

8-7-2020

New Government for Today's Portland Part II: Rethinking How We Vote

City Club of Portland (Portland, Or.)

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl_cityclub



Part of the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

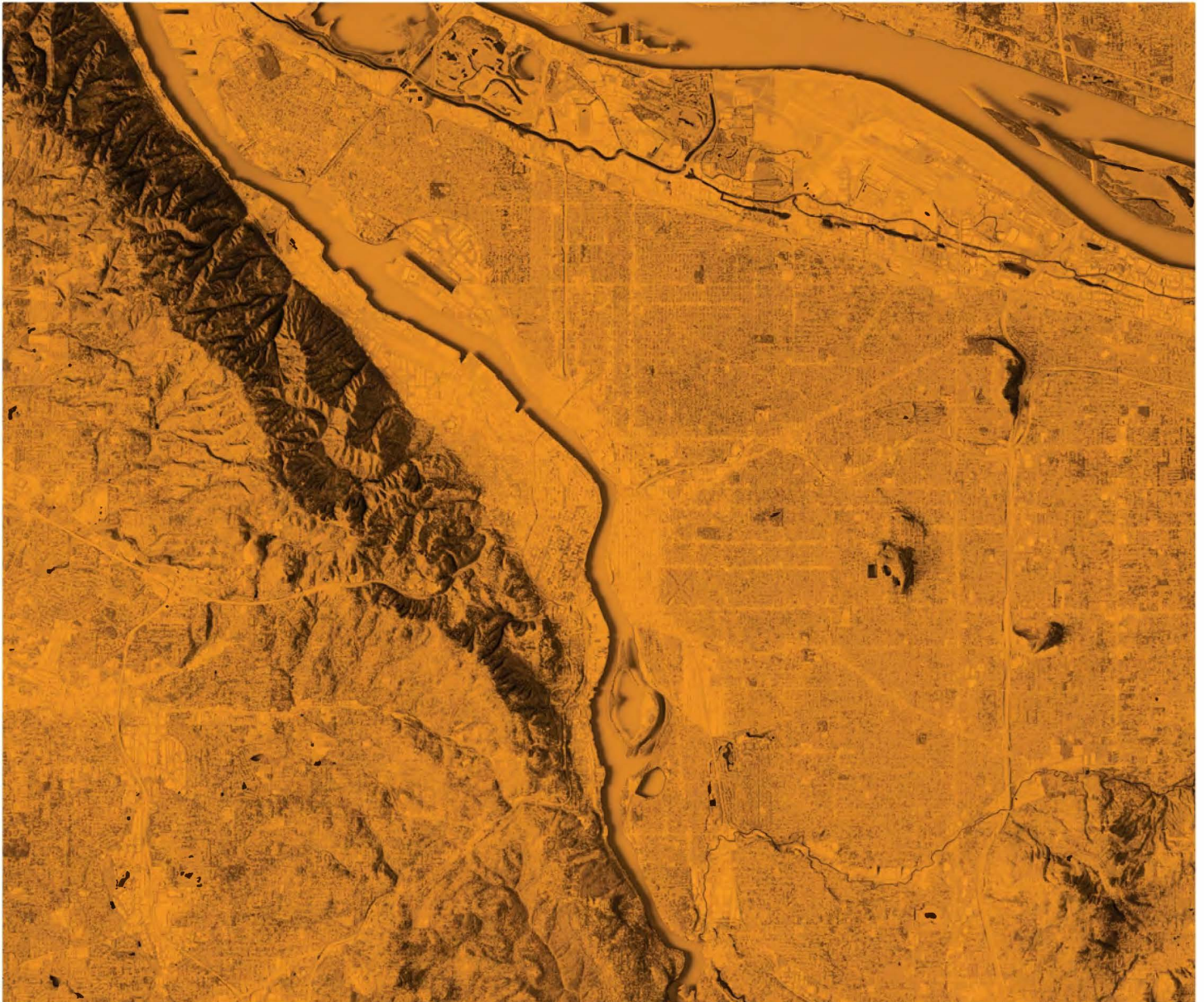
City Club of Portland (Portland, Or.), "New Government for Today's Portland Part II: Rethinking How We Vote" (2020). *City Club of Portland*. 585.

https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/oscdl_cityclub/585

This Report is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in City Club of Portland by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

New Government for Today's Portland

Part II Rethinking How We Vote



Executive Summary

This research committee was charged with examining alternative voting methods to Portland's current system for electing city commissioners that would result in more equitable representation.

This report amplifies and augments last year's report, "New Government for Today's Portland: Rethinking 100 Years of the Commission System," which recommended an overhaul of the city's current commission form of government. Taken together, these reports seek to spark debate and inspire action that would elevate the voices of all of Portland's residents, particularly communities of color, ethnic minorities, young people, and renters, regardless of zip code, as well as those living outside of the historically well-represented Southwest and inner East Side.

Portland's current voting system — a variation of a first-past-the-post system with at-large representatives — restricts equitable participation and representation. Arriving on a shared understanding of the shortcomings of this system was straightforward for the committee. However, the committee determined that settling on one single package of reforms and remedies for elections in Portland was impossible to complete without dedicated outreach efforts to all communities; in particular those who have historically been marginalized in the political process. Rather than outline a detailed proposal for an alternative voting method, the committee offers three broad recommendations:

1. **Significant and expansive community outreach efforts must be undertaken to ensure that the voices of historically marginalized communities are elevated in the final comprehensive package of reforms.** Broad and thorough engagement is needed to understand the changes that would best meet the needs

of those historically marginalized or shut out of the political process. We do not and cannot speak for all the communities of interest who would be impacted by reforms. This kind of civic engagement requires focused resources, leadership and commitment. We call on the City of Portland, philanthropic institutions, and supporters of civic engagement to prioritize this work in the coming years, and specifically during the 2021 Charter Review Commission process.

2. **Portland must adopt a voting method that eliminates the need for a primary.** Far fewer Portlanders vote in May primaries than in the November general election, yet City Council elections can be settled in May if a candidate wins a majority of ballots cast. Portland would benefit from an alternative voting method that eliminates the need for a primary. To implement this recommendation, the committee sees advantages to both ranked-choice voting and cumulative or limited voting.
3. **Portland must adopt multi-member districts.** The committee sees any shift toward districts as superior to Portland's current at-large system, as it would result in more equitable elections. A strong majority of the committee prefers multi-member districts over single-member districts since they eliminate winner-take-all outcomes and allow multiple constituencies within a geographic area to elect their preferred representatives. A hybrid system of districts and at-large seats would be an improvement but only a partial solution.

