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2005

# Planning a Sustainable Portland: A Digital Library for Local, Regional, and State Planning and Policy Documents

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## Citation Details

Abbott, Carl, "Planning a Sustainable Portland: A Digital Library for Local, Regional, and State Planning and Policy Documents" (2005). *Urban Studies and Planning Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 106.  
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# Planning a Sustainable Portland: A Digital Library for Local, Regional, and State Planning and Policy Documents

## Framing Paper

This paper is intended as a guiding framework for the collection and digitizing program of the Oregon Sustainable Community Digital Library. The document addresses the following issues:

- (1) Portland and Oregon as centers of innovative planning
- (2) The institutional context of planning
- (3) The types of planning documentation typically found
- (4) The definition and dimensions of sustainability
- (5) Issue areas and topics that are most significant and interesting for electronic access.

It then offers suggestions about priorities for digital archiving based on a historical interpretation of Portland's key planning and policy accomplishments and its consequent planning "gems" that are of greatest interest locally, nationally, and internationally.

The project's goal is to develop a digital library under the sponsorship of the Portland State University Library to serve as a central repository for the collection, accession, and dissemination of key planning documents and reports, maps, and other ephemeral materials that have high value for Oregon citizens and for scholars around the world.

The project speaks to the high reputation and interest that Oregon planning innovations and practices have developed among academic specialists, public officials, and community leaders both locally and in the nation at large.

It also offers a creative response to a problem of record-keeping and archiving of planning materials. Much of the documentation for planning initiatives and choices is contained in fugitive documents, reports, and memoranda that libraries have traditionally found it difficult to collect, accession, and maintain. National efforts in the 1970s and 1980s to develop microfiche archives of planning documents met with limited success, especially in terms of dissemination. The development of the Internet and World Wide Web, however, provides a powerful tool for storage and retrieval of such material.

## 1. Planning Innovation in Portland and Oregon

Oregon and particularly the Portland region are policy innovators in the realms of urban-regional planning, regional governance, and sustainable development. Portland is a middle-sized city with an outsized reputation for innovative government and good planning. From beginnings in the ferment of the later 1960s, residents of the city and metropolitan area have crafted an unusual set of institutions for guiding public policy. The result by the 1990s was to make Portland an example—or warning—to other cities. A recently compiled bibliography of books, chapters, and articles dealing with Portland area planning has found more than 100 entries for the last decade alone.

The development of innovative planning has a forty-year history and record of accomplishment; for more detail see the bibliography at [www.pdx.edu/~d3ca/](http://www.pdx.edu/~d3ca/) under the heading “Reading about Portland.”

The first steps came in the late 1960s. The national Model Cities program was designed to coordinate the delivery of improved services in selected urban neighborhoods around the country. Implemented in Portland in 1968-69, it trained and empowered a generation of community leaders in North and Northeast neighborhoods. Neighborhoods in other sectors of the city also organized to fight against unwanted changes to community character, creating citizen based organizations such as Southeast Uplift, the Northwest District Association, and the North Portland Citizens Committee. New environmental concerns—symbolized by the first Earth Day in 1970—brought other activists into the fray.

The issues that activists introduced thirty years ago are still on the city agenda—neighborhood revitalization, downtowns for people, environmentally sustainable development. These are issues that Portland Mayor Neil Goldschmidt advanced in the 1970s, Mayor Bud Clark in the 1980s, and Mayor Vera Katz in the 1990s. They have also been increasingly important for county leadership and for other cities in the region. Over the past generation, the Portland region has developed strong leadership around sustainable growth, high levels of public awareness and involvement in policy issues, and wide coverage in the press—in short, a habit of planning.

Some of the important changes were institutional innovations. The City of Portland, for example, formally recognized neighborhood groups as participants in public decisions by creating the Office of Neighborhood Associations in 1974 (now the Office of Neighborhood Involvement). The city provided funding and technical assistance to help neighborhood groups organize and develop their own agendas. Activist neighborhood associations function, at their best, as a sort of loyal opposition that frequently challenges decisions in City Hall, particularly regarding levels of land development and redevelopment. At the metropolitan level are regional transit and planning agencies that also date from the 1970s. The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District, or TriMet, operates buses, light rail, streetcar, and other public transit services. Metro, a regional planning and service delivery agency, stands out nationally as the only elected regional

government, and one whose powers were actually expanded by a home rule charter in 1992.

Providing a larger framework of goals is the Oregon statewide planning system established in 1973 by Senate Bill 100 and administered by the Land Conservation and Development Commission. The Oregon land use planning system leaves the details of planning to cities and counties, but requires that these local plans address statewide goals. The system provides regional growth management tools that are unavailable in most other metropolitan areas.

