neighborhood Associations to make it easier for our citizens to communicate with the city [to] get answers to questions."

In her 1996 budget message, Katz refers to an allocation, in response to the TFNI Report, of "\$750,00 over the next two year to provide neighborhood grants. The purpose of this program is to improve neighborhood safety and quality of life, develop services that respond to the needs identified by the neighborhoods and empower citizens to participate in community life and promote community partnerships" (xiii). Katz later

redirected this funding to other budget needs that arose after the budget was completed, and the grant program was not implemented.

Also in 1996, in response to another TFNI recommendation, Katz reported the allocation of “\$279,835 over the next two years that will allow the city to provide additional neighborhood office staffing, reach out to a more diverse group of citizens and to help neighbors with training and assistance in mediation and conflict resolution...” and to “develop a print a citizen’s guide to city services” (xv).

In 1997, Katz proposed a list of eight ideas for reorganizing city government to increase efficiency. The list included a proposed reorganization of “crime prevention functions” in ONA and the “Bureau of Police,” and the merger of “the functions of the Metropolitan Human Rights Commission with” ONA (xviii).

Katz placed particular emphasis on improving online access for community members to city government. In 1998, Katz highlighted work within city government to move much of City governments work online to offer community members a “24 hour City Hall” that will allow community members to “pay City bills online and to get City information without having to travel downtown and wait in line, or play endless games of phone tag.” Katz also described a project to use “Geographical Information Management System (GIS)” technology to “convert City information into an electronic format that will allow Portland to access the information they need from their home computer at any hour.” Both projects represented important advances in the transparency of city government and community member access to information and are up, operating, and well used by the public in 2013 (3).

In 1998 Katz reported that the city budget included funding to restore a crime prevention position in ONI and funding to assist in the transition of the ONI Mediation Center to non-profit status (6). Katz also highlighted city budget support for “strengthening our neighborhood business districts,” which included \$200,000 to start a “neighborhood Business Improvement District program” (12).

In 1999, Katz included a goal to “Promote the inclusion of under-represented neighborhoods and groups in participation in City activities and services.” The action items she listed under this goal included: restoration of full funding of ONA’s Mediation Center to help community members resolve disputes before the police have to get involved; funding for the city and county to study “problem of homeless youth in Portland;” funding for after school programs and apprentice programs in the City’s transportation and parks agencies; and a parks program guide (Portland. *City Budget* FY 1999-2000, “Mayor’s Budget Message” 10).

**Key Strengths of Portland:** While most of Katz’s budget messages are detailed descriptions of specific services and program actions, Katz sometimes refers to what she thinks makes Portland a special place.

In 1993, Katz notes that Portland is no longer a “small city.” It has “grown into one of the 30 largest metropolitan areas in the country” and that city government had become a “large, highly complex public corporation” (ii). In 1994, Katz reported that Portland is “recognized nationally and internationally for its vision and good planning” and notes that the city faces different challenges than in the 1960s when “the health of the entire downtown was threatened” (xiii).

In 1996, Katz writes that the city budget “honors the past by building on the work of my predecessors who made Portland one of the rare cities in this country filled with excitement, opportunity – a city that enriches and inspires” (v). She stressed the importance of attracting growth in the region into Portland to “enhance the character of our neighborhoods and prevent Portland from becoming a freeway to other destinations in the region” (vi). She also notes that “Portland is well known, even internationally regarded, as one of the best places to live. Its natural beauty, close proximity to recreation opportunities, small-town feel, neighborhoods with individual character, rich artistic endeavors, and short community times, make Portland an ideal place to raise a family, locate a business and enjoy life” (x).

In 1998, Katz stressed the importance of protecting and improving “Portland’s quality of life in the face of rapid change and growth—for those of us who live and work here today—and those who will follow us tomorrow” (1). Katz closed her 1999 budget message by stating that “We are no longer a small city on the edge of the United States somewhere between Washington and California.” She noted that Portland is home to “globally recognized companies” and is a leader in “international trade, high technology, creative services, environmental technology, and planning” (Portland. “Mayor’s Message.” *City Budget FY 1999-2000* 12).

Katz’s characterization of community involvement in her budget messages was a major departure from how Goldschmidt and Clark talked about community involvement. Instead of being portrayed as partners in city government decision making—as in the budget messages of Goldschmidt and Clark—Katz identifies community members almost

solely as “customers” of city services. The role of community members, in Katz’s budget messages, primarily is to tell the city what services they do and do not want. The City’s role, in turn, is to provide community members with high quality city services.

