

# **Housing: Sustaining Portland's Future**



## **Housing Component of the Comprehensive Plan City of Portland, Maine**

**Prepared by:** Housing Comprehensive Plan Committee  
**Co-Chairs:** Councilor Nicholas Mavodones and  
Councilor Nathan Smith

**Adopted November 18, 2002**

## Table of Contents

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| <b><u>Housing Comprehensive Plan Committee</u></b> .....                                |      |
| <b><u>Introduction</u></b> .....  | 5    |
| <b><u>Shaping a Community Vision for Portland</u></b> .....                             | 7    |
| <b><u>Housing Goal</u></b> .....  | 11   |
| <b><u>Executive Summary of Housing Policies</u></b> .....                               | 13   |
| <br>  |      |
| <b><u>Current Conditions and Housing Policies</u></b> .....                             | 23   |
| <i>Portland Today: A Shortage of Housing</i> .....                                      | 26   |
| <b><u>Policy #1: Ensure an Adequate and Diverse Supply of Housing For All</u></b> ..... | 29   |
| <i>Portland Today: An Aging Housing Stock Worth Preserving</i> .....                    | 36   |
| <b><u>Policy #2: Preserve a Quality Housing Stock</u></b> .....                         | 37   |
| <i>Portland Today: Current Impacts on Neighborhood Stability and Integrity</i> .....    | 42   |
| <b><u>Policy #3: Build on Neighborhood Stability and Integrity</u></b> .....            | 43   |
| <i>Portland Today: Affordable Housing is a Regional Issue</i> .....                     | 48   |
| <b><u>Policy #4: Housing is a Regional Issue</u></b> .....                              | 49   |
| <i>Portland Today: Sustaining Portland as a Healthy Community</i> .....                 | 52   |
| <b><u>Policy #5: Sustainable Development</u></b> .....                                  | 53   |
| <i>Portland Today: Equal Access in Housing</i> .....                                    | 58   |
| <b><u>Policy #6: Freedom of Choice</u></b> .....  | 59   |

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**Housing Component of the Comprehensive Plan for Portland Maine  
Adopted November 18, 2002**

**Prepared by: Housing Comprehensive Plan Committee  
Co-Chairs: Councilor Nicholas Mavodones and  
Councilor Nathan Smith**

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# **Housing: Sustaining Portland's Future** **Housing Element to the Comprehensive Plan**

## **Introduction and Acknowledgments**

Portland is in the midst of a housing shortage. Rents and purchase prices are escalating. Residents are struggling with their housing costs and many households have chosen or been forced to move to other municipalities. At the same time, public dissatisfaction with proposed housing developments has led to harsh criticism of Portland's housing policies. In response to these issues, former Mayor Cheryl Leeman appointed 27 citizens to the Housing Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee, which was co-chaired by Councilors Nicholas Mavodones, Jr. and Nathan Smith. The Committee was charged with developing a new plan that addresses Portland's housing issues. The Committee and the City are pleased to present Housing: Sustaining Portland's Future as a new element of Portland's Comprehensive Plan.

Housing: Sustaining Portland's Future is the result of an intensive one year planning effort. The process began with three community forums, which were held on Peaks Island, the peninsula, and off-peninsula. In a round table format, the participants at each forum were asked a series of questions designed to envision Portland's future and to identify housing issues and opportunities. The Committee developed a draft plan based on input received at these forums and from technical information and Census data presented at subsequent Committee meetings.

As public and Committee discussion on the plan evolved, it became clear that the primary theme of the plan is to encourage and manage growth over the next 10 to 20 years that will preserve and enhance Portland's quality of life. First, the plan contains a community-wide vision, which identifies attributes of Portland to value, preserve and build upon and then offers goals for a future direction. An overarching housing goal sets a policy direction for the city for the next decade. Six broad housing policies with accompanying objectives and actions were then created to achieve Portland's community vision and housing goal.

The draft plan was presented at six community meetings in December 2001: a meeting in each of the five Council Districts and one on Peaks Island. The meetings were well attended and residents provided additional guidance on the contents of the plan. The Committee has incorporated revisions to the plan to reflect public comments. The final component of the plan is an implementation plan intended to guide the sequence of recommended actions to achieve the housing policies. The City Council adopted Housing: Sustaining Portland's Future as the housing element of the Comprehensive Plan on November 18, 2002.

The Housing Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee members are commended for their dedication, insightfulness, and thoroughness under the wise direction of Councilors Mavodones and Smith. The Committee also received excellent technical assistance from Karen Martin, Senior Analyst, GPCOG, which was essential to this planning process. A special thanks is given to the Brackett Memorial Church on Peaks Island and the Portland School District for opening their facilities for neighborhood meetings.



**Housing:**  
**Sustaining Portland's Future**

**Community Vision**

**and**

**Housing Goal For Portland**



*Aerial of Rosemont Neighborhood*

# SHAPING A COMMUNITY VISION FOR PORTLAND

## DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF PORTLAND TO VALUE, PRESERVE & BUILD UPON

**Portland is an intimate city, small in scale but big in urban amenities and a high quality of life, which is situated around a scenic Maine coastal peninsula. Portland is a city of neighborhoods around a vibrant downtown, which make up the building blocks to the community as a whole.**

### **I. A City that Provides for People**

- Portland is the largest city in Maine and is the **economic and service center** for the region.
- Portland continues to attract people of workforce age due to **diverse job opportunities** (particularly in business and technology), quality employment, and a stable economy.
- Portland has a **vital working waterfront** with diverse coastal commerce activities and water dependent uses.
- Portland is the center for many **regional service institutions**, which offer high quality medical care, an extensive range of social services for those in need, and numerous higher education opportunities.

### **II. A City that is a Good Place to Live**

- Portland retains a **small town feel** with a built environment that is scaled for people, is pedestrian friendly, and is accessible to the community. Residents value and seek to enhance the safety of the community, the proximity of commercial uses near residences, and the walkable nature of the city.
- Portland enjoys a personable and congenial atmosphere that makes it a **welcoming place to work, live and visit**.
- Portland offers the **amenities and services** of a big city. Throughout Portland there are diverse arts, cultural and educational offerings, assorted shopping opportunities, numerous scenic parks and active athletic facilities, and high quality municipal services and infrastructure.
- Portland has an **active and vibrant downtown** both day and night due to its interwoven mix of residential, commercial, institutional, and cultural land uses.
- Portland is the **visual and performing arts center** of Maine.
- Portland is a **city of neighborhoods** with a range of residential neighborhood types, such as high-density areas on the peninsula, early 20<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods off the peninsula, suburban neighborhoods, and the more rural areas of the Islands.
- Portland is a great place for families with **good neighborhood schools** that serve families throughout their life cycle.

### **III. A City that Values Its Natural, Architectural, and Cultural Heritage**

- Portland is a **coastal community** that is geographically varied and dynamic with:
  - Spectacular views of Casco Bay and the Islands, Back Cove, and Maine's Mountains from the City's promontories; and
  - Three meandering rivers with significant saltwater estuaries and streams that flow through neighborhoods;
  - Significant wildlife and fisheries resources; and
  - Access to our natural features through the City's trails, parks and scenic viewpoints.
- Portland is a **culturally and ethnically diverse community** that values its shared history, is proud of its cultural diversity and is working together for a cohesive community.
- Portland is a **historic maritime city**, which
  - Retains a rich historic character for both commercial and residential neighborhoods,
  - Offers a broad spectrum of architecture and distinctive landmarks, and
  - Maintains unifying features: such as brick buildings and sidewalks, and established and traditional neighborhoods with narrow and interconnected streets.



# SHAPING A COMMUNITY VISION FOR PORTLAND

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PORTLAND

Portland is Maine's principal city, the **center of employment, housing, and services** for the region. In the future Portland will evolve as an extension, continuation and enhancement of the best qualities and characteristics of Portland today. Progress and prosperity will result from both incremental growth and bold initiatives tempered by careful consideration and foresight in planning. Portland's future will:

### **I. Build a Vibrant Small City**

- Build upon the distinctive fabric of Portland's built environment by **rehabilitating historic resources** and by **developing new buildings that respect the scale and character of traditional development patterns**. New development shall be pedestrian oriented and accessible.
- Strive for innovation and bold initiatives that increase the livability and quality of life in Portland.
- Support a **dynamic downtown** that embraces an intertwining of uses, including residential, business, retail, institutional, service, and arts and cultural uses.
- **Promote, support and celebrate the arts and cultural community** that enriches the lives of our citizens.
- **Capitalize on Portland's economic assets** and develop a strong economy based upon traditional industries, a strong retail and office center, and emergent opportunities in industry, business, and coastal commerce.

### **II. Serve the People**

- **Provide compassionate services** for the City's vulnerable citizens, while leading regional approaches to share the responsibility of caring for citizens in need.
- Foster **expanded opportunities, innovative solutions** and **exemplary services** from Portland's institutions for higher education, health care, and community services.
- **Achieve and operate excellent neighborhood schools** with state of the art facilities, which serve the educational needs of all students. Establish wide recognition that Portland schools meet or exceed the educational performance of any other public school system in the region.
- Support and encourage the creation and preservation of an **adequate supply of quality housing** for all.

### **III. Provide High Quality Leadership**

- Create a **sustainable community** with vital neighborhoods, high quality infrastructure, a strong economy, and a healthy environment, while keeping municipal taxes affordable.
- Encourage **excellence in City government and comprehensive planning** through increased civic involvement, responsive local government, accountable decision making, and creative and adaptive local and regional planning. Innovative thinking and leadership will preserve those attributes of Portland that we value.
- **Incorporate environmental, economic and neighborhood considerations** in municipal decision-making.
- Take the lead in developing **clear standards and rules and ensure adherence** thereto.