Portland's approach to planning has been conditioned by a political culture that values alliance building and compromise. Downtown and neighborhood activists engage in win-win discussions rather than the zero-sum battles typical of relationships between downtown business interests and neighborhood activists elsewhere. Suburban business and political leaders in several communities see a future as growing activity centers around the larger core of Portland (particularly Gresham, Beaverton, Hillsboro, and Clackamas County). At the largest scale, Portlanders have partially redefined and bridged a fundamental ideological divide in urban and regional planning. Builders of modern cities have long been torn between the preference for "going out" or "going up"--for lowering the overall density of metropolitan settlements or for increasing the intensity of land use. In the Portland case, environmentalism as an urban planning goal draws explicitly on the thought of Frederick Law Olmsted and Lewis Mumford, with their visions of cities and towns interlacing with the natural and cultivated environments in a democratic regionalism. Portland's eclectic urbanists borrow the insights of Jane Jacobs and William S. Whyte to assert the value of civic interaction in public spaces.

In the 1990s the two goals came together in a powerful "livable future" coalition. There is strong public involvement in both grassroots environmentalism and neighborhood conservation. Small waterways, wetlands, and natural spaces in the Portland area benefit from more than seventy-five "Friends of . . ." organizations. Friends of Forest Park, Friends of Fanno Creek, Friends of the Columbia Slough, Friends of Elk Rock Island, and similar organizations monitor development pressures and advocate for restoration programs. At the same time, Portland hosts nearly a dozen community development corporations and has a national reputation for its network of nearly 150 city-sponsored but community-controlled neighborhood associations. A group such as the Coalition for a Livable Future brings together environmental action groups and community development groups.

Political consensus and innovative institutions have supported important substantive accomplishments since the 1970s. At the same time, the first years of the twenty-first century have brought significant challenges that will need to be faced if the area is to add to these achievements.

o A Strong Center: Downtown Portland is the beneficiary of city-county sponsored *Downtown Plan* from 1972, a city-sponsored *Central City Plan* from 1988, and a Central City Summit that convened government and civic leaders in 1998. Each iteration built on previous plans, but also introduced new problems, concerns, and solutions. Portland now has a downtown core that can boast 30,000 new jobs in the last two decades, a burgeoning housing market, and every

important civic facility—museums, university, theaters, sports arenas, convention center, gathering places for protest and celebration.

Important issues for the coming decade revolve around the pressures of continued expansion. “Downtown” has now grown to include the Pearl District and Lloyd District, and will soon include a growing South Waterfront District. This growth has now utilized all the vacant land and has begun to press against the interests of viable older neighborhoods (such as Lair Hill, sandwiched between Oregon Health and Sciences University and the South Waterfront) and viable industrial districts (such as the Central Eastside).

o Recycled Neighborhoods: Portland has neighborhoods where citizens are engaged in local improvement efforts, where the old streetcar shopping strips are alive, where movie houses screen features suitable for family viewing, and where infill housing is a reality rather than a planners’ dream.

But, increased density brings problems as well as benefits. Issues of quality architecture and design include a city prohibition on “snout houses” that hide behind their garage and the difficulty of making row houses attractive. Portland’s very success in attracting well-educated residents to older neighborhoods has increased the pace of “gentrification,” meaning the displacement of lower-income residents by people who can pay more for the same property. Low income groups are increasingly pushed from central neighborhoods into suburban fringe areas

o Compact Metropolitan Growth: Portlanders debated the proper location of the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) in the late 1970s. They considered its possible expansion in the early 1990s in the Region 2040 plan, utilizing the input of nearly 20,000 citizens. Because some communities and interests feel that their concerns were not adequately accommodated, we are now revisiting some of the choices of the 1990s. Metro also decided in 2004 to substantially expand the UGB, especially in Clackamas County.

The challenges here are threefold. The first is to effectively develop the “town centers” such as Gresham, Hillsboro, and the Hollywood neighborhood that are called for in the 2040 plan. The second is to ensure that development inside the UGB does not simply reproduce cookie-cutter suburban designs. The third is to assess and deal with the impacts of Measure 37, a state law adopted by popular vote in 2004 that requires financial compensation or a waiver of zoning restrictions when such restrictions reduce the value of a property (owners under Measure 37 have the right to develop under the regulations in place at the date they acquired the property). The legal implications and details of Measure 37 remain uncertain in early 2005.

o Multi-choice Transportation: Portlanders have made repeated statements against freeways. They decided to rip out the six lanes of Harbor Drive in favor of a downtown waterfront park in 1972. They chose to abandon plans for a radial freeway in 1975, rejecting a massive community-killer in favor of maintaining affordable housing. And in the 1990s, they mobilized the weight of public and professional opinion against a western beltway that would have helped

electronics industry commuters but cut hole in the UGB. Instead, the region has invested heavily in a bus service and a growing system of rail-based transit. The result is a relatively well-balanced metropolitan transportation system whose viable options range from light rail transit to bicycle commuting.