When talking about what makes Portland special, Katz, unlike other mayors before her, never mentions Portland’s long tradition of strong community involvement in government decision making and civic life. She also does not lay out a vision for a greater governance partnership between city government and the community.

During the 1990s, Katz championed many priorities and initiated many projects, programs, and changes that reshaped the physical character of Portland. She also championed and implemented many innovations in city government organization and management. While Katz focused in great detail on many different subjects in her budget messages, her minimal comments about community involvement appear to indicate that community involvement in government decision making and further advancing the evolution of Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system were not high priorities for her.

#### Lessons from the 1990s

The “soul searching” of the 1990s found that Portland’s community and neighborhood involvement system had value, but needed further development and improvement to successfully move further toward achieving participatory democracy in Portland. Key themes that surfaced were the need to strengthen support for the existing system; to expand the system to do a better job of reaching out to and involving a greater diversity of people and community organizations in civic life and decision making; and to

improve the willingness and capacity of city leaders and staff to work with the community.

Many of the elements needed to achieve a strong city-wide community and neighborhood involvement system that advances a community toward greater participatory democracy had been identified in earlier processes in the 1970s and 1980s and were identified again by processes in the 1990s. Some of these included: the importance of the independence of neighborhood associations and district coalitions, a central agency that focuses primarily on supporting and empowering rather than controlling the system and acts as a bridge to help city agencies and community and neighborhood organizations work together effectively; funding and technical support to help community and neighborhood volunteers communicate effectively with their communities and government; effective and ongoing leadership and other skills training for community members; conflict resolution assistance; and information and referral. City government leaders and staff also need to have the willingness and ability to engage the community through early involvement, adequate notification, well designed processes that help community members affect outcomes, transparent processes and access to information, and accountability of city leaders and staff to document processes and decisions and communicate them back to the community members.

The 1990s provided additional insights into the process by which policies, programs and projects that would move a community toward greater participatory democracy get on the public decision making agenda and are acted on. The 1990s provided examples of studies that helped frame issues and elevated their visibility and the

urgency with which decision makers viewed them—examples include Portland Future Focus, Strachan’s 1992 report, and the TFNI. The 1990s also illustrated the important role policy entrepreneurs can play in developing and advocating for policy recommendations, such as the role Strachan played in leading the focus group review and then helping organize the 1993 Neighborhood Congress, which refocused neighborhood leaders on some common city wide strategies, and Charles Shi’s championing of the concept of “neighborhoods without borders,” which would introduce the idea of non-geographic communities and go on to significantly shape the system’s evolution.

In contrast with the 1970s and 1980s, when Neil Goldschmidt and Bud Clark used their influence as mayor to actively support and champion community and neighborhood involvement, the experience of the 1990s showed how the lack of a strong political champion can block the adoption and implementation of policies and programs that advance participatory democracy. In Portland’s case, the system actually lost ground with the discontinuation of key community involvement programs, such as the BACS, the Neighborhood Needs process, and neighborhood planning. Mayor Katz significantly shaped Portland city government’s agenda during the 1990s. The fact that she did not strongly support greater community involvement in city decision making, coupled with the seemingly lack of strong enthusiasm for the existing neighborhood system on the part of the ONA/ONI commissioners in charge during the 1990s and the lack of a strong advocate for community involvement among the other council members appears to have played a role in the lack of substantial advances in implementing the recommends of different review processes during the 1990s.

Some efforts were made in the 1990s to further embed participatory democracy values and practices into the City's policies and day-to-day operations and in the structure and operation of ONA, the district coalitions, and neighborhood associations. City Council adopted the public involvement principles and directed city agencies to use the *Outreach and Involvement Handbook* to improve their community involvement. This did raise the stature of community involvement somewhat, but appeared to have little effect on the culture and practices of city leaders and city government. The TFNI members had recognized that additional work would be needed to ensure that their recommendations were implemented in a way that would lead to change, but no vision or strategy for organizational change within city government was developed and implemented. The 1998 *ONI Guidelines* did embed some structural changes to Portland's community and neighborhood involvement system by allowing formal recognition of business district association and ethnic-based community organizations and allowing alternative governance models for district coalitions, but these changes ended up having little effect.

The next chapter describes some very interesting projects and processes that supported deeper thinking about both the inclusion of non-geographic and historically underrepresented communities in Portland's community and neighborhood involvement system and the policies, strategies, and support that would be needed to achieve a broad-based and lasting improvement in city government community involvement.