

Portland has changed in the last half -century, It's **population** has soared from 380,00 in 1970 to 658,000 today. That's just the city. The Greater Portland metropolitan region (including Vancouver) has grown to 2.2 million and now holds 46% of Oregon's 4.3 million people. The **demographics** have also changed. In the 1970's the city was predominantly white . Now it's residents are nearly one-third people of color: 12% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 6.3% Black. Its basic **economy** has diversified to a healthy mix of manufacturing, services, and high technology with trade a continuing important dimension.

Portland is no longer a big small town. To succeed in the future, Portland needs to shed its archaic commission form of government, designed for small towns more than a century ago. We are the last major city in the U.S. still governed this way. The future requires a government that is **Transparent, Accessible, Accountable, Equitably represented, and whose taxes are Equitably shared**. Portland's city government is none of these today.

We elect four Commissioners and a Mayor to carry out both legislative and executive responsibilities. They are elected at large, so many neighborhoods have no direct representation. As a Council, they make policy and the rules we live by. As Department Heads-- most are amateurs without demonstrated competence--they are responsible for managing the whole array of complex City functions. The Mayor, whose power derives mainly from the right to assign these executive posts, usually keeps the police and key financial management jobs for him or herself. The other bureaus—Parks, Water, Transportation, Housing, etc., become the fiefdoms of individual Commissioners who compete with one another for the City's limited resources. Responsibility for the well being of the city as a whole rests with the Mayor, who, with only one vote on the Council, must play political jiu jitsu to move the City forward, often changing Bureau assignments to achieve his or her goals. It is hard for citizens to keep up with who is in charge or to hold leaders accountable. In simpler times, Portland had some exceptionally skilled Mayors (think Neal Goldschmidt and Vera Katz). But the last three Mayors have served only one four year term, hampering any long term efforts to improve the system or to innovate.

Over the years, voters have defeated eight major efforts to change this quirky government, the last in 2007. A proposal in 2015 by East Portlanders to secure a voice in city government failed to make the ballot. Now may be the time to make Portland real instead of weird. The City Club is due to release its latest study and recommendations next month. That will at least generate another debate. A formal review of the City Charter by the Council, required every ten years, is ripe for action. A provocative series of articles last year by Sightline Institute's Kristin Eberhard proposes better ways to design "A City that Works." It could serve as a template for a thoughtful, widespread civic conversation. I hope the question will also be a major focus of Portland2.0.

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