The challenges here are (1) to continue to fund effective transportation alternatives to automobiles by expanding light rail and streetcar service, and (2) to find planning and land use options that reduce the need for both automobile trips and transit trips in the face of long-term costs increases for fuel.

o Environmental Protection: Residents of the Portland region have also taken particular care of the natural environment. Open space is carefully nurtured within the urbanized area and farmland is has been protected by the regional Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). The restoration of smaller stream courses, the Willamette River, and river margins emerged as a high priority in the 1990s, with attention both from local government and citizen groups. The City of Portland is currently engaged in a highly costly retrofit of its drainage system to separate sewage and storm water and thereby protect the quality of the Willamette River.

However, the city and Metro have reached the limits of politically acceptable environmental requirements and regulations within the urbanized parts of the region, as shown by Metro's limited ability to develop Goal 5 implementation measures (Goal 5 requires the protection of natural and historic resources) and the passage of Measure 37. Future progress will have to involve purchase of land and/or development rights (as with Metro's open space acquisition program in the 1990s) and voluntary stewardship programs.

## 2. The Institutional Context of Planning

The following paragraphs answer the question “Who plans?” by inventorying the governmental entities and organizations that engage in sustainability-related planning. These entities are described according to two criteria. The first criterion is geographic scope or scale, ranging from the nation at one extreme to individual neighborhoods at the other. The second criterion is the source and extent of legal authority that can be exercised by different types of planning organizations.

### A. Scale:

*Nation:* The federal government engages in economic development and land use planning when it weighs investment decisions on a national scale. Examples include the allocation of mass transit construction funds by the Department of Transportation, the development of project priority lists by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, or systematic decision-making about the closure of military bases by the Department of Defense. For the Portland region, the most prominent federal agencies are those that deal with natural resources. The Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture manages a set of National Forests that surround the metropolitan area. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers operates the huge power and navigation dams on the Columbia River, and the Bonneville Power Administration markets their hydroelectricity.

*Multi-state:* Multistate planning is often conducted under the aegis of the federal government, either through specially created regional organizations such as the Appalachian Regional Commission or the Tennessee Valley Authority, or through multistate compacts such as those allocating and regulating the flow of the Colorado and Arkansas rivers. Multistate planning may also take place on an ad hoc basis (e.g., for planning the location of a new bridge across the Columbia River). The most prominent multi-state agency for this region is the Columbia River Gorge Commission, which administers the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area in conjunction with the Forest Service.

*State:* States conduct planning through departments of transportation and economic/community development, land use planning, and environmental protection and through specific task forces and commissions designed to deal with particular issues. Each of these issues and agencies has direct impact on Portland’s growth and patterns of development.

*Sub-State Region:* All metropolitan areas have some sort of region-wide organization for transportation facility decisions, and they may engage in other types of metropolitan planning through a council of governments. Many states also engage in planning for coastal zones that include all or portions of many cities and counties. Key agencies for Portland are TriMet, Metro, and the Port of Portland.

*Municipality:* Cities and counties conduct planning for land use regulation, economic development, parks, water supply, and other sets of public services. In this region, the five cities of Portland, Gresham, Beaverton, Hillsboro, Oregon and Vancouver, Washington all have populations of more than 50,000, the rough size threshold for the ability to provide a comprehensive, full-service government.

*District:* Many public services are planned and delivered by special districts, which may function within a single city or county, or may cross jurisdictional boundaries. These can range from rural irrigation and volunteer fire districts to school districts to powerful organizations such as the Port Authority of New York-New Jersey. A large city may also engage in planning for a substantial sector or district that spans a number of neighborhoods.

*Neighborhood:* Cities, counties, and regional agencies often develop neighborhood-level plans with the cooperation of local residents.

## B. Authority for Planning:

*Elected government:* States hold sovereign authority over most arenas of planning. They often delegate aspects of this authority to the cities and counties and their elected governing bodies. Uniquely in Portland, state authority has also been delegated to an elected regional government (Metro).

*Appointed operating agency:* A state or municipality may delegate operating and decision making power to an agency whose governing board is appointed by elected officials. These agencies can operate with considerable latitude within established standards for their specific areas of responsibility. Portland examples are the Port and TriMet.

*Appointive advisory group:* Elected officials may appoint an advisory group, such as a Planning Commission, which is charged with recommending plans and making decisions, but which can be overruled by elective bodies.

*Private organizations:* Nonprofit advocacy organizations, nonprofit service delivery organizations, and business and professional lobbying groups can all engage in planning and produce planning documents. They can use these documents to guide the use of private resources, but otherwise must persuade organizations with governmental authority to utilize or consider their plans.

## C. Scale and Authority in Portland Area Planning:

The following table categorizes some of the entities and organizations that have been involved in planning for sustainability in the Portland metropolitan region. The listing under “Advisory Bodies” and “Nonprofits” are just a few examples of a very rich set of civic action

groups. The table highlights in bold type some of the organizations that have made strong, interesting, or unique contributions to metropolitan area planning and policy.