Contents

1 Introduction	1	5 Discussion:	21
Evaluation Criteria	3	A Contingent Relationship	
2 Background Information	5	6 Recommendations	22
Voting Methods Across the U.S.	5		
City Council Compositions	5		
Current Structure of Portland	6		
City Government Elections			
Voter Turnout in Portland	7		
Recent Legislative Changes	7		
3 Discussion:	9	7 Next Steps	23
Alternative Voting Methods		Charter Review Commission	23
First-Past-the-Post Voting	9	Outreach and	24
Ranked-Choice Voting	10	Greater Community Input	
Proportional and	12	Public Education Campaign	25
Semi-Proportional Voting			
4 Discussion:	15	Appendices	26
City Council Districts		A: Research Methods and Activities	26
At-Large Voting	15	B: Past City Club Studies of	27
Districts:	17	Local Government in Portland	
Single-Member and Multi-Member		C: Questions Addressed	28
Hybrid Models	19	D: Witness List	29
		E: Criteria for Map-Making	30
		F: Reference Links	31

Introduction

Portland should adopt a voting method that seeks to increase the participation of all Portland residents in the elections that select city commissioners, and seeks to level the playing field for candidates from historically disenfranchised communities to seek public service. When policy makers are not representative of their constituency, the decisions they make are at great risk of being detached from the interests and preferences of the people they are elected to serve.

Portland's City Council is elected through a first past the post, at-large voting method that has historically led to a majority of elected members coming from Southwest Portland (01 02). This method of voting places barriers to equal representation that have played a large role in dictating who can afford to run and who has been elected to city council.

Over five months the committee gathered information for this report based on a literature review and interviews with witnesses, including individuals who are involved with Portland city government and others who have spearheaded reform efforts in other cities. A more detailed description of research methods can be found in Appendix A. It should be stressed that the committee strongly believes that addressing the problems that a city faces requires numerous voices and viewpoints and cannot rely on the perspectives of just a few. This report is just a part of the conversation.

The committee's main charge was to assess "whether the City of Portland's current method of electing City representatives provides equitable representation for all residents and whether changes could increase that representation," and to recommend those changes. We defined equitable representation to include both participation at the ballot and representation of candidates from a variety of communities. We also understood our charge to include supporting processes that would lead to policies that deliver equitable outcomes in the community.

The committee was given latitude in determining which aspects of voting to address. We decided to focus our discussion on alternative forms of geographic representation (at-large, districts, and hybrids) and alternative methods of voting. We touch briefly on a second charge, the optimal voting methods for different forms of government. The conclusion of this report will discuss next steps for implementing reform, including a vision for broad community engagement and the key components of an education campaign to ensure that voters are prepared for elections under a new system. In this report we do not discuss proposed changes related to campaign finance reform, term length, or term limits.

This report addresses only a narrow aspect of political engagement: voting. The committee recognizes the limitations of the types of reforms we discuss in achieving a representative city government that serves all residents of Portland. Changing how representatives are elected is necessary but not sufficient by itself to open up

Following City Club of Portland's report on the form of government, we refer to this electoral system as first-past-the-post mainly as a way of distinguishing it from proportional systems.

This committee's third charge concerned legal barriers to changing the voting method. We came across no obvious legal barriers to stop the City of Portland from making voting method changes. A thorough legal analysis would be most effective after communities have determined the optimal system.

structures of power. These structures could be instrumental to ensure a political process that truly includes all of Portland's communities. Moreover, voting is just one way of many to express a political opinion. With that caveat, we aim to outline the issues with Portland's election system as we see them and to provide information about possible alternatives.

...women, people of color, ethnic minorities, young people, renters, and those living outside of Southwest Portland have been historically underrepresented in Portland government, in part due to the at-large system of voting.

In February 2019, the City Club of Portland's volunteer City Government and Equity Committee released a report outlining the numerous equity issues surrounding Portland's existing commission form of government. A vote of City Club members overwhelmingly supported that report. The previous research committee found that women, people of color, ethnic minorities, young people, renters, and those living outside of Southwest Portland have been historically underrepresented in Portland government, in part due to the at-large system of voting. Three major interrelated recommendations emerged from the committee's report:

1. Portland must transition to a modified council/manager form of government.
2. Portland must increase the size of the city council to between nine and 13 commissioners from the current five.
3. Portland must change how city council members are elected. In particular, district-based elections would increase geographic representation.

The previous report briefly discussed how altering Portland's method of electing its commissioners could produce more equitable outcomes. But it recognized the complexity of the issue and recommended a follow-up to study voting methods in more detail. This report is the answer to that call.

Combined, these two reports look not just at how the form of government impacts Portland residents, but also at how the method for choosing our representatives ultimately impacts the functionality of government and how equitably it serves all of its constituents — not just the powerful and historically favored. Both the City Government and Equity Committee and the Alternative Voting Methods Committee strongly recommend that Portland move away from its current at-large, first-past-the-post system of voting since the existing structure has systematically underrepresented many communities.

In the following pages, we survey the landscape of representation in cities across the U.S. and discuss several important features of elections in Portland. Next, we turn to an analysis of several types of constituencies: at-large, single-member districts, multi-member districts, and hybrid systems. We also analyze several voting methods, including first-past-the-post, ranked-choice, and cumulative voting.

Evaluation Criteria

The City Government & Equity Committee developed an equity lens with the following five broad elements:

1. Does the process lead to diverse candidates and officials?
2. Are policy outcomes equitable?
3. Does the process encourage greater participation?
4. Is the process responsive?
5. Does the process maintain equity long term?

To evaluate the specific merits and shortcomings of potential voting systems, the committee considered them in terms of their ability to accomplish the following outcomes:

Voter participation should be maximized.

Election methods directly affect whether a maximum number of voters has a say in the most important decisions. Portland's current system allows some decisions about the City Council to be finalized in low-turnout primary elections. Changes should ensure that as many voices as possible are part of the electoral process.

More Portlanders should have someone at City Hall representing their interests.

Election methods directly affect which voices are heard and which are silenced. Under Portland's current system, a majority of voters citywide have the exclusive ability to elect commissioners, leaving voters outside the majority without the representation they prefer.

Wealthy candidates, and candidates with connections to wealth, have a sizable advantage under Portland's current system.

Elected office should be accessible to all eligible community members.

Elections methods directly affect the affordability, feasibility, and attractiveness of running for office. Wealthy candidates, and candidates with connections to wealth, have a sizable advantage under Portland's current system. No interested candidate should be excluded from political office by a shortage of financial resources or any other systemic barrier.

Campaigns should be focused on issues.

Election methods directly affect the tone of campaigns and the issues that are discussed. Portland would benefit from a voting system that reduces the desirability of negative campaigning to win over voters.

All voters should be able to express their preferences honestly and fully.

Election methods directly affect the desirability of voting strategically. Under Portland's current system, voters have an incentive to support a candidate who they perceive has a chance to win a majority. Other information about their preferences is unknown. Every voter should be able to support the candidate they truly prefer and still feel that their vote matters in determining the outcome.

Election results should be transparent and intuitive.

Election methods directly affect voter trust in the electoral system and their willingness to participate in future elections. The computation of election results should be clear and avoid counterintuitive outcomes, such as a candidate who could beat all opponents in a head-to-head race losing the election».

Elected officials should engage with all Portlanders.

Election methods directly affect which communities policy makers engage most with, and the ones they feel they can safely ignore. All Portland residents should have a representative who engages with them and advocates for their needs based upon the immediate community or neighborhood in which they reside.