### **IV. Protect Our Community Attributes**

- **Protect the natural environment and historic resources.**
- **Preserve and enhance the park system** with its trails, active recreation facilities and natural areas.
- **Strengthen alternative transportation options** to create an accessible city that promotes ease of movement for all citizens, serving neighborhood needs, pedestrians, handicapped persons, bicyclists, and vehicles.
- **Listen to, embrace, empower and support our diverse citizenry.**



## **Housing Goal for Portland**

Portland, as Maine's largest city, will strive to provide a sufficient supply of quality housing commensurate with a manageable level of growth to sustain the City as a healthy urban center in which to live and work, and its position as a growing regional economic and service center.

Housing in the city will be varied and affordable to accommodate Portland's socially and economically diverse population.

The existing housing stock will be enhanced and preserved, and a wide variety of new housing will be designed and created to support Portland's continued economic development, insure the safety of its citizens, and maintain its vibrant and stable neighborhoods.

When seeking solutions to Portland's housing needs and issues, the City will strive for innovation and creativity in the areas of urban design, expenditure of its financial resources, and the use and reuse of land and buildings to ensure that residential development fits within Portland's unique living environment.



**Housing:**  
**Sustaining Portland's Future**

**Executive Summary**

**of**

**Housing Policies**



*Planned Residential Unit Development off Allen Avenue*



## Ensure an Adequate and Diverse Supply of Housing for All

**Policy #1: Ensure that an adequate supply of housing is available to meet the needs, preferences, and financial capabilities of all Portland households, now and in the future.**

*Ensure the construction of a diverse mix of housing types that offers a continuum of options across all income levels, which are both renter and owner-occupied.*

Zoning: Encourage all types of high quality and compatible housing to enhance neighborhoods.

Building Code: Flexible provisions to encourage a variety of quality housing types.

Incentives: Develop financial incentives, partnerships, and zoning incentives to increase the diversity of housing.

Neighborhood Plans: Encourage neighborhood plans to address a diverse mix of housing and city needs.

*A variety of housing choices should be available such that no one should have to spend more than 30% of their income for housing.*

20% Target for Subsidized Housing: Maintain Portland's current proportion of subsidized units. Establish a target of at least 20% of the total number of new housing units will be subsidized for households earning 80% or less of the region's median income.

Portland Housing Authority: Encourage and support PHA to become active in development of more housing.

Creative collaborations: Seek incentives and partnerships to increase affordable housing options for moderate-income households.

Legislation: Support state and federal legislation for new incentives to develop housing, such as tax increment financing, employer assisted housing and housing trust funds.

Financial Incentives: Employ a range of financial incentives to create housing.

Annual HUD Funding: Significantly increase share of City's annual HUD funding used for affordable housing. Support programs that assist with land acquisition, construction, mortgages, infrastructure, and conversion of non-residential buildings to housing.

Non-profit Developers: Use a portion of HUD funding to build capacity of non-profit developers to build and manage housing.

PILOT: Establish a policy on paying taxes or a PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) Program for non-profit housing developers.

*Encourage higher density housing located near services, such as schools, businesses, institutions, employers, and public transportation.*

Higher Density Housing: Encourage higher density multi-family developments and mixed-use projects with housing, along major public transportation routes, near service areas, and in redevelopment or infill areas.

Small Lot Subdivisions: Support development of higher density

subdivisions with smaller lots and a variety of housing types.

Housing Downtown: Encourage varied housing options downtown by updating zoning.

Parking: Encourage innovative approaches to address residential parking needs.

Housing in Business zones: Combine housing and economic development strategies to create high-density housing and mixed-use developments in business zones.

*Increase Portland's rental housing stock to maintain a reasonable balance between supply and demand yielding consumer choice, affordable rents, and reasonable return to landlords.*

Implement Bayside Plan: Create 300 units within 5 years and 500 additional units in 25 years, a significant portion of which will be rental units.

Rental & Accessory Units: Remove zoning barriers to rental housing and accessory units in single-family homes & accessory structures, where compatible with existing neighborhood character.

Large Units: Encourage construction of 3 or more bedroom units for large families.

Fair Market Rents: Monitor FMR's and seek exception rents from HUD when needed.

Senior Citizen Rental Options: Support a variety of affordable rental options for senior citizens.

***Increase home ownership opportunities for all types of households and all income levels.***

Implement Bayside Plan: Create 300 units within 5 years and 500 additional units in 25 years, a significant portion of which will be owner-occupied units.

200 Home Ownership Units: Facilitate development of 200 affordable owner-occupied units in Portland, with an emphasis on starter homes for families with children.

Move-up Market: Encourage the development of units for those moving up in the real estate market, so Portland can remain competitive with suburban communities.

Affordable Home Ownership: Strengthen and expand opportunities for home ownership assistance through City programs, such as New Neighbors and Homeport.

Senior Citizen Housing: Support affordable home ownership options for senior citizens.

***Ensure that a continuum of housing is available for people with special needs and circumstances ranging from emergency shelters and transitional housing to permanent housing (rental and homeownership), which offer appropriate supportive services.***

Supportive Housing: Increase quantity of supportive housing for persons with special needs who desire and need to live in an urban area where services are available.

10% Handicapped Accessible: Ensure in total, at least ten percent (10%) of all new housing will be designed as handicapped accessible units. Encourage universal design standards for handicapped accessibility in new housing.

Beds for the Homeless: Create enough beds to ensure that no one is forced to sleep outside due to a lack of beds in emergency shelters.

Supportive Housing: Support funding proposals for new supportive housing facilities.

Senior Citizen Options: Promote creation of assisted and congregate living facilities for low-income senior citizens.

Transitional Housing: Ensure an adequate supply of transitional housing facilities.

Transition to Permanent Housing: Encourage proposals to transition homeless families and individuals out of emergency shelters and transitional facilities into permanent housing, including single room occupancy (SRO) units.

***Identify vacant land and redevelopment opportunities throughout the City to facilitate the construction of new housing.***

Real Estate Inventory: Coordinate with Land Bank Commission to create a real estate inventory where housing can be developed in each neighborhood.

Property Disposition: Develop disposition policy for City-owned and tax-acquired property that is in keeping with the City's adopted housing plan.

Pilot Projects: Develop a pilot housing project with a neighborhood, a developer and the City as partners, which utilizes City property and other incentives (i.e. Unity Village).

***Promote Portland as a Pro-Housing Community.***

One Stop Housing Office: Create a "one stop housing office" to assist developers.

- Integrate neighborhood based planning and neighborhood interaction
- Information about City's development review rules and procedures
- Financial Resources, Land Inventory, and Demographic Data

Workforce Housing: Assist new or expanding businesses to create or locate housing for new employees.

Public Relations: Develop a campaign to promote the benefits of living in Portland for the public and real estate industry.

Public Education: Develop an educational campaign to inform the public of housing needs and de-stigmatize perceptions about affordable housing.



## Preserve a Quality Housing Stock

**Policy #2: Maintain, rehabilitate, and restore the existing housing stock as a safe and important physical, economic and architectural resource for the community.**

*Assist with the restoration and rehabilitation of architecturally significant residential properties within and outside Portland's historic districts.*

Building Codes: Update local codes to allow historically accurate and sensitive rehabilitation/maintenance of residential properties. Create a balance in codes between accurate restoration and the need for compatible but affordable preservation alternatives.

Financial Incentives: Provide incentives to rehabilitate and restore historic and architecturally significant homes without using resources designated for creation of new low and moderate-income housing.

Historic Districts: Evaluate where historic districts should be expanded or created.

Public Education: Develop brochures to answer frequently asked questions regarding minor repairs and the options to sensitively restore and rehabilitate older homes.

Tax Credits: Evaluate option of a local tax credit for historic preservation properties.

*Foster safe and high quality housing through appropriate building codes and financial assistance.*

Safe Codes: Update housing codes to adequately protect the health and safety of residents in existing buildings.

Enforcement: Ensure adequate staffing to aggressively enforce local code inspections of multi-family housing at least once every five years for safe housing and consider incentives and disincentives to improve compliance.

Code Education: Increase public education efforts to improve overall code compliance.

Rehabilitation: Use HUD funds for rehabilitation of all types of housing units, including energy conservation:

Collaborations: Create partnerships for joint rehabilitation projects.

Remain in Homes: Assist elderly and disabled homeowners to stay in their homes with HUD funds for rehabilitation and handicapped accessibility improvements.

Public Education: Provide educational programs on topics such as:

- Landlord and Tenant Education, Homebuyer Training, and Condominium and Homeowner Association Information

*Target vacant buildings for maintenance, rehabilitation and reuse.*

Inventory: Inventory vacant and underutilized buildings suitable for more housing.

Inspect Vacant Buildings: Inspect all vacant residential buildings at least annually.

Maintenance: Require owners to repair vacant residential buildings with structural problems.

Reuse: Seek creative and architecturally compatible reuse of buildings for housing or mixed-use projects with housing using financial incentives and partnerships.

*Improve the safety of Portland's housing stock by eliminating public health hazards from single and multi-family residential properties.*

Lead Paint: Use HUD funds to help eliminate lead paint from housing, with a priority for households with young children.

Education: Offer preventive actions and outreach to protect against health hazards found in housing through public health programs.

*Establish a standard of "no net loss of housing" for all proposed development.*

Replacement Housing: Amend zoning to encourage or require a one for one replacement of any housing units lost as part of a development proposal.

Housing Linkage Fund: Evaluate creating a housing linkage fund, so developers can contribute funding for housing, rather than replace demolished units on their own.

Preserve Housing: Find alternatives to the proposed demolition of housing.