**Scale and Authority in Portland Area Planning**

	<i>Elected Government</i>	<i>Appointive Government Agency</i>	<i>Advisory Body</i>	<i>Nonprofit Organization</i>
<i>National</i>	Congress, President	Forest Service HUD EPA		National Trust for Historic Preservation, Sierra Club
<i>Multi-state</i>		<b>Columbia River Gorge Commission,</b> Bonneville Power Admin.		
<i>State</i>	Legislature, Governor	<b>Land Conservation &amp; Development Commission,</b> Environmental Quality Commission, <b>Oregon Transportation Commission</b>	Ocean Policy Advisory Com.	<b>1000 Friends of Oregon,</b> Oregon Chapter, American Planning Assn., Oregon Business Council
<i>Sub-State Region</i>	<b>Metro</b>	<b>Tri-Met,</b> Port of Portland	Joint Policy Advisory Committee (Metro)	Metropolitan Homebuilders, Bull Run Interest Group, <b>Coalition for a Livable Future</b>
<i>Municipality</i>	City Councils, County Commissions	<b>Portland Development Commission,</b> <b>Housing Authority of Portland</b>	<b>Planning Bureau &amp; Planning Commission,</b> Landmarks Commission, <b>Portland Office of Sustainability</b>	<b>City Club of Portland,</b> Portland Business Alliance, Portland Bicycle Alliance
<i>District</i>	Drainage Districts, Educational Service Districts, Community College Districts, Recreation Districts			<b>Community Development Corporations,</b> <b>Southeast Uplift,</b> <b>Friends of the Reservoirs,</b> <b>Watershed Groups</b>
<i>Neighborhood</i>				<b>Neighborhood Associations,</b> <b>City Repair</b>

### 3. Types of Urban Planning and Policy Materials

Urban planning and policy development is an iterative process that tends to produce a high volume of written and graphic materials that serve as preliminaries to formally adopted or approved documents. The following categories are listed in ascending order from the most ephemeral to the most formal. The categories are not precise, but their order roughly shadows the decision-making process.

#### o Planning process records:

Examples are minutes of advisory committees, minutes of formal bodies such as Planning Commission, Landmarks Commission, correspondence, testimony on planning issues, and public input materials.

These are materials generated during research and discussion stages of plan making or policy development. Many are intended for internal use rather than designed for public dissemination. The preservation is random, often in the files of individual participants in the discussions. They may find their way into public archives through the deposit of personal papers in a historical archive or library. For example, the Oregon Historical Society has the papers of several Portland City Commission members from the middle decades of the twentieth century, and these well-indexed papers include many files of such materials.

These materials are of great value to historians and other scholars interested in understanding the reasoning and political factors behind public decisions. They have potential interest to attorneys trying to reconstruct the intent behind a public policy or regulation.

#### o Drafts of plans and policies:

Examples are draft plans prepared for public comment, often in the form of analyses of alternatives.

These materials may be published for public distribution, but they may be difficult to identify and may appear in multiple, overlapping versions. Public testimony may be recorded on tape, or accessed through notes and written submissions.

These materials, like planning process records, are most useful for reconstructing a decision-making process for scholarly or legal purposes.

The character of these documents is currently being affected by electronic production of text, graphics, and maps. In particular, the development of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for electronic mapping now allows a much richer and flexible production of

cartographic information.

o Informational reports:

Examples are reports on important public topics prepared by private organizations such as the City Club of Portland or Oregon Business Council, as well as published background reports and inventory data for large planning efforts. An example of a background report is Portland's Willamette River Atlas, a compendium of maps showing topography, land characteristics, ownership, zoning, principle uses and other baseline data for the margins of the Willamette River within Portland. It was issued by the Portland Planning Bureau in 2001 as supporting material for the "River Renaissance" initiative of Mayor Vera Katz. This is the sort of document that could usefully be available on-line both as finished maps and as GIS data.

Background reports are usually prepared for some sort of public distribution. Numbers of copies and methods of distribution can differ widely. Some printed copies find their way into libraries (such as "Research Reports" of the City Club). Increasingly, these sorts of materials are also being posted on web sites as a supplement or substitute for physical publication. Because active planning agencies may not be interested in maintaining such materials on their web sites beyond the period of active discussion, it may be important that procedures be developed for migrating a selection of such materials to the Digital Library.