Arriving on a shared understanding of the shortcomings of this system was straightforward for the committee. However, the committee determined that settling on one single package of reforms and remedies for elections in Portland was a much harder task — and one that is impossible to complete without dedicated outreach efforts to all communities; in particular those who have historically been marginalized in the political process.

As the committee debated, analyzed, and discussed the merits of each policy reform—the highlights of which follow in the report—we used these elements as signposts to whether a proposed reform was on the right track.

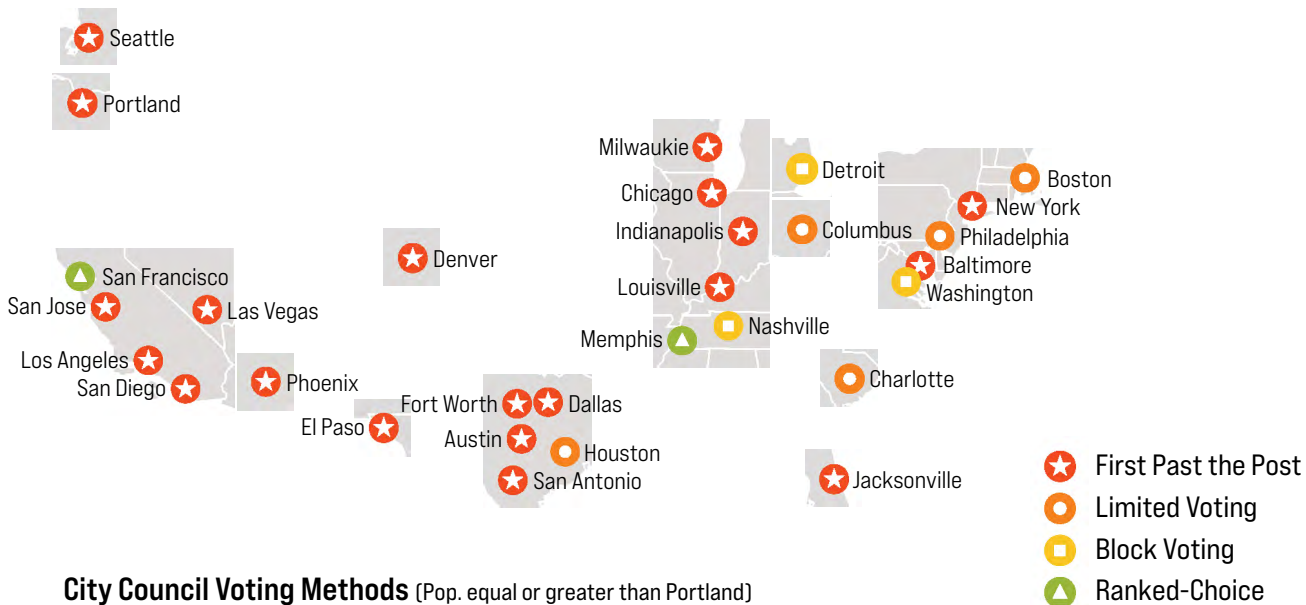
This is known as the Condorcet criterion. A Condorcet winner is defined as the candidate who would win a head-to-head election against all opponents. Such a winner may not exist because voters might prefer a candidate to some opponents and not others, similar to the game rock-paper-scissors. But this criterion states that a voting method should ensure that if there is such a candidate, that person should win the election.

Background Information

Voting Methods Across the U.S.

City government voting methods across the United States vary over two dimensions: voting methods and city council constituencies. We address each of these in turn.

City council voting methods fall into four categories: first-past-the-post, ranked choice, limited voting, and cumulative voting. Among 30 cities with the same or a greater population than Portland, 19 cities (63 percent), including Portland, use first-past-the-post; six cities (20 percent) use limited voting; three cities (10 percent) use block voting; and two cities (7 percent) use ranked-choice voting.

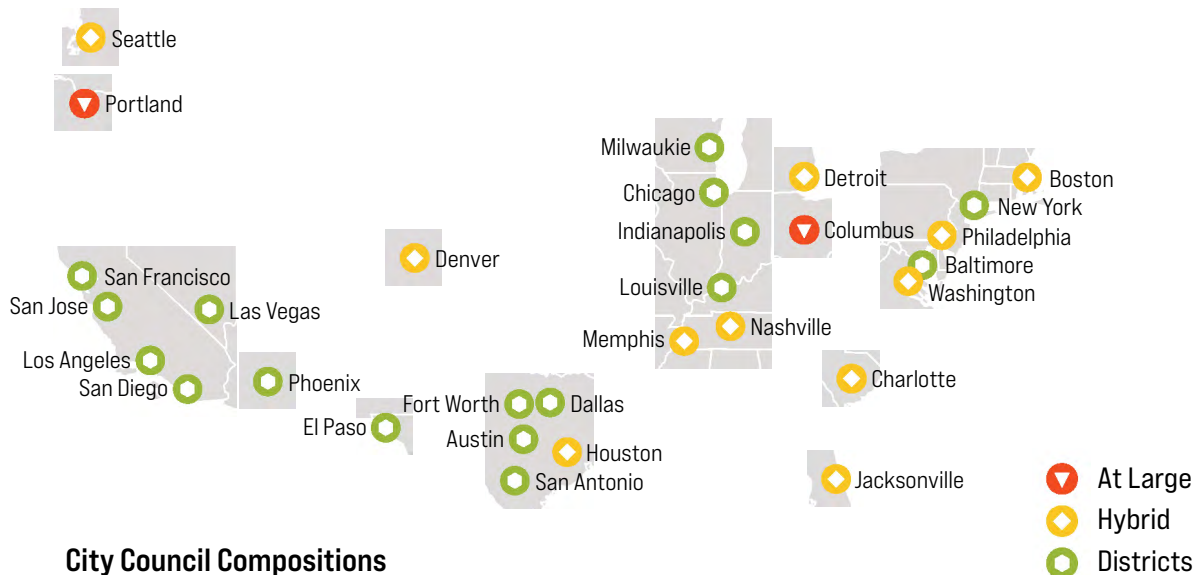


City Council Compositions

City council constituencies fall into three categories: at-large seats, district seats, and hybrid systems. There are two types of district seats: those elected from single-member districts and multi-member districts ([↗03](#)).

Among cities with a similar or larger population than Portland, 17 cities (57 percent) use district seats, and 11 cities (36 percent) use hybrid systems. Only two cities (7 percent), including Portland and Columbus, Ohio, use at-large constituencies ([↗04](#)). City councils for municipalities with larger populations (250,000 and above) more frequently use

district voting compared to smaller municipalities, which more frequently use at-large constituencies. The committee strongly believes that Portland should look to cities with a similarly sized population (shown in the map below) when considering the types of reforms that would be most effective.



City Council Compositions

Current Structure of Portland City Government Elections

In Portland's system of first-past-the-post voting, a winning candidate for each commissioner position, including the mayor, must eventually receive a majority of ballots cast. If a candidate earns more than 50 percent of votes in the May primary, they are declared the winner. But if no candidate exceeds this threshold, a runoff is held in November between the top two primary finishers. As noted, Portland is one of very few cities to currently elect all of its city council members at-large. There is no requirement for commissioners to reside in a specific section of the city.