## Neighborhood Stability and Integrity

**Policy #3: Maintain and enhance the livability of Portland’s neighborhoods as the city grows and evolves through careful land use regulation, design and public participation that respects neighborhood integrity.**

*While accommodating needed services and facilities, protect the stability of Portland’s residential neighborhoods from excessive encroachment by inappropriately scaled and obtrusive commercial, institutional, governmental, and other non-residential uses.*

Housing Along Arterials: Maintain residential zoning along arterials and encourage increased residential densities and mixed uses within business zones.

Demolition: Discourage demolition or conversion of residential properties for non-residential uses.

Compatible Development: Encourage well-planned developments and uses to enhance compatibility between residential and non-residential uses.

Student Housing: Encourage construction of affordable student housing to meet current and future needs.

*Support Portland’s livable neighborhoods by encouraging a mix of uses that provide needed goods and services, within walking distance of most residents.*

Neighborhood Livability: Promote through City policies a mix of housing types, retail and service businesses, community services, and open space/recreation opportunities of appropriate size, scale and type within neighborhoods.

Uphold Zoning: Enforce approved density regulations in the Zoning Ordinance.

*Encourage innovative new housing development, which is designed to be compatible with the scale, character, and traditional development patterns of the City’s residential neighborhoods.*

Municipal Regulations: Update codes to encourage new residential development that:

- Offers diverse and quality living options.
- Encourages traditional neighborhood elements.
- Promotes a walkable city.
- Are compatible with Portland’s existing neighborhoods.

Design Guidelines: Adopt design guidelines for new housing and rehabilitation that are compatible with the character and patterns of development in each neighborhood.

*Encourage new housing development in proximity to neighborhood assets such as open space, schools, community services and public transportation.*

Assets: Inventory neighborhood assets, such as open space, recreation facilities, schools, services and public transportation.

Suitable Housing Sites: Use asset inventories and agreed upon neighborhood priorities to select potential housing sites as part of the Neighborhood Based Planning Process.

Walkable neighborhoods: Give preference to projects that are located within a walkable distance to neighborhood assets, particularly when seeking City funds.

*Ensure the integrity and economic value of Portland’s neighborhoods.*

Enforcement: Aggressively enforce codes that require owners to maintain properties.

Maintain Property: Ensure all properties are kept clear of debris and derelict vehicles.

Redevelopment: Work to find productive uses for vacant and underutilized lots.

Public Improvements: Ensure neighborhood improvements are safe, attractive and well maintained.

Public Safety: The Portland Police Department will continue to work with neighborhoods on community policing, crime watch and other public safety programs to ensure neighborhoods remain safe for residents and visitors.

Traffic: Work with neighborhoods to address traffic issues and enforce traffic laws.

Public Parks: Preserve public amenities, such as trails, athletic fields, and parks.

Open Space: Work with neighborhoods to update, “Green Spaces/Blue Edges”.

*Encourage Portland's neighborhoods to address the City's housing issues through the Neighborhood Based Planning Process.*

Housing Solutions: Involve each neighborhood in creating housing solutions.

Public Education: Support outreach efforts to discuss the benefits, issues, and potential design solutions for increased densities in residential neighborhoods.

*Encourage neighborhood populations that are economically, socially, culturally and ethnically diverse.*

Mix of Housing: Encourage a mix of housing types for all ages, household sizes, and incomes, so neighborhoods are socially, culturally, ethnically, and economically diverse.

Displacement: Discourage displacement through enforcement of municipal ordinances, and adoption of long-term affordability restrictions on City assisted housing.

Housing Programs: Obtain resources and implement programs to enable residents to remain in their neighborhoods, such as rental housing vouchers.

Retain Assisted Housing: Preserve Portland's existing affordable housing units as assisted developments.

Higher Density: Increase density where appropriate to achieve neighborhood diversity.

### **Housing is a Regional Issue**

**Policy #4: Seek opportunities for economic and social integration throughout the Greater Portland region by encouraging the development of a range of housing options that are available and affordable to all income levels in the region.**

*Educate the public, neighboring municipalities, the State legislature, and our Congressional delegation on the need for affordable housing throughout the Greater Portland area.*

Public Education: Work with regional organizations to develop a public education campaign on the need for affordable housing throughout the region.

Leadership: Portland will be a leader within the region and State to change policies that limit an adequate supply of affordable housing.

*Initiate the development of a regional housing plan.*

Regional Housing Plan: Initiate and lead efforts with municipalities and regional organizations to develop a regional housing strategy that will strive to create a wide range of affordable housing options in each municipality.

*Seek innovative solutions and collaborations with municipalities, regional organizations, housing authorities and developers to implement the regional housing plan.*

Regional Housing Administration: Create regional cooperation agreements for the planning and administration of housing development programs.

Regional Funding Consortium: Investigate establishing a consortium of municipalities to apply for and administer state and federal funding for affordable housing development.

Regional Cooperation: Support developer and municipal proposals to obtain resources and develop affordable housing throughout Greater Portland.

Housing and Transportation: With efforts to develop more affordable housing, create viable public transportation options.

## Sustainable Development

**Policy #5:** **Portland's Comprehensive Plan encourages a manageable level of growth that will sustain the city as a healthy urban center in which to live and work and to achieve our shared vision for Portland. Portland should encourage sustainable development patterns and opportunities within the city by promoting efficient land use, conservation of natural resources, and easy access to public transportation, services, and public amenities.**

*Encourage growth in Portland that strives for a dynamic balance of the essential elements of the city, such as excellent schools, diverse housing choices, proximity to services and employment, increased public transit usage, expanded economic base, high quality services, and an affordable tax rate.*

Target to grow: Achieve and maintain a 25% share of Cumberland County's population.

Public relations: Analyze and promote the public benefits of growth.

Incentives: Integrate housing and economic development incentives to encourage growth and take advantage of the City's capacity to accommodate more people.

Monitor: Assess the impacts of growth on infrastructure and adjust policies accordingly.

*Maximize development where public infrastructure and amenities, such as schools, parks, public/alternative transportation, sewer lines, and roads, exist or may be expanded at minimal costs.*

Transit Oriented Development: Locate new housing along or within walking distance of major transportation corridors to increase use of METRO and encourage alternative modes of transportation.

Infill Development: Encourage development on vacant lots along accepted city streets.

Proximity to Services: Encourage housing near schools, parks and athletic facilities.

Denser Development: Encourage higher density housing along arterial and in or near downtown, particularly the redevelopment of Bayside according to the Bayside Plan.

*Create new housing to support Portland as an employment center and to achieve an improved balance between jobs and housing.*

Work Force Housing: Encourage major institutions and employers to invest in housing in proximity to work places.

Incentives for Mixed-Use: Combine housing and economic development initiatives for mixed-use developments near employment centers.

Build Streets: Explore building streets to encourage infill housing near existing infrastructure and neighborhood centers.

*Encourage neighborhood business centers throughout the city to reduce dependence on the car and to make neighborhood life without a car more practical.*

Neighborhood Centers: Build neighborhood centers with small-scale retail and service businesses at appropriate locations within neighborhoods.

Pedestrian Links: Encourage pedestrian links between residential and business areas.

Innovative Development: Encourage higher density development, which incorporates housing above businesses through flexible reviews and shared parking options.

Redevelopment: Encourage redevelopment of underutilized land, such as surface parking lots, to more efficiently use available land.

*Locate and design housing to reduce impacts on environmentally sensitive areas.*

Open Space: Support Land Bank Commission's work to preserve sensitive natural areas.

Environmentally Sensitive Development: Encourage development that minimizes environmental impacts and encourages stormwater

management through natural means.  
Environmentally Sensitive Zoning:  
Explore zoning and regulatory tools for environmentally friendly development.

*Design housing to use new technologies and materials that reduce costs and increase energy efficiency.*

Public Education: Collaborate with construction industry and environmental organizations to develop educational outreach efforts to encourage the design, construction, and rehabilitation of energy efficient homes.

Energy Efficient: Encourage energy efficient rehabilitation & construction for City assisted housing.

Update Codes: Periodically review codes to minimize conflicts for emerging or new cost efficient technology.

## Freedom of Choice

**Policy #6: Strive to ensure freedom of choice in housing type, tenure, and neighborhood for all, regardless of race, color, age, gender, familial status, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, source of income or disability.**

*Increase and ensure equal access to housing opportunities for minorities, low-income people and persons with disabilities and special needs.*

Development: Create programs and resources to increase housing opportunities for minorities, low-income people and persons with disabilities and special needs.

Financial: Encourage equitable lending.

Homeownership: Foster partnerships and programs with financial institutions that enable low and moderate-income households to become homeowners.

*Work to prohibit discrimination in selling and renting of all types of housing.*

Lending practices: Monitor mortgage lending practices to ensure equal opportunity.

Education: Educate public on housing discrimination and process for filing a complaint.

Fair Housing Report: Update the HUD report "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing".

*Ensure that an adequate supply of new and existing housing is accessible to persons with physical disabilities.*

Accessible Design: Develop designs, rules and procedures for the construction of accessible housing.

Building Codes: Ensure local codes are consistent with federal laws governing handicapped accessible construction.

Remain home: Develop strategies to enable people with physical limitations and disabilities to remain and/or age in place.

*Work to educate the public about housing laws and opportunities.*

Homebuyer Education: Create and maintain homebuyer education programs.

Landlord Education: Encourage landlord education classes on fair housing laws and practices for managing rental property.

Tenant Services: Evaluate the need for a tenant services office to assist in mediating and resolving conflicts between landlords and tenants.