**Whether in paper or electronic format, these are important materials for a digital library** (see Section 5 for more detail). They can be valuable documents for understanding the forces and issues behind policy changes, and showing the different arguments advanced and positions taken. They have value for students, scholars, and community activists. **Organizations that prepare such documents may have additional web site material that should be linked to a digital library.**

o Academic research and reports:

An additional source of background material on Portland is Portland State University, particularly the School of Urban Studies and Planning. The Center for Urban Studies and the Institute for Portland Metropolitan Studies research important regional issues dealing with transportation, land use, economic development, governance, and related topics. Findings are disseminated through working papers and reports, and summaries are sometimes published in Metro magazine. **The Digital Library should consider including copies of these reports, and it might explore the possibility of offering on-line access to Metro.**

Graduate student research also examines relevant topics. Doctoral dissertations in Urban Studies are available through Dissertation Abstracts, and the Digital Library might include appropriate links to that data base. Many **Master's theses in Urban Studies, Public**

**Administration, Geography, Sociology, History, and Political Science deal with issues of Portland area planning and development, which should be referenced within the Digital Library.**

o Complete recommended plans and policy proposals:

These are items such as land use plans, transportation plans, and final environmental impact statements that culminate a planning process and are submitted to a decision-making body for discussion, possible amendment, and approval. They may come, for example, from a city or county planning department to a city council or county commission.

These documents often include text and maps that illustrate and define particular options

**These key landmarks of the planning process are essential parts of a digital library.**

o Formally adopted plans:

Examples include city and county Comprehensive Plans, Metro's functional plans, neighborhood and district plans incorporated by reference into comprehensive plans, Planning Commission recommendations to City Council

It is important to maintain the distinction between a formally proposed draft plan, and the final plan that is legally adopted after amendments. The amendments may result in a complete reprinting of the document, or simply the insertion of an addendum.

**These are key documents for a digital library.**

o Legally adopted implementation measures:

Examples are zoning codes; maps and text showing the location of an Urban Growth Boundary; Goals and Rules adopted by the Land Conservation and Development Commission; City Council decisions on zoning and development questions and appeals.

Such materials are formally maintained by local governments, since they have legal status.

**They are increasingly available on-line and should be linked to a digital library.**

## 4. Sustainability and Urban Policy

Sustainable development is a balancing act. It is often seen as an effort to find common ground among the competing needs of environmental protection, economic development, and social equity. These are sometimes summarized as the 3E's of **Environment, Economy, and Equity** or as the 3P's of **Place, Prosperity, and People**. They can also be summarized as the goals of creating a metropolis that is "**Green, Growing, and Just.**"

Most planning efforts can be grouped under at least one of these broad categories. For example, the Journal of the American Planning Association categorizes planning-related articles and reports in nineteen broad categories. A handful ("planning methods") are not directly relevant, but most can be grouped in the three goals of sustainability.

Environment: "land use, zoning, growth management, law"  
"environment, energy, natural resources"  
"architecture, design, historic preservation, urban form"  
"transportation"

Economy: "economic development"  
"infrastructure"  
"employment, labor"  
"transportation"

Equity: "citizen participation and dispute resolution"  
"housing and real estate"  
"employment, labor"  
"health, education, social services"  
"community development, neighborhood planning"  
"politics and society"

Much of the policy and planning debate—as well as creative problem-solving—arises where the categories overlap or compete, creating what scholar Scott Campbell calls three conflicts.” There is the “resource conflict” between overall economic growth and efficiency and environmental protection, the “development conflict” between the environment and the demands of social justice and economic opportunity, and the “property conflict” between social equity goals and economic development.

With these tensions or conflicts in mind, it is useful to see that sustainability can be introduced and found in both simpler and more complex forms or definitions. The following paragraphs summarize the different definitions or approaches and offer some Portland area examples as illustrations. They range from the simplest way to approach sustainability (Definition 1) to the most complex (Definition 5).

Definition 1: Sustainability as resource conservation..

The idea of sustainability takes its deepest roots in nineteenth century thinking about the need to conserve natural resources for long term and or renewable use. Identified early-on with the writings of George Perkins Marsh, conservation for sustainability found early expression in efforts to maintain steady flows of fresh water by preventing the clear cutting of the forested margins of watersheds—one of the key motivations for the origins of the National Forest system in the United States. This motivation activated much of the conservation efforts and legislation of the Progressive era (1900-1920) and the New Deal of the 1930s. In the phrase of historian Samuel Hays, it was conservation motivated by the “gospel of efficiency.”

This motivation of wise or careful resource use remains a strong factor in water resource policy, energy policy, forest policy, resource recycling, and similar efforts to encourage use of renewable resources, or resource use at conservative levels. At the local scale, it finds expression in such very specific efforts as “green building” (resource and energy efficient) and programs to divert storm water from sewers to permeable ground.

Definition 2: Sustainability as preservation and restoration of natural systems:

A second definition shifts the focus from the *use of natural resources to the maintenance or restoration of the inherent integrity* of natural systems. One consequence of such restoration efforts may be the protection of economically viable resources, but the conceptual focus is the natural system itself as much as its human use.

The approach to sustainability is often justified in economic terms (e.g., by describing the “economic” values and functions of wetlands and marshes). However, the approach has also imbued environmentalism with a spiritual dimension in which the natural systems as seen as having inherent value rather than value only as they can be used by human beings.