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, elected in 2018, is only the second representative elected since 1995 who lives east of 82nd Avenue

Portland's voting method has a long history of systematically underrepresenting many communities [705]. Renters, women, people of color, ethnic minorities, and young people face significant barriers which they are required to overcome to reach a seat on the City Council. According to data compiled by the Sightline Institute, more than three-quarters of the years served on City Council since 1995 have been by white men [706]. Less than a quarter of the years served have been by renters in spite of the fact that according to

2017 data, 42 percent of Portland residents are renters [↗07]. Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, elected in 2018, is only the second representative elected since 1995 who lives east of 82nd Avenue. The committee strongly believes that this lack of diverse representation can be attributed in large part to Portland's voting system.

Voter Turnout in Portland

Vote by mail and automatic voter registration are important features of elections in Portland. Vote by mail was passed by ballot measure in 1998 [↗08]. Automatic voter registration is a recent change. Oregon became the first state to implement it in January 2016. The law, which automatically adds voters to the rolls after a "qualifying interaction" at the DMV unless they opt out, has helped to boost the rate of registration among eligible voters. In 2018, 90 percent of eligible Oregon voters registered, compared with 78 percent in 2012. The national think tank Demos attributes a 2-3 percentage point increase in voter turnout to automatic registration, as well as diversity among voters by age, race and income [↗09].

The first past the post election method is another important feature. Not only is participation lower in the primary, but the electorate is also less representative of the population. Portland State University's project "Who Votes for Mayor," completed in 2016,

	Primary	General Election
2016	173,338 in race to re-elect Commissioner Amanda Fritz	260,448 in race to elect Commissioner Chloe Eudaly
2018	119,613 in race to re-elect Commissioner Nick Fish	267,146 in race to elect Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty

highlights the gaps by analyzing participation in the 2012 mayoral election. The study concluded that "voters 65 and older have 3 times greater Electoral Clout than voters aged 18-34." [↗10] At the precinct level, participation in the 2018 primary ranged from 13 percent to 49 percent. By contrast, every precinct in the 2018 general election had at least 43 percent participation. The table below shows the number of votes in the race for each commissioner seat [↗11]:

...the use of a May primary discourages the majority of eligible voters from participating at all.

The committee studied voter turnout data as a way to compare participation across elections, with the belief that higher turnout indicated more engagement and resulted in representation for a larger number of residents. With regard to the election of policy makers who set public budgets and govern the administration of public services, voting is the fundamental way that Portlanders may express their preferences — and the use of

a May primary discourages the majority of eligible voters from participating at all. We recognize that engagement takes many forms and that voter turnout does not account for the many other ways in which residents may make their voices heard.

Recent Legislative Changes

Two very recent legislative changes and one ballot measure change directly relate to electoral reform, but the impacts of these changes are too early to analyze.

The Oregon Voting Rights Act was passed in June 2019. It includes a provision that permits constituents to use a simpler public process to change school boards' election methods to ensure that people of color have fair representation. Alternatively, individuals may bring a lawsuit to existing systems, in which case a judge would decide the most appropriate remedy. With the Oregon Voting Rights Act, the state has set an important precedent to expedite reform of inequitable voting systems.

The Open & Accountable Elections System for public financing was created by Portland City Council in 2016. Under this system, candidates who receive enough small contributions from qualified donors will get donations matched six-to-one, up to \$50 per donor. The candidates who participate agree to a fundraising and spending limit ([12](#)).

In 2018 voters approved **\$500 Contribution Limits** for all City of Portland and Multnomah County campaigns. After a legal challenge, those limits went into effect on May 4, 2020.

Discussion:

Alternative Voting Methods

The sections that follow discuss how well various voting methods accomplish the goals outlined in our evaluation criteria, as well as concerns uncovered by the committee's research or witness testimony.

First-Past-the-Post Voting

A first-past-the-post system is one where each voter casts a single ballot, and the candidate with the most votes wins. As noted, Portland's current rules are a variation of this system: in the primary, any candidate who wins more than 50% of the vote wins outright. If no candidate wins more than 50%, the top two vote-getters move on to the general election¹³. First-past-the-post is compatible with any type of constituency, including at-large, districts, and hybrids. For example, New Jersey uses it with multi-member districts, and in state legislative elections in November 2019, two representatives to the general assembly were elected from each district [13].

If a candidate wins a majority of votes in the primary, they win the seat outright without a need for a general election.

...in Portland, where the majority of the population is non-Hispanic white, a candidate could win an election without campaigning for support from communities of color.

The largest advantage of first-past-the-post, both in general and in Portland specifically, is its familiarity. Voters are accustomed to choosing a single name from a list of options and expect that the candidate who has received the highest number of votes will be the winner. These rules have a long history in federal and Oregon state elections [14]. Supporters of this system also argue that it is an advantage that a candidate must appeal to a large number of voters to be widely recognized and considered the best option by a majority. However, the committee was not convinced that this feature is beneficial because it allows candidates to pay less attention to voters outside the majority required for them to win. Specifically in Portland, where the majority of the population is non-Hispanic white, a candidate could win an election without campaigning for support from communities of color. On the other hand, even a candidate who appeals to a strong majority of voters of color in the city would still need to win over some white voters to win a City Council seat.

There are other significant disadvantages to Portland's first-past-the-post rules. Last year's City Club report on Portland's government concluded that first-past-the-post voting is "the least likely to increase equity by lowering barriers to entry into the political process and increasing the chances that all voices—including minority voices—are heard."

This committee had this conclusion corroborated by a witness with extensive experience researching voting methods. Reasons for this conclusion include the following:

- First-past-the-post voting is inequitable because, as described above, any voter coalitions that are outnumbered risk ending up with no representation. This method does not meet the committee's stated goal of ensuring that all voters are represented.
- First-past-the-post discourages voters from expressing their true preferences, particularly if they think their favorite candidate won't win anyway. Consider a race that includes two leading candidates and a third candidate who has much less support. Voters who prefer the third candidate are faced with a decision: should they "throw away" their vote on someone who is not likely to win, or should they vote for one of the other two candidates to make their voices count? Voters may also choose to vote strategically to avoid splitting the vote between two similar candidates, resulting in neither one winning.
- This voting method encourages negative campaigning because candidates are seeking to take support away from one another, leading to attack ads against opponents. A reform process in Portland should seek a voting method that is likely to discourage attack ads and to focus on substantive issues.
- Portland's implementation of first-past-the-post voting with a May primary is inequitable because turnout in the primary is consistently lower and less representative of the city's population than turnout in the general election. This goes against the committee's goal of ensuring that voter participation is maximized. But it should be noted that first-past-the-post is compatible with a single round of elections with a plurality winner.