Public Education: Develop brochures and public service announcements on their rights and obligations under local, state and federal fair housing laws



# Housing: Sustaining Portland's Future

**Current Conditions**

**and**

**Housing Policies**



*Single family construction in North Deering*



*Example of infill development*





## **Policy #1**

**Ensure an Adequate and Diverse Supply  
of Housing for All**

## **Portland Today: A Shortage of Housing**

### **Introduction**

Portland is experiencing a significant shortage of all types of housing and thus, current housing demands are unmet. Changes in the city's demographics and the limited amount of housing created over the past decade all contribute to the shortage. Portland seeks to encourage construction of new housing units through land use regulations and financial incentives. Increasing Portland's housing stock in developed urban areas of the city is challenging, but necessary for the long-term health of the city. The Housing Plan sets out policy and provides incentives to decrease barriers to new construction and increase the supply of housing for both renters and owners citywide.

***Condition One: Portland has a shortage of housing units because nearly two households were formed for every new housing unit created since 1990.***

### **Facts (Between 1990 and 2000)**

#### **Portland Data**

- Added 1,560 new households
- Added 854 new housing units
- Added less than 92 new residents
- Vacancy rate 2.3%
- Average household size decreased by 6%

#### **Cumberland County Data**

- Added 13,477 households
- Added 12,710 new housing units
- Added 22,477 residents
- Vacancy rate 1.7%

The number of people living in Portland is essentially the same as in 1990. However, during this period, the demand for housing increased significantly due to a change in the average number of people living in each housing unit. Each occupied housing unit is referred to as a household. The number of households increased by 1,560, but only 854 housing units were built. Because the number of new households exceeded the number of new units built, the supply of vacant units decreased to an unusually low number. This limited supply affects all types of housing units and all income levels. In addition, the demand for housing for persons with disabilities continues to grow. Many persons with disabilities seek to live in the city to be in proximity to employment, public transportation, medical services, and support services.

***Condition Two: Lack of housing supply causes price increases for both renters and owners.***

### **Facts (In 2000)**

#### **Rental Statistics**

- 57.5% of Portland households are renters
- 47.6% of all renters in Cumberland County live in Portland
- Rental rates increased 70% over last ten years.

#### **Home Ownership Statistics**

- Sales prices increased 44% in Portland and 39% in the County between 1992 and 2000.
- 43% of Portland residents own their home
- 67% of County residents and 72% of Maine residents own their home.

Portland is home to 24% of Cumberland County's population (a decrease since 1960 when we were 40% of the County's population) and nearly 50% of all renters in the county. While the homeownership rate in Portland is lower than the County's overall rate, it is higher than many other comparable cities. The low vacancy rate in rental housing has increased rent levels and put it out of reach of many Portland residents; particularly those employed in lower wage jobs or on a fixed income. In 1990, 48.5% of Portland's population earned 80% or less of the median income for the Portland MSA. Current estimates indicate this income breakdown has remained constant. Also, 25% of the households under 80% of the median pay more than 30% of their income for

housing costs.<sup>1</sup> Paying a disproportionate share of household income for housing increases the risk of homelessness. Portland's emergency shelters reached an all time high for bed-nights provided in 2000/01.

***Condition Three: Portland has limited vacant land suitable for new development, thus infill sites and redevelopment options are the primary opportunities for creating new housing.***

As a developed urban center, Portland has limited vacant land available for new housing. In this regard, Portland differs from most municipalities in Cumberland County, which have large open areas suitable for residential construction. Thus, in-fill development and redevelopment are the primary opportunities for creating housing within our established neighborhoods.

The Housing Plan recommends higher residential densities to address Portland's housing needs and encourage efficient use of infrastructure and land resources. The objective states, "Encourage higher density housing for both rental and home ownership opportunities, particularly located near services, such as schools, businesses, institutions, employers, and public transportation." This objective is balanced by housing policies to preserve the existing housing stock, to maintain and enhance the livability of Portland's neighborhoods, and to encourage a manageable level of growth that will sustain Portland as a healthy urban center in which to live, work, and achieve our shared community vision.

What is housing density? Housing density is defined as the number of housing units per acre. In Portland, housing density varies among its neighborhoods. The peninsula neighborhoods have the highest housing densities; which include some of the city's most attractive housing. Typical densities range between 20 and 40 units per acre with higher densities over 60 units per acre in Parkside and Downtown. While these areas have dense housing patterns, the neighborhood population has remained level or declined due to the population trend toward smaller household size. Many of the Census Block Groups located within the inner ring of suburbs, such as Oakdale and Deering Center, have densities between 5 and 20 units per acre. North Deering, Riverton, and Nason's Corner typically have housing densities near 5 units per acre, with lower densities (close to 1 unit per acre) in Stroudwater. Exceptions to these figures exist in all neighborhoods where housing densities for specific census blocks exceed or are well below typical patterns of development.

What do these recommendations mean for Portland? In some neighborhoods, the existing pattern of development and residential density cannot be replicated under current zoning regulations. One objective is to promote residential densities that are consistent with past development patterns, such as permitting smaller single-family lot subdivisions, modifying lot setbacks and/or encouraging accessory apartments. Locations along arterials, near services, or adjoining public amenities may be appropriate for a medium or high-rise apartment building given appropriate controls, high quality design and neighborhood compatibility. The intent is to identify areas suitable for higher density housing without adversely impacting the character of Portland's neighborhoods.

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<sup>1</sup> 2000-2005 Consolidated Housing and Community Development Plan, May 15, 2000, City of Portland Housing and Neighborhood Services Division, Portland Maine

## Examples of Housing Density in Portland

**1-5  
units/  
acre**



**5-10 units/  
acre**



**10-20  
units/  
acre**



**20-30  
units /  
acre**



**30-40  
units/  
acre**



**50-60 units**



**Portland's Future: Ensure an Adequate and Diverse Supply of Housing for All**

**Policy #1: Ensure that an adequate supply of housing is available to meet the needs, preferences, and financial capabilities of all Portland households, now and in the future.**

**OBJECTIVES FOR POLICY #1**

**Objective 1.a:** Ensure the construction of a diverse mix of housing types that offers a continuum of options across all income levels for both renter and owner-occupied, including but not limited to the following:

- i. Affordable housing<sup>2</sup>, including starter homes;
- ii. Housing units for decreasing household sizes, such as young professionals, empty nesters, single-parent households, and senior citizens;
- iii. Medium and high priced options for the “move-up” market;
- iv. Housing for special markets, such as Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units, student or dormitory housing, group homes, and artist housing including live/work opportunities;
- v. Higher density housing, such as row houses, small lots, reuse of non-residential buildings, and mixed use buildings;
- vi. Rental units for large families with children;
- vii. Housing development that encourages community, such as co-op housing;
- viii. Housing with a range of services and medical support for the elderly and special needs population, including assisted living, congregate care, group homes and nursing homes; and
- ix. Emergency Shelters for the homeless and transitional housing for individuals and families striving for independence.

**Actions:**

- 1.a.1. Evaluate and update current zoning to incorporate flexible provisions and incentives to encourage all types of housing. Establish zoning provisions that enhance neighborhoods with compatible and high quality housing developments.
- 1.a.2. Evaluate and update, as needed, the building code with reasonable and flexible provisions to encourage a variety of housing types that are well built and safe.
- 1.a.3. Develop financial incentives, partnerships, zoning incentives<sup>3</sup> and non-regulatory options to increase the diversity of Portland's housing stock.
- 1.a.4. Encourage all neighborhood based planning efforts to include within neighborhood plans the development of a diverse mix of housing types to aid in addressing the city's need for both rental and home ownership opportunities.

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<sup>2</sup> Affordable Housing: Housing that costs 30% or less of a household's gross income. The term is generally used in this plan to refer to housing that is affordable to households earning less than 80% of the median for the Portland MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area).

<sup>3</sup> Zoning incentives may include, but are not limited to, density bonuses for public benefits such as handicapped accessibility (universal design), long-term affordable housing, quality design, open space, and other desired community amenities.

**Objective 1.b:** A variety of housing choices should be available such that no one should have to spend more than 30% of their income for housing.

**Actions:**

- 1.b.1. Maintain Portland's current proportion of subsidized<sup>4</sup> units to its total housing stock. Establish a target of at least 20% of the total number of new housing units will be subsidized for households earning 80% or less of the region's median income.
- 1.b.2. Encourage the Portland Housing Authority to become active in the development of more housing and support them in their efforts.
- 1.b.3. Seek financial incentives and partnerships that increase the affordable housing options for households earning less than 120% of the Portland MSA's median income.
- 1.b.4. Support state and federal legislation that would provide new incentives for development of both rental and home ownership housing, such as tax increment financing, employer assisted housing and housing trust funds.
- 1.b.5. Evaluate financial incentives that could be employed by the City to create housing, including TIF program, the assessment of impact fees and linkage fees, and other incentives.
- 1.b.6. Significantly increase the percentage of Portland's annual HUD funding allocated for the creation of affordable housing, including rental, home-ownership and supportive housing options. Support financing programs that assist with land acquisition, new construction, mortgage assistance, new infrastructure, and conversion of non-residential structures to housing.
- 1.b.7. Allocate a portion of Portland's annual HUD funding to build the capacity of non-profit community development corporations to build and manage rental and/or home ownership housing.
- 1.b.8. Establish a consistent City policy regarding the payment of taxes or a PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) Program for non-profit housing developers.

**Objective 1.c:** Encourage higher density housing for both rental and home ownership opportunities, particularly located near services, such as schools, businesses, institutions, employers, and public transportation.

**Actions:**

- 1.c.1. Evaluate and update current zoning, as needed, to encourage higher density multi-family developments and mixed use projects that incorporate housing, particularly along major public transportation routes, near service areas, and in redevelopment or infill areas, where appropriate.
- 1.c.2. Evaluate land use patterns and update current zoning, as needed, to support development of higher density subdivisions with smaller lots and a variety of housing types, where appropriate, to increase Portland's attractiveness to new markets of home buyers and address changing demographic trends, including:

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<sup>4</sup> Subsidized Housing: Housing that has received financial or other forms of government assistance, e.g. density bonuses and other mechanisms to offset costs and to achieve the goal for more affordable housing.