Examples at the federal level include policies to require wetlands preservation and/or mitigation and to encourage the clean-up of polluted industrial sites (brownfields mitigation and Superfund sites). Regional examples include the farmland and forest land protection goals of the Oregon land use planning system, Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, and regional efforts to protect and enhance wild salmon populations. Smaller scale examples are often place-oriented, involving efforts to protect and restore particular streams and watercourses (Fanno Creek, Johnson Creek, Columbia Slough), wetlands (Smith and Bybee lakes), open spaces (Ross Island), and urban wildlife

Definition 3: Sustainability as environment/economy balance:

Sustainability policy can use a broader framework that explicit considers the tensions and

tradeoffs between environment and economy or place and prosperity. In effect, this approach accepts the validity of both definition 1 (efficient use) and definition 2 (the inherent worth of natural systems) and attempts explicit balance. This is the most common public policy understanding, and has roots in key documents such as the Brundtland Report, which gave sustainability principles international standing.

Many key policy decisions are framed in these terms, at scales from the global (the Kyoto Treaty in global warming) to the local (City of Portland environmental protection zoning or its “River Renaissance” program). Perhaps most prominently in this region, the tradeoff has been the framing context for Metro’s 2040 Plan and for that agency’s decisions about where, when, and how much to expand the Urban Growth Boundary.

Definition 4: Sustainability as the balance of economy and equity:

Critics have begun to apply the language of sustainability to questions of economic equity, arguing that a highly polarized society is unbalanced and therefore not sustainable. At the international scale, this question is embedded in the passionate debate about the impacts of economic globalization. At the national scale, it involves questions of tax policy, social security, unemployment benefits, medical insurance, and other parts of the social safety net.

At the regional and local scale in Portland, the debate in recent years has revolved around questions of housing cost, gentrification, and commercial revitalization. A key issue in discussions of the Urban Growth Boundary is the degree to which a somewhat constricted land supply raises housing prices and thereby hurts the poor. Portland is also concerned to encourage revitalization of older neighborhoods without hurting poor renters through rapid increases in real estate prices (“gentrification”).

The city has tried to speak to these concerns through the Albina Community Plan for North-Northeast Portland and the Souttheast Community Plan and through the establishment of urban renewal zones for the Lents and North Interstate Avenue districts.

Definition 5: Sustainability as the three-way balance of environment, economy and equity:

Since the 1980s, planners have been concerned about “environmental racism,” or the tendency for low-income and minority populations to live in neighborhoods that have suffered environment degradation and may be current health hazards (the Love Canal crisis in New York was a particularly egregious example). Although Portland’s demographic makeup and industrial history have made this a lesser problem than in many eastern cities, the cleanup of the Columbia Slough in North Portland is a local example.

A second example involves choices of park development and open space acquisition. Municipalities and Metro can often preserve natural systems and most efficiently by acquiring large, outlying tracts of land. These tracts also have the potential to encourage nearby development

because of their amenity value. However, such parcels may be located at a substantial distance from lower-income residents, who therefore gain little benefit.

## 5) Portland Planning and a Sustainable Community Digital Library

The preceding discussion offers a basis for prioritizing materials for a Sustainable Community Digital Library organized around leading issues, document types, scale of planning, and contributions to sustainability.

The Digital Library should focus on four issue arenas in which the Portland region has played an innovative role or achieved national prominence. In so doing, it should seek a balance among multistate, regional, municipal, district, and local (neighborhood) level actions and activities. The first four issue areas are derived from the discussion in Section 1 of this document. The final issue area—public participation—runs across all of the substantive areas.

- (1) Strength at the center (the conservation and revitalization of downtown and the recycling and upgrading of older neighborhoods)
- (2) Regional planning and governance
- (3) Multi-modal transportation
- (4) Integration of the natural environment within the urbanized fabric of the metropolitan area
- (5) extensive and active public participation in civic issues.

The Digital Library should emphasize the acquisition and archiving of the following sorts of materials, in priority order:

- (1) formally adopted plans and policy statements from local and regional governments,
- (2) informational and advocacy reports and documents by government agencies and private organizations, when these are not readily available in print or on organizational web sites,
- (3) records, minutes, newsletters, and similar materials of nongovernmental advocacy and action organizations,
- (4) records, minutes, newsletter, and draft plans and policies of local and regional

governments that provide background on the documents in category 1.

The following matrix indicates examples of programs and planning efforts for which materials might be collected. The matrix groups these efforts by scale and by broad issue area. The entries in italics are past episodes of historic important. The remainder of entries are ongoing organizations and/or activities. The notation **L** indicates an organization with a substantial web site for linkage. The number 1-5 indicates the approach or approaches to sustainability taken by the organization or initiative.