Ranked-Choice Voting

Ranked-choice voting methods, including examples such as instant runoff voting and single transferable vote, ask voters to rank the candidates rather than choose a single favorite. This type of method is compatible with either single-winner or multi-winner elections. Ranked-choice voting is gaining traction nationwide, with the 2019 Ballot Question 1 in New York City as a prominent example of voters approving this voting method in the nation's largest city. Over 73 percent of voters approved a move which, among other changes, establishes ranked-choice voting as the method for primary and special elections beginning in 2021 [15].

How it works

To determine the results of **ranked-choice voting** with a single winner, election administrators tally the number of first-choice votes for each candidate. If any candidate earns more than half of the first-choice votes, they win the election. If no candidate reaches this threshold, additional rounds of vote tallying ensue to determine a winner. In the second round, election administrators eliminate the candidate with the fewest first-place votes, but those ballots remain active. Each vote transfers to the candidate who was ranked second on those ballots, and all of the ballots are counted again to determine

if anyone has won a majority of first-choice votes. A ballot is exhausted only if all the candidates that a voter has ranked are eliminated from the race. The transfer process is repeated until one candidate has earned more than half of the available votes.

In a multi-winner election, election administrators set a threshold to determine winners

City Council						
Rank up to 6 candidates. Mark no more than 1 oval in each column.	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Fourth choice	Fifth choice	Sixth choice
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Valarie Altman Orange Party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
George Hovis Yellow Party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Althea Sharp Purple Party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mary Tawa Lime Party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Joe Li Tan Party	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Phil Wilkie Independent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ballot example from FairVote.org

based on the number of seats in the district. For example, in a district with three representatives, any candidate with at least 25 percent of the vote wins. In the tallying process for these elections, voters rank multiple candidates on their ballots. After identifying any first-choice winners with more than the threshold share of the votes (25 percent in this example), election administrators then eliminate the candidate with the fewest first-choice votes, and re-tally the ballots, again ensuring that each ballot cast influences the final outcome [716].

The major advantages of methods that ask voters to select candidates in order of preference are:

- These voting methods meet the committee’s goal of allowing voters to express their preferences honestly. Ballots are not “wasted” if a voter’s preferred candidate has a low chance of winning. Voters can support their first choice but still influence the outcome of the election by using their second choice and all their following choices to rank the remaining candidates.
- Negative campaigning is discouraged when candidates want the supporters of their opponents to consider them as a second choice. This has been seen in practice in Minneapolis, where ranked-choice voting was first used in 2009. A report on the

Relatedly, results of the election may take days before a winner can be declared.

2017 election by FairVote Minnesota found that “93 percent of polled voters felt that candidates did not spend most of their time criticizing opponents.” [↗17]

We outline two primary concerns with ranked-choice voting:

- The process of ranking candidates becomes complex for voters if there are many people running for office. Voters have the option of ranking only the candidates they have an opinion about, but the advantages of ranked-choice voting may be diminished if many of the ballots cast are exhausted before a winner is found▶.
- There are theoretical conditions where a counterintuitive result can occur under ranked-choice voting, though in practice these are exceedingly rare; in the more than 100 ranked-choice voting elections that have occurred over the last decade, we could find just one example of these counterintuitive results. The Center for Election Science lays out the shortcomings of ranked choice voting with examples including the 1991 gubernatorial election in Louisiana and the 2009 mayoral election in Burlington, VT [↗18].

The committee views ranked-choice voting as an option to make elections in Portland more equitable. Critically, it ensures that voters have more of a say in the final outcome of an election by allowing the transfer of votes among candidates. It has also been shown to increase diversity of representation in places where it has been implemented. In Minneapolis — where, as in Portland, non-Hispanic whites are a majority of the population [↗19] — a woman or person of color won 12 of 22 races contested in the 2017 election [↗20].

Proportional and Semi-Proportional Voting

There are three commonly used forms of proportional or semi-proportional voting. Cumulative and Limited Voting can be used in multi-member districts, where voters will elect more than one representative.

There are two variations of cumulative voting: In the **free version of cumulative voting**, each voter has as many votes as there are seats being contested, and may allocate them to candidates in any way [↗21]. For example, if four Portland commissioners were being elected in a single district, voters could vote once for each of their four favorite candidates. If they felt strongly about one candidate, they could allocate all four votes to that individual. Other arrangements would also be possible, such as giving three votes to a favorite candidate and one vote to a second candidate. **Equal and even cumulative voting** is more restrictive. It requires voters to allocate votes equally among all candidates selected. In this method, if a voter selected two candidates, she would give each two votes even if she preferred one over the other.

See more about multi-member districts on page 17.

Limited voting allows each voter to cast fewer votes than there are seats available. If Portland used limited voting, with four contested seats decided in a single race rather than by post, each voter would cast two or three votes.

The advantages of cumulative and limited voting methods are highly connected to the advantages of multi-member districts. These include the following:

- These voting methods advance the goal of ensuring that all voters are represented. Cumulative voting in particular has been adopted in some municipalities as a remedy to violations of the Voting Rights Act [§22]. These methods eliminate the ability of a majority, however slight, to win all elected offices and instead allows for a non-majority voting bloc to win representation.
- The goal of allowing voters to express their preferences honestly and fully is advanced by these methods. The free version of cumulative voting gives voters the flexibility to give most of their support to a candidate they feel is likely to win but also express some support for a preferred long-shot candidate.
- These methods meet the goal of making political office more accessible by lowering the threshold of votes needed for candidates to win. A candidate would not need the support of a majority of voters, or even a plurality, to win office. In Portland, these methods would reduce barriers to candidates by making it possible to campaign in specific communities or neighborhoods rather than citywide.

Vote splitting comment needed.

The committee has one primary concern with cumulative or limited voting:

Districts	Single-Member	Multi-Member		
	Ranked Choice Voting	Ranked Choice Voting	Cumulative Voting	Limited Voting
Voter participation should be maximized.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
More Portlanders should have someone at City Hall representing their interests.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Elected office should be accessible to all eligible community members.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Campaigns should be focused on the issues & discourage negative campaigning	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>		
All voters should be able to express their preferences honestly and fully.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Election results should be transparent and intuitive. Method should not encourage vote-splitting/strategizing	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>		

- These methods may limit the ability of voters to express their preferences honestly because vote-splitting among similar candidates may lead to neither candidate getting elected (23). This issue could lead to unintended consequences such as limited voter choice. If a community feels they need to coalesce behind a single candidate to have the best chance of winning, candidates may hesitate to enter an election. Unlike in ranked-choice voting, there is no transfer of support once a candidate is eliminated.

Overall, the committee concludes that either cumulative or limited voting would be an improvement over a first-past-the-post system. Either one would be a strong alternative to ranked-choice voting if the use of multi-member districts makes them a viable option.

In sum, ranked-choice voting and limited or cumulative voting elevate the voices of voters by allowing them to express more fully their preferences for multiple candidates. This is a clear advantage over first-past-the-post voting, in which voters may only select one candidate per ballot. In first-past-the-post voting voters who favor a clear second choice, or find another candidate completely unacceptable, have no way to express those views. Portland would benefit from a system that allows voters to provide a more complete expression of who they want to see in office. The committee did not come to a consensus about whether the other advantages offered by these alternative voting methods made one clearly preferable to another.