- Affordable starter homes for families with children;
  - Affordable retirement homes;
  - Townhouse style homes; and
  - New condominiums.
- 1.c.3. Encourage housing within and adjacent to the downtown. Evaluate and update current zoning and building codes, as needed, to facilitate new housing and redevelopment opportunities, including:
- Condominiums;
  - Townhouses;
  - 2 to 4 unit buildings;
  - Live/work options; and
  - High-density multi-family housing.
- 1.c.4. Seek and encourage implementation of innovative approaches to addressing residential parking needs by the city and private developers, such as the shared use of commercial parking lots, overnight use of parking garages and other off-site solutions.
- 1.c.5. Seek and encourage implementation of options to combine economic development strategies and public/private partnerships with housing policies to create higher density housing and mixed-use developments in business zones.

**Objective 1.d:** Increase Portland’s rental housing stock to maintain a reasonable balance between supply and demand yielding consumer choice, affordable rents, and reasonable return to landlords.

**Actions:**

- 1.d.1. Implement the existing Bayside Plan, which has the stated goal of creating 300 units in the Bayside area over the next five years and an additional 500 units in the next 25 years; a significant portion of which will be rental units.
- 1.d.2. Evaluate and update current zoning, as needed, to eliminate barriers to the creation of rental housing and facilitate development of accessory rental units within existing single-family dwellings and accessory structures where compatible with existing neighborhood character.
- 1.d.3. Encourage all developers, especially those seeking City funds, to build rental units of three or more bedrooms to accommodate larger families.
- 1.d.4. Monitor fair market rent levels and work with the Portland Housing Authority to request exception rents from HUD when needed.
- 1.d.5. Support a variety of affordable rental options for senior citizens.

**Objective 1.e:** Increase home ownership opportunities for all types of households and all income levels.

**Actions:**

- 1.e.1. Implement the existing Bayside Plan, which has the stated goal of creating 300 units in the Bayside area over the next five years and an additional 500 units in the next 25 years; a significant portion of which will be owner-occupied.
- 1.e.2. Facilitate the development of 200 affordable owner occupied units throughout the remainder of Portland, with an emphasis on starter homes for families with children.
- 1.e.3. Encourage opportunities for the development of homes that are attractive to those households moving up in the real estate market, whether in traditional settings, or other innovative developments, so Portland can remain competitive with surrounding suburban communities.
- 1.e.4. Maintain, strengthen, and expand opportunities for home ownership assistance through City programs, such as New Neighbors and Homeport.
- 1.e.5. Support affordable home ownership options for senior citizens.



*Traditional neighborhood with small cape style homes off Ocean Avenue*

**Objective: 1.f:** Ensure that a continuum of housing is available for people with special needs and circumstances ranging from emergency shelters and transitional housing to permanent housing (rental and homeownership), which offers appropriate supportive services.

**Actions:**

- 1.f.1. Increase the amount of supportive housing for persons with disabilities, the frail elderly, homeless families and individuals, and person with other special needs that desire and need to live in an urban area where services are available.
- 1.f.2. Ensure in total, at least ten percent (10%) of all new housing will be designed as handicapped accessible units for both young adults and senior citizens. Encourage universal design standards for handicapped accessibility in new housing.
- 1.f.3. Create enough shelter beds to ensure that no one is forced to sleep outside due to a lack of beds in emergency shelters.
- 1.f.4. Support funding applications to state and federal agencies from non-profit developers for new supportive housing facilities.
- 1.f.5. Promote proposals for the creation of new assisted-living<sup>5</sup> and congregate living facilities for frail low-income senior citizens who require supportive housing.

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<sup>5</sup> Assisted-living: Housing that offers a range of services for elderly or special needs residents.



- 1.f.6. Encourage proposals from developers that will transition homeless families and individuals out of emergency shelters and transitional facilities into permanent housing, including single room occupancy (SRO) units.
- 1.f.7. Ensure an adequate supply of transitional housing facilities.

**Objective 1.g:** Identify vacant land and redevelopment opportunities throughout the city to facilitate the construction of new housing.

**Actions:**

- 1.g.1. Coordinate with the Land Bank Commission to create a real estate inventory, including vacant land and potential redevelopment opportunities, where new housing can be developed in each neighborhood.
- 1.g.2. Develop a disposition policy for City-owned and tax-acquired property that is in keeping with the City's adopted Housing Plan.
- 1.g.3. Continue to develop housing projects as pilot ventures with a neighborhood, a developer and the City as partners, which utilizes City-owned or tax acquired property and other incentives (i.e. Unity Village model).



*Example of a Vacant Lot*

**Objective 1.h:** Promote Portland as a Pro-Housing Community.

**Actions:**

- 1.h.1. Create a “one stop shopping” housing office in the City to assist developers who are proposing new housing projects in Portland. Provide assistance and information in the following areas as needed:
  - Integrate neighborhood based planning and neighborhood interaction;
  - Information about the City's development review rules and procedures;
  - Financial resources;
  - Available real estate; and
  - Demographic data.
- 1.h.2. The City's Planning and Development Department should assist existing businesses and new businesses seeking to expand or locate in Portland with creating and locating housing opportunities for new employees.

- 1.h.3. Develop an educational and public relations campaign to educate the public and the real estate industry on the benefits of living in the City of Portland, including services, accessibility, trails/open space /recreation opportunities, educational opportunities, cultural life, and other attributes, so that the home buying market is well informed about the qualities of Portland.
- 1.h.4. Develop an educational and public relations campaign about Portland's housing needs to destigmatize public perceptions about affordable housing.

## **Policy #2**

# **Preserve a Quality Housing Stock**

## Portland Today: An Aging Housing Stock Worth Preserving



### Introduction

As with any older American city, it is important to make maximum use of Portland's existing housing stock by preventing deterioration, minimizing demolition, and encouraging rehabilitation and code enforcement.

*Condition One: Portland has a wealth of historic structures that contribute to its distinctive community character.*

### **Facts (in 2000)**

- Portland has approximately 1,500 structures in 7 Historic Districts
- Portland has 73 Individual Landmarks (buildings listed on the National Historic Register)

Portland is frequently cited for its rich historic character. Commercial and residential neighborhoods boast an impressive array of architectural styles reflecting over 250 years of development. The City uses a Historic Preservation regulatory program to preserve these historic resources. Portland has also been instrumental in facilitating the adaptive

reuse of many non-residential historic buildings, such as former school buildings. Attention to historic assets and innovative approaches to redevelopment, which honor and preserve the city's history, contribute to the quality and character of the community.

*Condition Two: Portland's many older residential structures necessitate ongoing City efforts to address safety and substandard conditions*

### **Facts (in 2000)**

- Our housing stock is old with 50% of the housing stock built prior to 1939
- 10-20 units per year are lost to demolition
- An estimated 80% of housing units have lead based paint.

A significant percentage of Portland's housing stock was built prior to 1939. While much of it has been renovated and rehabilitated over the years, preserving this stock is an ongoing responsibility. Safety is a concern with an older housing stock, which may need to be upgraded to address lead based paint and fire safety hazards. At the same time, concerns have been raised about institutional expansions, which have converted or demolished housing or purchased residential structures only to neglect them until they are a blight in the neighborhood. Housing is a critical component of the city's infrastructure. Any redevelopment initiatives, commercial or residential, should result in a no "net loss" of housing for the city as a whole.



*House in need of repair*

**Portland's Future: Preserve a Quality Housing Stock**

**Policy #2: Maintain, rehabilitate, and restore the existing housing stock as a safe and important physical, economic and architectural resource for the community.**

**OBJECTIVES FOR POLICY # 2**

**Objective 2.a:** Assist with the restoration and rehabilitation of architecturally significant residential properties within and outside of Portland's historic districts.

**Actions:**

- 2.a.1. Evaluate and update Portland's existing housing and building codes, as needed, to allow for the historically accurate and sensitive restoration, rehabilitation and maintenance of historic and architecturally significant residential properties. Create a balance in local regulations between accurate restoration and the need for compatible, but affordable preservation alternatives.
- 2.a.2. Provide financial incentives for rehabilitation and restoration of historic and architecturally significant homes without using resources designated for creation of new low and moderate-income housing.
- 2.a.3. Evaluate areas of the city where an historic district should be expanded or created to facilitate the restoration of historic and architecturally significant homes.
- 2.a.4. Develop educational brochures that answer frequently asked questions regarding minor repairs and present the options available to sensitively restore and rehabilitate older homes.
- 2.a.5. Evaluate the need to enact a local option tax credit for historic preservation of properties.

**Objective 2.b:** Foster safe and high quality housing through appropriate building codes and financial assistance.

**Actions:**

- 2.b.1. Evaluate and update, as needed, Portland's housing and building codes to ensure they adequately protect the health and safety of Portland residents in existing buildings.
- 2.b.2. Ensure adequate staffing to aggressively enforce the housing and building codes, including inspections of all multi-family housing at least once every five years, to ensure all Portland residents live in safe housing. Consider incorporating rewards for excellent compliance and disincentives, such as penalties and re-inspection charges, to improve compliance.
- 2.b.3. Increase public education techniques and efforts to improve overall understanding of code compliance.

- 2.b.4. Continue to use HUD funding to assist income eligible owners and tenants with housing rehabilitation, including energy conservation. Current rehabilitation programs to be extended include:
  - Single family grants and loans;
  - Multi-family grants and loans;
  - Lead based paint hazard control grants and loans; and
  - Special needs housing grants and loans.
- 2.b.5. Create collaborative partnerships with other organizations for joint rehabilitation projects.
- 2.b.6. Assist the elderly and disabled homeowners to stay in their homes by using HUD funds for rehabilitation and handicapped accessibility improvements.
- 2.b.7. Provide educational programs that present housing information and expertise on topics such as:
  - Landlord and tenant education;
  - Homebuyer training;
  - Condominium and homeowner association information; and
  - Safety and housing code regulations.