Drawing on the matrix, this document then identifies three important planning efforts that have generated a series of reports and documents over time and highlights some of the key efforts and activities involved in each, with attention to (a) developments over time and (b) planning at different scales. These planning “stories” are suggested as starting points for the Digital Library. They involve the strengthening of central Portland, planning for a compact region, and efforts to restore the Willamette Riv er.

	Strong Center: Downtown & Neighborhoods	Regional Plans & Government	Natural Environment	Transportation	Citizen Action & Participation
Multi-state		Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area <b>L 4</b>		Col. River Bridges ODOT/ WDOT	
Region		Metro 2040 Growth Concept & Regional Framework Plan <b>3</b>  Urban Growth Management Functional Plan <b>3</b>  Metro UGB Expansion <b>5</b>  Coalition for a Livable Future <b>L5</b>	Metro Open Space Program <b>L 1</b>	Port of Portland <b>3</b>  Tri-Met <b>5</b>  Metro Regional Transportation Plan <b>3</b>	Bull Run Interest Group <b>1</b>  1000 Friends of Oregon <b>L 5</b>
City/ County	<i>P'land Downtown Plan 1972</i> <b>4</b>  <i>Portland Central City Plan</i> <b>4</b>  Gresham Civic Neighborhood <b>4</b>		Portland River Renaissance <b>L 3</b>  Portland Parks Plans <b>5</b>  P'land Office of Sustainability <b>L 1</b>	OHSU Tram  Portland bicycle program <b>3</b>	<i>Central City Summit</i> <b>5</b>  City Club of Portland <b>L 5</b>

District	Albina Community Plan and Southeast Community Plan <b>4</b>  N. Interstate Urban Renewal Plan <b>4</b>  South Waterfront District Plans <b>5</b>  Downtown Beaverton Regional Center Dev. Strategy <b>3</b>	Planning for Gresham & Damascus UGB Expansion <b>5</b>	Columbia Slough Restoration <b>2</b>  <i>Riverfront for People &amp; Waterfront Park</i> <b>2</b>  Johnson Creek Watershed Council <b>3</b>		REACH Community Dev'tment Corp. <b>4</b>
Locality	<i>Pioneer Courthouse Square</i> <b>3</b>  Columbia Villa / New Columbia <b>4</b>  NW Pilot Project Housing Inventory <b>4</b>		Oaks Bottom & Ross Island Restoration <b>2</b>  Green building initiatives <b>1</b>		City Repair Project <b>L 5</b>  <i>Friends of the Reservoirs</i> <b>3</b>  Dignity Village <b>4</b>

**Planning a Prosperous and People-Friendly Center**

Comprehensive approaches: Each of the three previous decades has brought a comprehensive effort to look at the future and needs of downtown Portland and the surrounding districts.

“Portland Downtown Plan” (1972): This plan was developed in response to the decline of downtown retailing, the need for parking, and the opportunity created by the removal of Harbor Drive. It brought together important business stakeholders with city government and citizen participants. It proposed a cohesive set of improvements that have resulted in the Transit Mall, new open spaces, new downtown retailing, improved parking, and business reinvestment. The majority of its recommendations have been implemented in the following three decades.

“Central City Plan” (1988): Developed by the City of Portland, this plan updated the 1988 proposals and expanded consideration to include not only downtown itself, but also the Lower Albina, Lloyd, Central Eastside, Pearl, Goose Hollow, and South Waterfront districts. The planning process involved extensive public input and numerous background reports in addition to the final approved plan.

“Central City Summit” (1998): Sponsored by the City of Portland and the Association for Portland Progress (representing downtown businesses), this event brought together 400 business and community leaders to consider next steps for Portland’s core area, utilizing a set of background documents and reports. The group emphasized the importance of quality schools and a restored river as supports for a strong central core.

District and local implementation: The comprehensive vision for central Portland requires implementation through plans and development decisions for particular subareas and issues, of which the following are a small selection to highlight private development, public development, and social needs.

South Waterfront District plans (2000-2005): The South Waterfront district is currently (2005) one of the city’s major development opportunities with planned investment by private developers and Oregon Health and Sciences University. Planning efforts over several years have slowly refined expectations and requirements for street patterns, building footprints and heights, riverfront greenway, and other elements. There is no single outstanding document, but rather a series of drafts and proposals that have continually evolved.

Pioneer Courthouse Square (1980s): Pioneer Courthouse Square was built in the 1980s on the site of a parking deck, utilizing a national design competition. Both the design decisions and the politics behind those decisions make an interesting case in public decision-making.

Northwest Pilot Project Housing Inventories (1990s-date): The Northwest Pilot Project is a social service agency that has prepared annual inventories of affordable housing units in downtown. The availability of the full series would be an excellent source on demolition, conversion, and construction of low-income housing.

