

THE IMPACT OF THE CODE CHANGE

Civic Life Works Towards More Inclusive Civic Engagement Practices



Our Vision

We envision a City in which all Portlanders see opportunities to be involved in Civic Life and contribute to the betterment of Portland for generations to come.

We believe Portlanders who are impacted by systemic inequalities such as housing insecurity or racial profiling possess the best insights to solve them.

"When navigating civic engagement, it should be the government's responsibility to reach out to our communities. Civic Life must work to fortify new avenues for communities who historically haven't walked the path limited to those with the privilege."

—TAJI CHESIMET

The Updated Code Will:

- Continue to direct the City to invest in and work with organizations that promote the common good.
- Establish a new foundation for our conversations and actions toward a more racially and socially inclusive Portland.
- Empower Civic Life to work more closely with other bureaus, such as Planning & Sustainability and Development Services, to ensure community members are more engaged with how decisions are made in the City.
- Allow the bureau's work to better embody its mission and its new name. For example, the Community Safety program (formerly Crime Prevention) promotes a more holistic view of safety that is inclusive to more Portlanders.

Government Should Be Accessible to Everyone

The bureau seeks to create greater opportunities for communities that are currently being excluded from meaningful civic engagement so that their experiences, concerns, and aspirations are reflected in City-supported programs.

More groups that are doing innovative work around civic engagement and the improvement of our city will be encouraged to participate in Civic Life and with each other.

All communities working to address the unique needs of Portlanders will be able to better compete for City resources.

An updated code will allow the City to adapt and effectively respond to Portland's needs and aspirations for decades to come.

Community Provides Input During Year-long Public Process

In July 2018, the Portland City Council directed the Office of Community & Civic Life to review its code to make recommendations for more inclusive practices.

Creating a strong culture of civic engagement in which all Portlanders feel encouraged to contribute their ideas and solutions will make Portland a better place to live for everyone.

Historically, not all Portlanders have had equal access to City-funded civic engagement resources and support, which means some communities are less likely to be a part of the decision-making process that affects their communities.

Since 1974, the City's code has directed the bureau to disproportionately invest in neighborhood associations for civic engagement. Many communities—such as renters, people of color, people experiencing houselessness, people with disabilities, low-wage earners, immigrants, and youth—organize differently and often across neighborhood association boundaries. While our system of neighborhood associations has a long history in Portland, we cannot continue looking to this system as a panacea to address all community concerns.

When governments preferentially invest in some groups over others and do not involve a diverse range of community members in decision-making processes, all communities are harmed. Many people and groups have never seen themselves as welcome because of the bureau's focus on neighborhood associations. As a result, the City has not adequately listened to their voices.

An Inclusive and Responsive Process

Since August 2018, the Office of Community and Civic Life has engaged Portlanders across the city in conversations about how to update the code. Throughout this public process, Civic Life staff have taken intentional steps to have targeted engagement opportunities that ensure participants reflect the many voices of our City. The Code Change project seeks to create a model of community engagement for other City bureaus and local agencies to follow that is inclusive, innovative, and continuously improving.

Highlights include:

- Close collaboration with **Committee 3.96**—a group of 25 community leaders—to ensure a variety of community voices are being heard at each stage in the process
- A Survey of Civic Life taken by more than **1,000 Portlanders**
- Presentations and conversations with **15 existing gatherings** in communities not currently well-represented in Bureau partnerships, such as faith-based, local business, immigrant and refugees
- **Five in-depth, multilingual community conversations** held in English, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- Reporting back with the 15 existing community gatherings and a large **Community Connections** gathering
- **Two rounds of community feedback**, first on the initial language for the code, then on draft recommendations from Committee 3.96
- Partnerships with **student journalism programs** at Parkrose and David Douglas high schools

Portland City Council: The Portland City Council is expected to consider Committee 3.96's recommendations for updating the code at its meeting on (tentatively) **September 3, 2019**.

Promote the common good.

Code Change Project website: portlandoregon.gov/civic/codechange

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