**Objective 2.c:** Target vacant buildings for maintenance, rehabilitation and reuse.

**Actions:**

- 2.c.1. Create an inventory of all vacant and underutilized residential and non-residential buildings in Portland that can accommodate more housing.
- 2.c.2. Amend the City's Housing Code to require that all vacant residential buildings be inspected at least annually.
- 2.c.3. Minimize the deterioration and demolition of vacant residential buildings by amending the Housing Code to require the repair of all vacant residential buildings with structural problems that are contributing to deterioration be paid for by the owner.
- 2.c.4. Seek creative and architecturally compatible reuse of vacant non-residential buildings for housing or for mixed-use projects that incorporate housing by using creative financial incentives and partnerships.

**Objective 2.d:** Improve the safety of Portland's housing stock by eliminating public health hazards from single and multi-family residential properties.

**Actions:**

- 2.d.1. Utilize HUD funds to help eliminate lead paint hazards from single-family homes and multi-family buildings, with a priority for households with young children.
- 2.d.2. Offer preventive actions and educational outreach to protect residents from health hazards found in housing through the Portland Public Health Program and the State of Maine's public health programs.

**Objective 2.e:** Establish a standard of “no net loss of housing” for all proposed development.

**Actions:**

- 2.e.1. Amend the zoning ordinance to encourage or require one for one replacement of any housing units proposed for demolition or conversion for non-residential reuse as part of a new development proposal.
- 2.e.2. Evaluate the creation of a housing linkage fund, administered by the City, so that developers can contribute funding for housing, rather than replace demolished housing units on their own.
- 2.e.3. Work with developers and institutions to find alternatives to demolition of existing housing within proposed developments.





## **Policy #3**

# **Neighborhood Stability and Integrity**

## Portland Today: Current Impacts on Neighborhood Stability and Integrity

### Introduction

Portland's neighborhoods are diverse in character and design offering a broad spectrum of housing choices for residents, from dense urban neighborhoods to island communities. Citizens maintain a strong sense of community in each neighborhood. This creates a common bond throughout the city's eighteen (18) neighborhoods. Building on the integrity and quality of Portland's neighborhoods is key to encouraging the type of growth Portland needs both to support itself in the future and counter regional sprawl.

***Condition One: Since 1990, the number of people in Portland has not really changed, but within neighborhoods the population has shifted.***

### Facts (Between 1990 and 2000)

| <u>Gained 5% or more</u> |     | <u>Stable Neighborhoods</u> | <u>Lost 5% or more</u> |                |        |
|--------------------------|-----|-----------------------------|------------------------|----------------|--------|
| West Bayside             | 15% | Westend                     | +1%                    | East End       | (-10%) |
| Islands                  | 14% | Ocean Ave                   | 0%                     | Libbytown      | (-10%) |
| Riverton                 | 13% | Rosemont                    | (-2%)                  | Nason's Corner | (-6%)  |
| Stroudwater              | 12% | Oakdale                     | (-2%)                  | Deering Center | (-5%)  |
| Parkside                 | 9%  | Valley Street               | (-2%)                  | East Deering   | (-5%)  |
| North Deering            | 5%  | East Bayside                | (-4%)                  |                |        |
|                          |     | Downtown                    | (-4%)                  |                |        |

Portland's total population has remained relatively stable since 1990, but population shifts have occurred between neighborhoods. Six neighborhoods gained population, with Riverton adding 600 new residents. Seven (7) neighborhoods remained relatively constant, while five (5) neighborhoods lost more than 5% of their population. East End (Munjoy Hill) lost the most, decreasing by 541 residents. The number of households increased while the population declined due to a 10% drop in the average number of people living in each household. The change in distribution of the city's population is reflected in school enrollment. Some schools are over-crowded and others are losing students.

***Condition Two: There are more jobs than residents in the City of Portland and the city is the central service center for the region.***

### Facts (in 2000)

- Residents in the City of Portland in April 2000: 64,249
- % of Cumberland County 24.2%
- Jobs in the City of Portland in April 2000: 70,144
- % of Cumberland County 43.0%
- Ratio of Jobs to Residents over 18: 1.34

Portland continues to be the employment center for Cumberland County, but the city's share of the overall county population has dropped from 40% in 1960 to 24.2 % today. Meanwhile, other communities in the county have grown in a traditional urban sprawl pattern. According to a national study, Greater Portland is one of the fastest urbanizing metropolitan areas in the U.S.<sup>6</sup> Development in the region negatively impacts Portland and its neighborhoods as commuter traffic congestion increases and the demand for many municipal services rises without a commensurate growth in the city's tax base.

***Condition Three: Portland is the central service center for the region with large institutions, such as medical and higher educational facilities.***

### Facts (in 2000)

- Higher education enrollment: 12,250
- Medical institution employment: 10,000

Portland is home to the region's major institutions, which provide numerous employment opportunities and create a demand for housing for employees and students. These benefits can be offset by increased traffic, parking and housing demands that may adversely impact neighborhoods. Residents express concern about the transitory nature of student tenants, shortage of parking, and upkeep of residential buildings. The City will continue to work on balancing neighborhood stability with the needs of institutions to expand and provide required services.

<sup>6</sup> "Who Sprawls Most? How Growth Patterns Differ Across the U.S.", William Fulton, Rolf Pendall, Maie Nguyen, and Alicia Harrison, *The Brookings Institutions Survey Series*, July 2001.

**Portland's Future: Building on Neighborhood Stability and Integrity**

**Policy #3: Maintain and enhance the livability of Portland's neighborhoods as the City grows and evolves through careful land use regulation, design and public participation that respects neighborhood integrity.**

**OBJECTIVES FOR POLICY # 3**

**Objective 3.a:** While accommodating needed services and facilities, protect the stability of Portland residential neighborhoods from excessive encroachment by inappropriately scaled and obtrusive commercial, institutional, governmental, and other non-residential uses.

**Actions:**

- 3.a.1. Maintain residential zoning along arterials where it currently exists and encourage increased residential densities and mixed uses within the business zones in the downtown and throughout the community.
- 3.a.2: Evaluate and update, as needed, the current residential zoning to discourage the demolition or conversion of residential properties for non-residential uses.
- 3.a.3. Encourage well-planned developments and uses to enhance compatibility between residential and non-residential uses.



*Example of commercial uses on first floor and residential units above.*

- 3.a.4. The City should work with its colleges and universities to assure new construction of affordable student housing, to meet the current and future needs created by their long-term goals for expansion.

**Objective 3.b:** Support Portland's livable neighborhoods by encouraging a mix of needed uses and services within walking distance of most residents.

**Actions:**

- 3.b.1. Promote a mix of housing types, small retail and service businesses, community services, and open space/recreation opportunities of appropriate size, scale and type within each neighborhood through City policies and programs such as zoning for mixed use



neighborhood centers, housing pilot projects, Land Bank Commission efforts and parks planning.

- 3.b.2 Protect safety and stability of Portland neighborhoods by enforcing the approved density regulations as prescribed in the Portland Zoning Ordinance.

*Mix of uses along Stevens Avenue*

**Objective 3.c:** Encourage innovative new housing development, which is designed to be compatible with the scale, character, and traditional development patterns of each individual residential neighborhood.

**Actions:**

3.c.1. Evaluate and update, as needed, the current zoning and subdivision codes to encourage new residential development that:

- Offers diverse and quality living options;
- Provides traditional neighborhood elements;
- Promotes a walkable city; and
- Is compatible with Portland's existing neighborhoods.

3.c.2. Adopt neighborhood design guidelines as part of Portland's land use code for new housing and substantial rehabilitation that are compatible with the character and patterns of development found within each neighborhood.

**Portland Neighborhoods**



**Objective 3.d:** Encourage new housing development in proximity to neighborhood assets such as open space, schools, community services and public transportation.

**Actions:**

3.d.1. Create neighborhood inventories of assets such as open space, recreation facilities, schools, services and public transportation.

- 3.d.2. Use neighborhood asset inventories to identify housing sites for new development as part of the neighborhood based planning process. Establish priorities for selecting properties for housing development.
- 3.d.3. When projects seek City funds, give preference to projects seeking City funds that are located within a walkable distance to neighborhood assets.

**Objective 3.e:** Ensure the integrity and economic value of Portland’s neighborhoods.

**Actions:**

- 3.e.1. Aggressively enforce the City’s housing and health codes that require owners to maintain their properties.
- 3.e.2. Ensure that all properties are kept clear of debris and derelict vehicles.
- 3.e.3. Work with owners and developers to find productive uses for vacant and underutilized lots.
- 3.e.4. The Departments of Public Works and Parks and Recreation will continue to work together to ensure neighborhood public improvements are safe, attractive and well maintained.
- 3.e.5. The Portland Police Department will continue to increase public safety by working with neighborhoods on community policing, crime watch and other public safety programs to ensure neighborhoods remain safe for residents and visitors.
- 3.e.6. The Department of Public Works and Portland Police Department will continue to work with neighborhoods to address traffic issues and enforce traffic laws.
- 3.e.7. The City will preserve publicly owned neighborhood amenities, such as trails, athletic fields, and parks.
- 3.e.8. The Departments of Planning and Development and Parks and Recreation will work with neighborhoods to update the City’s open space plan, “Green Spaces Blue Edges”.

**Objective 3.f:** Encourage Portland’s neighborhoods to address the City’s housing issues through the neighborhood based planning process.