## **Restoring the Willamette River**

### Overview:

River Renaissance initiative (ongoing). Under Mayor Vera Katz, the City of Portland initiated an effort to enhance the role of the Willamette River within the city, with attention to water quality, habitat, recreation, and riverside access. Policy proposals and data are summarized at [www.river.ci.portland.or.us](http://www.river.ci.portland.or.us).

### Access:

Riverfront for People/Tom McCall Waterfront Park (from late 1960s to present): Tom McCall Waterfront Park is located on the site of Harbor Drive, an expressway that

separated downtown and the river from the late 1930s through the 1960s. Much of the initiative for removing the highway came from the citizen group Riverfront for People (files of clippings, newsletters, and testimony are available). The planning and development of Waterfront Park is documented in a series of plans and studies for the Portland Parks Bureau.

Eastbank Esplanade (2001): Construction of the Eastbank Esplanade is an important design accomplishment under the management of the Parks Bureau. See [www.parks.ci.portland.or.us/Eastbank/esplanade.htm](http://www.parks.ci.portland.or.us/Eastbank/esplanade.htm)

South Waterfront District/Willamette Greenway: Planning for the South Waterfront District has involved decisions about the treatment of the public access riverfront, with implications for natural systems and economic development. Design efforts are currently underway. The succession of draft district plans contain relevant material, along with design plans and their implementation.

#### Water quality:

Johnson Creek Watershed Council (ongoing): Johnson Creek is an important regional stream that drains much of the southeastern section of the metropolitan area. Efforts to manage flooding and improve water quality and habitat began with Metro in the 1980s and have been taken over by the Johnson Creek Watershed Council. Its “Watershed Action Plan” is at [www.jcwc.org](http://www.jcwc.org).

Portland Sustainable Development Commission (ongoing): Operating under the City of Portland, the Sustainable Development Commission has several programs. Its “Green building” initiative encourages building with reduced impact on the natural environment (including stormwater drainage). See [www.sustainableportland.org](http://www.sustainableportland.org).

Ross Island Restoration (forthcoming): Ross Island, in the Willamette River, has long been mined for gravel. It will soon be donated to the city and restored as natural habitat. Documentation of planning and implementation would be very interesting.

## Planning a Compact Region

### Comprehensive approaches:

“Regional Urban Growth Goals and Objectives”; Developed in the early 1990s, the RUGGOs defined the initial principles for thinking through metropolitan area growth patterns.

“2040 Growth Concept” (1995): In the 1990s, Metro considered specific growth options for the Portland region. It solicited citizen comment on several alternatives and adopted the 2040 Growth Concept based on moderate UGB expansion, increased density, and focusing development on transportation nodes. Particular useful are the background reports analyzing the different options, public involvement newsletters and public testimony, and the final adopted plan and “Growth Concept.”

“Regional Framework Plan” (1997): This plan translated the 2040 Growth Concept into specific planning goals and specifications.

“Urban Growth Management Functional Plan” (periodically updated): Metro’s charter authorizes it to implement the framework plan through functional plans that include this plan and the Regional Transportation Plan.

“Regional Transportation Plan” (periodically updated): The Regional Transportation Plan is designed to work in concert with the Regional Framework Plan, directing transportation infrastructure investment in the most useful ways.

Urban Growth Boundary Expansion, 2000-2004: Metro is required by state law to adjust the Urban Growth Boundary to include a twenty-year supply of buildable land. The choice of expansion areas requires both technical evaluation and political compromise. From 2000 to 2004, Metro engaged in the process of evaluating expansion possibilities and weighing options. The record of technical studies, proposals, and Metro Council deliberations is voluminous.

District and local implementation: The 2040 plan is based on a hierarchy of activity centers, from downtown Portland to neighborhood business clusters.

Gresham Civic Neighborhood (planning and implementation since late 1990s): One of the important elements for implementation is the encouragement of regional centers, or second-level employment, commercial, and residential centers with good public transit and highway accessibility. The City of Gresham has invested substantial effort to encourage development of vacant land adjacent to its downtown and served by light rail.

Orenco Station (initially developed 1998): Orenco Station is a private development that

follows the principles of “New Urbanism,” offering a mix of housing types and commercial space along with access to light rail. There are a number of reports and scholarly studies that describe Orenco Station and examine the use patterns of its residents. See [www.terrain.org/unsprawl/10/](http://www.terrain.org/unsprawl/10/) for a description of the development.

“Pleasant Valley Concept Plan” (2002). Metro and local governments in 2002 engaged in an effort to develop plans for the Pleasant Valley area, on the southeast side of the metropolitan area, in anticipation of its expected inclusion within the Urban Growth Boundary. Materials relating to the concept plan and an evaluation of the planning process by PSU faculty members Sy Adler and Connie Ozawa can be found on the Metro website.

“Downtown Beaverton Regional Center Development Strategy” (2004): Beaverton is another of the important regional centers, which has developed a strategy for intensified development.