What was clear to the committee is that the voting method ultimately chosen should result in a single round of elections, eliminating the low-turnout primary. An argument against this position was made by someone experienced in local campaigning: a runoff election gives voters an opportunity to more thoroughly vet the final two candidates. The committee was not convinced by this argument because this potential advantage is negated when elections are decided in a May primary, thereby eliminating the runoff itself. A single election in November with any of the voting methods outlined above, would provide voters with time to vet all their options. Moreover, it would make political office more accessible by eliminating the cost of running two rounds of campaigns

Discussion:

City Council Districts

The sections that follow discuss how well at-large voting, single-member and multi-member districts accomplish the goals outlined in our evaluation criteria, as well as concerns uncovered by the committee's research or witness testimony.

At-Large Voting

Portland voters currently elect city council members at-large, rather than dividing the city into districts and electing representatives from each one. Among U.S. cities larger than Portland, only Columbus, Ohio still elects its city council in at-large elections. Over the previous decade, cities including Seattle and Austin have moved away from at-large elections. Austin voters approved a change to districts in 2012, also expanding their city council from seven members to 11 [\[24\]](#).

The main advantages claimed by advocates of an at-large voting system are that without districts, there is no risk of gerrymandering, and that all representatives have a city-wide perspective. Supporters of an at-large system argue that representatives do not have a perspective limited by a single district [\[25\]](#). Portland's commissioners can make decisions that benefit the entire city, without districts competing for resources.

However, there are several concerns with at-large voting:

- An at-large system fails to provide representation for all voters because a majority group in the city can dominate elections. As one example, in Portland, where about 70 percent of the population is non-Hispanic white, representatives who are white have served a disproportionate amount of time on the city council – far greater than 70 percent. Though a few recent elections go against this pattern, it does not change the inequitable structure of an at-large system.
- An at-large system creates barriers to running for political office. The number of votes required to win an at-large election is high, especially when candidates run for specific position slots as they do in Portland, resulting in increased campaign costs. Portland's new Open & Accountable Elections Program is intended to level the playing field and make running for commissioner accessible to a wider range of candidates. But this change does not entirely offset the inequity inherent in an at-large system.
- Representatives do not have strong ties to specific geographic areas in an at-large system, making them less responsive to the needs of marginalized communities within the city. Supporters of at-large elections might consider the lack of strong ties a benefit because representatives are less parochial, but the lack of responsiveness to marginalized communities in an at-large system is the more significant concern for the committee.

As mentioned above, among U.S. cities larger than Portland, only Columbus, OH elects its city council in at-large elections, making it the subject of scrutiny from the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (NAACP LDF). In November 2017, the NAACP LDF wrote a letter to Columbus's seven city council members, stating "substantial concerns that this electoral method may violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and other federal and state laws, by denying voters of color in Columbus of the equal opportunity to elect their preferred candidates to this important local body." [↗26] At the time the letter was sent, the city council was majority black, but only one black candidate in the city's history won their seat in an election without being appointed first [↗27].

In May 2018, Columbus voters passed a ballot initiative, with 76 percent in favor, to add two members to the city council and divide the city into nine districts. However, while one representative will be elected from each district, elections will remain citywide. The transition to district elections is set to take place in 2023 [↗28].

A competing set of reforms was introduced by the group Everyday People for Positive Change. Their proposal would have increased the size of the city council to 13, with 10 representatives from districts and three at-large members. Other proposed changes included term limits and caps on campaign contributions. But the city attorney ruled that by combining so many reforms, the initiative violated the one-proposal rule [↗29], which states that petitions cannot address multiple topics at once. A lawsuit to overrule the city attorney's decision and force the proposal onto the ballot was unsuccessful [↗30].

... Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg cited at-large voting, along with racial gerrymandering, as a method to deny equal voting rights to minority voters.

Examples abound of at-large systems struck down by courts because they violate the Voting Rights Act. In 2018, a federal appeals court unanimously upheld a decision that at-large elections for the school board in Ferguson, Missouri violated the Act [↗31]. In 2009, the United States Department of Justice filed a complaint against the town of Park Lake, Florida for its at-large system [↗32]. Over the course of several decades, courts have recognized that at-large voting dilutes the power of racial minorities and mandated changes to more equitable systems. In 2013, in her dissent from the Supreme Court's decision to strike down key parts of the Voting Rights Act, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg cited at-large voting, along with racial gerrymandering, as a method to deny equal voting rights to minority voters [↗33].

... there is no voting system that can be applied in at-large elections to make them equitable.

The committee believes there is no voting system that can be applied in at-large elections to make them equitable.

Districts: Single-Member and Multi-Member

Broadly speaking, Portland's options for districting fall into two categories: In **single-member districts**, a system familiar from state and federal elections, districts would be drawn so that each representative has roughly the same number of constituents, and each one would elect a single representative. Single-member districts are commonly used in city council elections in other U.S. cities. **Multi-member districts** would allow voters to elect multiple representatives in the same district. They do not necessarily need to have the same number of constituents. For example, Portland could have an eight-member council with three districts, if two of the districts elected three representatives each and the third district elected two.

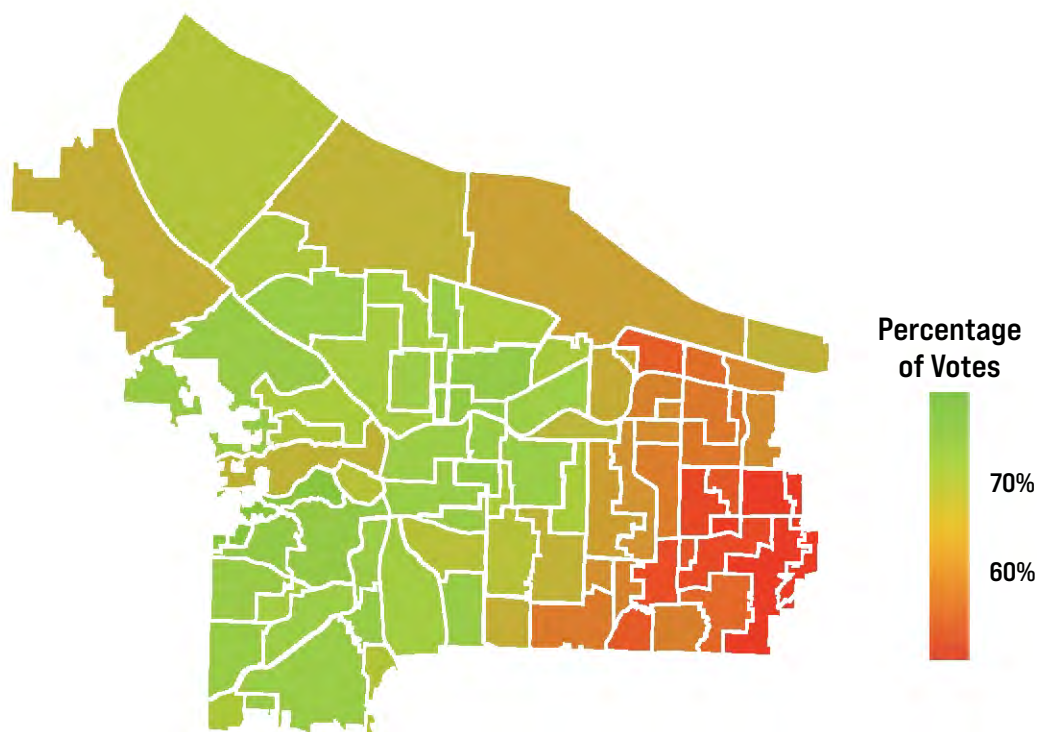
Major advantages of districts include:

- Either of these scenarios lead to the election of commissioners who are more geographically diverse, which advances the goal of ensuring all voters are represented. This is a key concern because Portland's east side has had so few representatives. Having districts would encourage representatives to be more attuned to the nuances of policies that their constituents support.
- These scenarios make political office more accessible because in any district-based election, the number of votes required to win an election is reduced, leading to less expensive campaigns. This change, in combination with Portland's finance reforms, would make office attainable for more lower income candidates.
- District-based elections would result in stronger ties between a representative and residents of a particular area. Representatives who have experienced daily life in a particular part of the city would be able to speak to the specific concerns of their neighborhoods. Constituents would also have a clear point of contact in a single-member district, or multiple points of contact in multi-member districts.

Darren Harold-Golden, Julia DeGraw
Community Leaders Panel

Our research supports the conclusion that multi-member districts would effectively bring greater diversity, in terms of geography, race and ethnicity, gender, status as homeowners or renters, and other factors, to Portland's city council. In a study of districting options in Portland, the Sightline Institute concluded that multi-member districts, in conjunction with ranked-choice or cumulative voting, would result in the election of more diverse candidates [34]. District elections have had this impact in other cities too. As an example, San Francisco elected its first female African-American supervisor, first Asian-American supervisor, and first openly gay supervisor, Harvey Milk, all in its first district-based election in November 1977.

Voting patterns in Portland suggest an additional argument in favor of multi-member districts. Multi-member districts are a good fit for areas where there is no consensus around a single candidate because voters outside the majority are also represented.



Highest Precinct Support for Commissioner

The chart above uses data from recent elections (2016 and 2018, dependent on the candidate) of Commissioners Eudaly, Fish, Fritz, and Hardesty. It shows, at the precinct level, the biggest percentage of votes achieved by any one candidate among this set of four. The level of support for candidates varied throughout the city; western precincts were more likely to decisively support a single candidate, while eastern precincts were more evenly divided among the candidates running.

Our witnesses and research uncovered some concerns with districting, including the following:

- Districts have limited power to ensure that all voters have representation. Academic research shows that the impact of districts in increasing representation for communities of color is highly dependent on the concentration of minority groups. It is currently impossible in Portland to draw districts with a non-white majority. Single-member districts are most effective at increasing diversity of representation in places where people of the same race and ethnicity tend to live in the same neighborhood, which is less true of Portland.
- District-based representation would lead to changes in the budgeting process, which could adversely impact the quality of representation. Competition for funding could open the door to pork barrel politics, where representatives look for opportunities to bring additional money to their districts while rejecting less desirable projects like landfills. But representatives elected at-large have not represented all interests equally. Districts would explicitly provide a way for all areas of Portland to have a voice in decision-making.

Trounstine, Jessica, and Melody E. Valdini. "The Context Matters: The Effects of Single-Member versus At-Large Districts on City Council Diversity." *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2008, pp. 554-569. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25193833

From a witness' testimony about Whatcom County, WA.

It is worth noting that districts are not a panacea for the problem of representation. A witness familiar with Portland's city council expressed that the intentions of representatives is important regardless of voting method. For example, council members elected at large can still be committed to equitable outcomes for Portland residents. However, the committee strongly believes that a system should rely on structures that result in better representation, rather than relying on the benevolence of individual elected officials. Even though representatives elected at large may address the needs of individual neighborhoods, this possibility is not an adequate substitution for a voting method that consistently guarantees representation for all parts of the city.

Staggering the timing of elections would need to be considered in a move toward district-based voting. In the case of multi-member districts, all representatives within a single district would need to be elected in the same cycle. But should all districts vote at once? (As an example, in San Francisco, odd and even districts have alternate election cycles.)

The answer to this question would have implications for the continuity of the City Council. While it is unlikely that all incumbents would be voted out at once, staggering elections would ensure that at least some representatives have two years of experience when new representatives are voted in. On the other hand, the mix of voters who participate in elections during presidential and midterm years would create differences in the mix of voters whose voice is represented.

Hybrid Models

A hybrid model, in which some representatives are elected at-large and some are elected in districts, may function as a compromise by preserving some features of Portland's current system. This model has been implemented in Seattle, with seven districts and two at-large representatives. The city council in Washington, D.C. is another prominent example, with eight members elected from wards, plus five at-large members [\[35\]](#).

Hybrid models combine the advantages of district-based and at-large elections. Specifically:

- At-large members bring a citywide perspective, while representatives from districts advocate for the needs of their neighborhoods. This combination gives communities a voice while providing protection against pork-barrel politics. As noted by a witness, any move away from an at-large system will help improve the geographic diversity of representation, a key concern in Portland.
- Hybrid models make some positions more accessible to a socioeconomically diverse field of candidates. The district-based positions require fewer votes to win and would allow for campaigns built more around in-person engagement.

Steve Mulroy, Panel 1

Still, the committee has concerns about a hybrid system, largely because the inequities that are part of an at-large system continue to exist for some of the positions. Specifically:

- At-large elections favor majority groups and do not provide representation for all voters. Any candidate running for the at-large positions would face the barriers of greater campaign expense and less opportunity to go door-to-door and engage with voters personally. The existence of two different types of positions, one of which is more accessible than the other, would create tiers within the city council.

A hybrid system would also potentially create governance challenges that are beyond the scope of this committee.

Under a hybrid system, as with a pure district-based system, it would be essential to consider the impact of staggering elections. Electing district-based representatives during the federal election cycle and at-large representatives during midterms, or vice versa, would change the mix of voters whose voice is represented. Overall, the committee recognizes a hybrid system as an improvement over electing all representatives at-large but sees it as only a partial solution.

In sum, the committee views multi-member districts as the most equitable way to elect representatives but considers single-member districts and hybrid systems an improvement over at-large elections. Our research suggests that multi-member districts would ensure that more voters have representation and make political office more accessible by reducing the cost of campaigning.

Discussion:

A Contingent Relationship

The form of government and the way City Council members are elected are closely connected. The committee believes that a shift in the voting method combined with a shift in the form of government would improve the overall quality of local government in Portland. Both should be decided only after extensive community input.