**Actions:**

- 3.f.1. Involve Portland’s neighborhoods in creating and supporting innovative housing solutions in each neighborhood.
- 3.f.2. Support educational outreach efforts to discuss and illustrate the benefits, issues, and potential design solutions associated with increased densities in residential neighborhoods.

**Objective 3.g:** Encourage neighborhood populations that are economically, socially, culturally and ethnically diverse.

**Actions:**

- 3.g.1. Encourage a mix of housing types for all ages, household sizes, and incomes throughout the city.
- 3.g.2. Discourage displacement of long-term neighborhood residents through enforcement of the City's ordinances, such as the condominium conversion ordinance, and the adoption of long-term affordability restrictions on City assisted housing developments.
- 3.g.3. Work with local, state and federal housing agencies and organizations to obtain resources and implement housing programs that enable residents to remain in their neighborhoods, such as rental housing vouchers.
- 3.g.4. Work with local, state and federal housing agencies and housing developers to preserve Portland's existing affordable housing units as assisted developments.
- 3.g.5. Increase density where appropriate in order to achieve neighborhood diversity.

## **Policy #4**

# **Housing is a Regional Issue**

## **Portland Today: Affordable Housing is a Regional Issue**

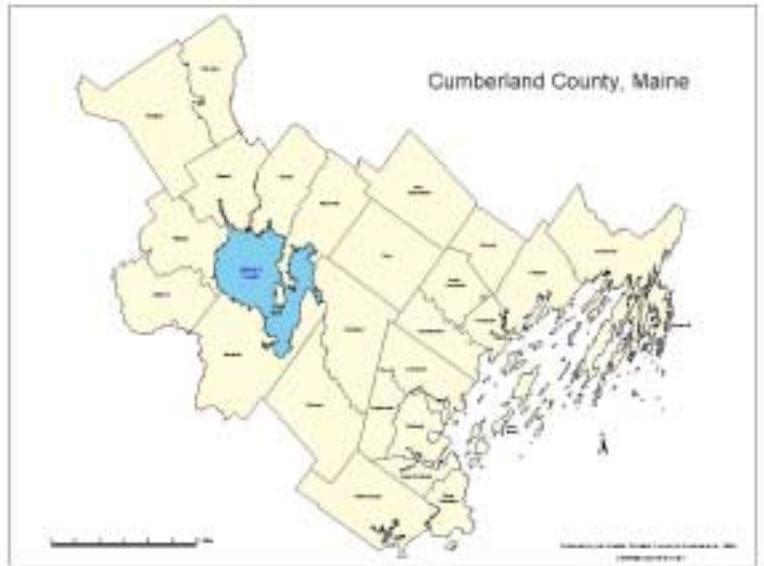
### **Introduction**

Housing issues do not follow municipal boundaries and housing affordable to all income levels is needed throughout Cumberland County. Portland needs partners to address the growing demand for reasonably priced units. Portland citizens seek strong City leadership to address housing through regional collaborations, organizations and solutions.

***Condition One: Portland provides a significant amount of housing affordable to households earning 80% or less than the county's median income.***

### **Facts (in 2000)**

- Portland has over 3,168 subsidized units
- Portland Housing Authority provides Section 8 housing assistance to 1,900 households
- The subsidized units represent 15% of all occupied housing units



Portland offers financially assisted housing for over 5,000 households, which includes subsidized units and rental assistance certificates available for use in the private market. Thus, at least 15% of Portland's total occupied housing units are subsidized and this estimate does not include group homes and other assisted-living arrangements. There are special needs housing options for the homeless, victims of domestic abuse, youth, persons with substance abuse or mental health issues, AIDS/HIV, and others. While there is a range of subsidized housing options in Portland, there is not enough housing to meet the demand. Lower income persons are hurt the most in a tight housing market and are often forced to move due to escalating rents.

***Condition Two: There is an insufficient supply of affordable housing opportunities throughout Cumberland County.***

### **Facts (in 1990 and 2000)**

- 22% of home owners are paying 30% or more of the income toward housing costs in Portland (1990 Census)
- 21% of home owners are paying more than 30% of their income for housing in Cumberland County (1990 Census)
- 43% of Portland renters pay 30% or more of their income toward housing costs
- 39% of County renters pay 30% or more of their income toward housing costs
- 53% of all renters in the County paying 30% or more of their income to housing costs live in Portland.

Housing is one area that would benefit from strong regional leadership that encourages collaboration among municipalities. Every community in Cumberland County must grapple with affordable housing needs. A growing percentage of the county's residents are spending more for their housing. The housing issue must be addressed regionally and solutions must be sought that increase the supply of affordable rental and home ownership options throughout the region.



**Portland's Future: Housing is a Regional Issue**

**Policy #4: Seek opportunities for economic and social integration throughout the Greater Portland region by encouraging the development of a range of housing options that are available and affordable to all income levels in the region.**

**OBJECTIVES FOR POLICY #4**

**Objective 4.a:** Educate the public, neighboring municipalities, the State legislature, and our Congressional delegation on the need for affordable housing throughout the Greater Portland area.

**Actions:**

- 4.a.1. Work with existing regional organizations, such as Greater Portland Council of Governments, Cumberland County, PROP, Greater Portland Chamber of Commerce, and the Southern Maine Affordable Rental Housing Coalition, to develop and implement a public education campaign on the need for more affordable housing throughout the region.
- 4.a.2. Portland will be a leader within the region and the State to change policies that limit the construction of an adequate supply of affordable housing.

**Objective 4.b:** Initiate the development of a regional housing plan.

**Actions:**

- 4.b.1. Initiate and lead efforts with other municipalities and regional organizations to develop a regional housing strategy that will strive to create a wide range of housing options in each municipality that are available and affordable to all income levels in the Greater Portland area.

**Objective 4.c:** Seek innovative solutions and collaborations with municipalities, regional organizations, housing authorities and developers to implement the regional housing plan.

**Actions:**

- 4.c.1. Create regional cooperation agreements between municipalities and regional organizations for the planning and administration of housing development programs in Greater Portland, such as the merger of currently independent Housing Authorities.
- 4.c.2. Investigate the advantages of establishing a regional consortium of municipalities that could apply for, receive and administer state and federal funding for affordable housing development.
- 4.c.3. Support the efforts and proposals of other municipalities and developers to obtain resources for the development of affordable housing for low and moderate households throughout Greater Portland.
- 4.c.4. In conjunction with efforts to develop more affordable housing in the region, additional efforts must be taken to expand and/or create viable public transportation options in the Greater Portland region.



## **Policy #5**

# **Sustainable Development**

## **Portland Today: Sustaining Portland as a Healthy City**

### **Introduction**

Growth is a part of sustaining Portland as a healthy city and maintaining its role as the economic, cultural, and residential center for the region. Appropriate growth is needed to provide housing near employment centers, support public transportation, attract families with children, expand the tax base, and stabilize neighborhoods. Portland needs to grow along with Cumberland County and maintain a 25% share of the County's population. Portland must grow to remain an attractive urban center in which to live and work and to achieve its shared vision for the future.

***Condition One: Portland's share of the County and State's population is declining.***

### **Facts (Between 1960 and 2000, Portland's population as a share of the County)**

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Portland Pop</u> | <u>Cumberland Pop</u> | <u>Portland Share of County Population</u> |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--|
| • 1960      | 72,376              | 182,202               | 40%  |
| • 1970      | 64,926              | 195,029               | 33%  |
| • 1980      | 61,382              | 215,789               | 28%  |
| • 1990      | 64,358              | 243,135               | 26%  |
| • 2000      | 64,249              | 265,000               | 24%  |

Cumberland County's population has grown over the past decades, whereas Portland's population has declined and then stabilized. The City's share of the county population has dropped to its current level of 24%. A declining share of the County's population could result in a smaller legislative delegation, less influence in the region, a declining tax base, and underutilized public infrastructure. Portland's prominence as the central city is threatened by these trends.

***Condition Two: Families are leaving Portland and school enrollment is declining.***

### **Facts (In 2000, Portland's population & age distribution compared to Cumberland County)**

|                           |               |                                |               |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| <u>Total Population</u>   | 24% of County | <u>Residents 45 to 54</u>      | 22% of County |
| <u>Residents under 5</u>  | 21% of County | <u>Residents 55 to 64</u>      | 20% of County |
| <u>Residents 5 to 19</u>  | 19% of County | <u>Residents 65 to 74</u>      | 23% of County |
| <u>Residents 20 to 34</u> | 34% of County | <u>Residents 75 to 84</u>      | 26% of County |
| <u>Residents 35 to 44</u> | 23% of County | <u>Residents 85 &amp; over</u> | 31% of County |

- Total enrollment in Portland schools has decreased by 500 students since 1996.
- In 1995, there were 823 children born to Portland residents. Only 533 of these children were enrolled in Portland kindergarten classes in 2000.

Compared to other Cumberland County municipalities, Portland has the largest percentage of young adults, the lowest percentage of population between 30 and 65, and the highest percentage of population over 75. This age distribution, combined with the declining school enrollments, suggests that families with children are leaving Portland. The movement of families out of the city is also indicated by the declining percentage of children born to Portland residents actually entering the school system. In the early 1990's, the number of children entering kindergarten equaled the number of children born to Portland parents five years earlier. By 2000, only 65% of the children born to Portland parents entered the public school system.

***Condition Three: Cumberland County has one of the highest conversion rates of rural to urbanized land. The low-density development consumes increasingly more land than past patterns of development.***

### **Facts (Between 1982 and 1997)**

- Developed land in the County increased by 108%
- Population increased in the county by 17.4%
- Population density in the County decreased by 47%

The expanding development of the region results in some of Portland's public investments and infrastructure being underutilized, such as public transportation, schools and sewers, while the City's roads are congested with commuter traffic. The Brookings Institute Study\* identified Greater Portland as one of the fastest urbanizing metropolitan areas (measured by the percent change of rural to urbanized land). These expanding development patterns do not support higher density housing and mixed use projects that are within walking distance of employment centers, parks, schools, and public transit lines. In Portland, new development is desired that is efficient, well designed and created at a manageable rate for the community.

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\* "Who Sprawls Most? How Growth Patterns Differ Across the U.S.", William Fulton, Rolf Pendall, Maie Nguyen, and Alicia Harrison, *The Brookings Institutions Survey Series*, July 2001.

## Portland's Future: Sustainable Development

**Policy #5: Portland's Comprehensive Plan encourages a manageable level of growth that will sustain the City as a healthy urban center in which to live and work and to achieve a shared vision for Portland. Portland should encourage sustainable development patterns and opportunities within the City by promoting efficient land use, conservation of natural resources, and easy access to public transportation, services, and public amenities.**

### OBJECTIVES FOR POLICY # 5:

**Objective 5a:** Encourage growth in Portland that strives for a dynamic balance of the essential elements of the city, such as excellent schools, diverse housing choices, proximity to services and employment, increased public transit usage, expanded economic base, high quality services, and an affordable tax rate.

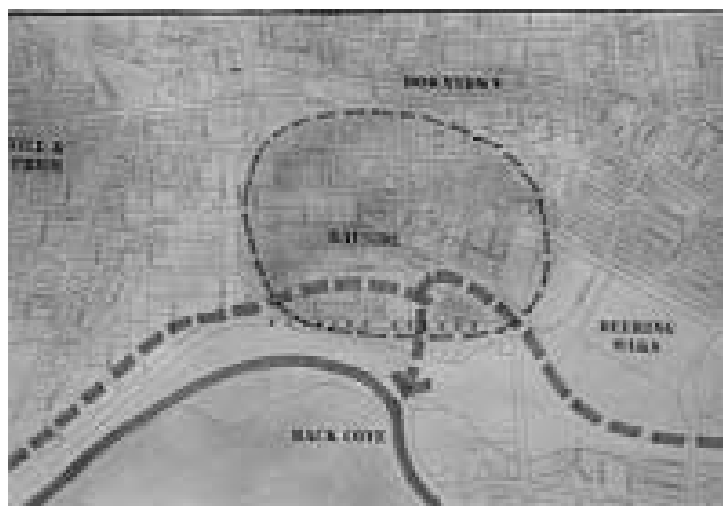
#### **Actions:**

- 5.a.1. Target Portland to achieve and maintain a 25% share of Cumberland County's population.
- 5.a.2. Analyze and promote the public benefits of growth for Portland as the County's urban center.
- 5.a.3. Integrate Portland's housing and economic development incentives to encourage growth and take advantage of the city's capacity to accommodate more people.
- 5.a.4. Monitor and assess the impacts of growth on the City's infrastructure and adjust policies accordingly.

**Objective 5 b:** Maximize development where public infrastructure and amenities, such as schools, parks, public/alternative transportation, sewer lines, and roads exist or may be expanded at minimal costs.

#### **Actions:**

- 5.b.1. Locate new housing along or within walking distance of major transportation corridors to increase use of METRO and encourage alternative modes of transportation.
- 5.b.2. Encourage infill development on vacant lots along accepted city streets.
- 5.b.3. Encourage new housing near neighborhood schools and in proximity of public parks and athletic facilities throughout the city. *Concept of Bayside for neighborhood redevelopment plan.*
- 5.b.4. Encourage higher density housing along arterials and in and near the downtown, with particular attention to the redevelopment of Bayside according to the adopted Bayside Plan.



**Objective 5.c.:** Create new housing to support Portland as an employment center and to achieve an improved balance between jobs and housing.

**Actions:**

- 5.c.1. Encourage major institutions and employers to invest in housing in proximity to work places.
- 5.c.2. Explore opportunities to combine housing and economic development initiatives for more integrated mixed-use developments near employment centers.
- 5.c.3. Explore the potential of Portland constructing streets within undeveloped right-of-ways to encourage infill housing near existing infrastructure and neighborhood centers.

**Objective 5.d.:** Encourage neighborhood business centers throughout the city to reduce dependence on the car and to make neighborhood life without a car more practical.

**Actions:**

- 5.d.1. Encourage and build neighborhood centers with small-scale retail and service businesses at appropriate areas within neighborhoods.
- 5.d.2. Encourage strong pedestrian links between residential areas and business areas.
- 5.d.3. Encourage innovative development and redevelopment proposals that increase density and incorporate residential housing above first floor businesses by facilitating the review process and considering flexible shared parking options.
- 5.d.4. Encourage redevelopment of underdeveloped land such as surface parking lots, where appropriate; to more efficiently utilize available land.



*Neighborhood businesses in Rosemont*

**Objective 5.e:** Locate and design housing to reduce impacts on environmentally sensitive areas.

**Actions:**

- 5.e.1. Support the efforts of Portland's Land Bank Commission to preserve the most sensitive and important natural areas within the city.
- 5.e.2. Encourage sensitive land development designs and construction methods that minimize impacts on the environment and investigate innovative solutions and collaborative approaches to address stormwater separation and management through natural means.
- 5.e.3. Explore ways to use zoning and other regulatory tools to encourage environmentally friendly development.

**Objective 5.f:** Design housing using new technologies and materials that reduce costs and increase energy efficiency.

**Actions:**

- 5.f.1. Collaborate with the construction industry and environmental organizations to develop educational materials and public outreach efforts to encourage the design, construction, and rehabilitation of energy efficient homes.
- 5.f.2. Encourage energy efficient rehabilitation and new construction for City assisted housing.
- 5.f.3. Periodically review City codes to minimize conflicts between existing codes, and emerging or new cost-efficient technology.





## **Policy #6**

# **Freedom of Choice**

## **Portland Today: Equal Access in Housing**

### **Introduction**

In the 1980's, Portland was designated a Refugee Resettlement community. The religious, cultural and ethnic diversity of Portland has increased significantly since then. As Portland becomes more diverse, we need to ensure that housing is equally available to all residents.

***Condition One: Incidents of housing discrimination have occurred in Portland, particularly against large families with children, people of color who are recent immigrants, and people with disabilities.***

### **Facts (in 2000)**

- 8.7% of Portland residents are People of Color
- 14.4% of all of Maine's People of Color live in Portland
- 49.6% of all of Cumberland County's People of Color live in Portland.
- International In-migration is a significant factor in city and county Population

As a Refugee Resettlement Community, Portland has over 40 languages spoken in its public schools with most of the recent immigrants coming from Cambodia, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, Africa and Islamic nations. "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing" completed by the City of Portland in November 1996, concluded that the principle form of housing discrimination encountered in the city was against people of low income. The rental market has tightened since 1996 and Portland is now facing a scarcity of multi-family units and escalating rental rates. Most of the recent calls received by the Fair Housing Office are tenant/landlord complaints and difficulties with rising rents. The 1996 survey data did reveal incidents of discrimination against protected classes, particularly large families with children, people of color who are recent immigrants, and people with disabilities.



## Portland's Future: Freedom of Housing Choice

**Policy #6: Strive to ensure freedom of choice in housing type, tenure, and neighborhood for all, regardless of race, color, age, gender, familial status, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, source of income or disability.**

### **OBJECTIVES FOR POLICY #6**

**Objective 6.a:** Increase and ensure equal access to housing opportunities for minorities, low-income people and persons with disabilities and special needs.

**Actions:**

- 6.a.1. Work with housing providers and developers to create programs and secure resources to increase housing opportunities, both rental and homeownership, for minorities, low-income people and persons with disabilities and special needs.
- 6.a.2. Encourage equitable lending by financial institutions in all city neighborhoods by monitoring their community reinvestment act ratings and performance.
- 6.a.3. Foster partnerships and programs with financial institutions that enable low and moderate-income households to become homeowners.

**Objective 6.b:** Work to prohibit discrimination in selling and renting of all types of housing.

**Actions:**

- 6.b.1. Monitor mortgage lending practices to ensure equal opportunity in Portland.
- 6.b.2. Educate and assist the public on what constitutes housing discrimination and the process for filing a complaint in collaboration with the Maine Human Rights Commission.
- 6.b.3. Update the report "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing" as required by HUD.

**Objective 6.c:** Ensure that an adequate supply of new and existing housing is accessible to persons with physical disabilities.



**Actions:**

- 6.c.1. Work with organizations that provide services to persons with disabilities to develop designs, rules and procedures for the construction of accessible housing.

*Handicapped ramp at Longfellow Commons*

- 6.c.2. Review building codes to ensure they are consistent with federal laws governing handicapped accessible construction, and revise as needed.
- 6.c.3. Develop strategies to enable people with physical limitations and disabilities to remain and/or age in place.

**Objective 6.d:** Work to educate the public about housing laws and opportunities.

**Actions:**

- 6.d.1. Create and maintain homebuyer education programs in partnership with local, state and federal housing finance and service providers for all potential new homebuyers including first time buyers, immigrants and persons with disabilities.
- 6.d.2. Encourage the provision of landlord education classes to inform rental property owners and managers of fair housing laws and practices for managing rental property.
- 6.d.3. Evaluate the need for a tenant services office to assist in mediating and resolving conflicts between landlords and tenants.
- 6.d.4. Produce an educational program informing the public of their rights and obligations under local, state and federal fair housing laws, including brochures and public service announcements.

# **Housing:** **Sustaining Portland's Future**

## **Implementation Strategy**



*Unity Village on Stone Street and Cumberland Avenue*



# Housing: Sustaining Portland's Future

## Appendix



*Congress Street on Munjoy Hill*