If the current commission form of government were to remain unchanged, it would be necessary to maintain the status quo of voting at-large. The combination of districts with a commission form of government would be highly problematic, incentivizing commissioners to benefit their districts using their assigned bureaus as leverage in order to win votes in a re-election campaign. For example, a commissioner assigned to Parks and Recreation could prioritize a new park or improvements for their own district.

In contrast, in all forms of government — whether commission or another form — a change in the status quo from first-past-the-post voting and a May primary would advance the committee's goals for more equitable participation and more reflective representation. However, this change in isolation would have less of an impact on equity of representation.

In terms of voting method, the committee recommends ranked-choice voting if single-member districts are adopted. However, in the case of multi-member districts, the committee saw the benefits of ranked choice and two forms of proportional voting.

As previously stated, the committee recommends multi-member districts. Therefore, we also implicitly recommend changing the form of government to something other than the commission form.

Recommendations

1. **Significant and expansive community out-reach efforts must be undertaken to ensure that the voices of historically marginalized communities are elevated in the final comprehensive package of reforms.** Broad and thorough engagement is needed to understand the changes that would best meet the needs of those historically marginalized or shut out of the political process. We do not and cannot speak for all the communities of interest who would be impacted by reforms. This kind of civic engagement requires focused resources, leadership and commitment. We call on the City of Portland, philanthropic institutions, and supporters of civic engagement to prioritize this work in the coming years, and specifically during the 2021 Charter Review Commission process.
2. **Portland must adopt a voting method that eliminates the need for a primary.** Far fewer Portlanders vote in May primaries than in the November general election, yet City Council elections can be settled in May if a candidate wins a majority of ballots cast. Portland would benefit from an alternative voting method that eliminates the need for a primary. To implement this recommendation, the committee sees advantages to both ranked-choice voting and cumulative or limited voting.
3. **Portland must adopt multi-member districts.** The committee sees any shift toward districts as superior to Portland's current at-large system, as it would result in more equitable elections. A strong majority of the committee prefers multi-member districts over single-member districts since they eliminate winner-take-all outcomes and allow multiple constituencies within a geographic area to elect their preferred representatives. A hybrid system of districts and at-large seats would be an improvement but only a partial solution.

Next Steps

In this section, we turn our attention to three aspects of designing and implementing reforms. First, we briefly discuss the upcoming Charter Review Commission due to its significant role in determining possible changes. Next, we provide a more detailed framework for community engagement. Finally, we turn to some thoughts on an education campaign that will help smooth the transition to whichever voting system Portland ultimately adopts.

Charter Review Commission

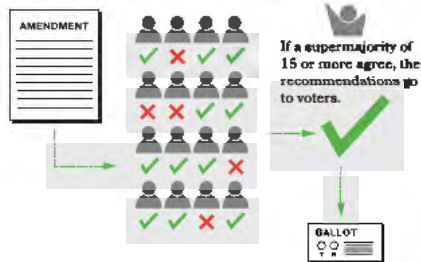
The committee has discussed the upcoming Charter Review Commission, to be established in 2020, as an avenue for reforming the election process. Portland City Council is required to convene this commission once every 10 years. When it last convened, commission members proposed nine measures to amend the charter in January 2012 [736]. Of those nine measures, all nine were added as amendments. The Commission may take up any issues related to the city's charter – including form of government, district representation and methods of voting.

HOW DOES THE CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION WORK?

Each member of the city council selects four members to serve on the Charter Review Commission.

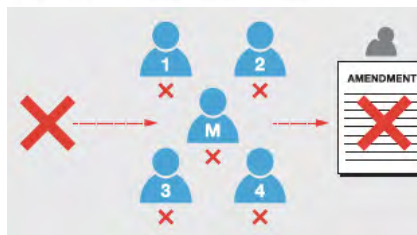


The Commission has broad latitude to recommend amendments to the City Charter.



OR

If there's no supermajority, the city council can accept, reject, or modify any recommendations.



► Image sourced from www.pdxcityclub.org/should-we-wait-for-the-charter-review-process-to-work-on-change/

The commission has 20 members, appointed by the five City of Portland commissioners. Each appointee is approved by the full City Council. If at least 15 members support an amendment to the city's charter, it is submitted as a ballot measure for voters to decide. If a majority of commission members, but fewer than 15, support a measure, it is considered a recommendation to the City Council. In this case, there is no requirement to put the measure on the ballot, but the City Council may choose to do so [\[37\]](#).

Outreach and Greater Community Input

All segments of Portland's community should be able to provide input about how they want to be represented in our city, and what changes should be implemented to achieve policies resulting in more equitable outcomes and more reflective representation. Within these conversations, we believe that the City of Portland must prioritize engaging those who have been most excluded from our democracy during the Charter Review Commissioner process or other approaches to addressing these problems. This kind of civic engagement requires resources, focused leadership and commitment. We call on the City of Portland, philanthropic institutions, and supporters of civic engagement to prioritize this work in the coming years, and specifically during the 2021 Charter Review Commission process.

Based on witness testimony, it became clear that a discussion of alternative voting methods cannot be separated from a broader discussion about engagement with the political process. With that in mind, the committee suggests a set of questions and topics to address through community outreach.

- In what ways do you engage with Portland's city government? What barriers do you face to engagement? Do you feel the current ways you engage are effective at influencing candidates and elected officials? What would make you feel welcomed into and included in the political process?
- Do you believe that a voting method other than first-past-the-post would help you and your community — however you define it — elect someone to better represent your needs and priorities?
- Do you believe that district-based elections would help you and your community — however you define it — to elect someone who effectively represents your needs and interests? What city-wide process to determine how districts are defined would best support you and your community?
- Would any of these changes make it easier for people from your community to run for office and get elected?

The current discussion of city government reform and voting methods is a historic opportunity. The voices of communities who have been least represented must be centered in this process. Robust, deliberate, and expansive conversation will create spaces for communities to introduce new ideas around engagement, including how Portland residents shape decision-making and who is able to vote. Communities that have been denied political power in the current system are essential participants in shaping a new, inclusive power structure.

Public Education Campaign

A robust, well-funded, and multilingual public education campaign is essential for a successful change to any new system and should be a central element in planning to transition to a new form of voting or government. Among other benefits, such a campaign would increase transparency and help build trust with voters. The committee studied education campaigns in other cities and found that Minneapolis, which transitioned to ranked-choice voting for the 2009 municipal election, offers a particularly useful case study for how to carry out a transition successfully and maintain education efforts several election cycles later.

According to the Minneapolis City Clerk, there was just one single defective ballot found among the nearly 46,000 ballots cast in the 2009 election. A poll found that 95 percent of voters found it easy to use. In addition to creating outreach fliers in six languages other than English, the city of Minneapolis made an interactive ballot available online prior to the 2017 election. The city's website has a two-minute video explanation available in three languages other than English.

If Portland decides to implement ranked-choice voting, the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center has assembled a list of other resources, including a two-page handout from San Francisco that includes a picture of a ballot, a list of steps for voting, and an explanation for how votes are counted [38]. The committee has not seen an equally robust set of resources for cumulative or limited voting.

No single reform would constitute an overnight panacea, and any switch in the system would expect growing pains to accompany it. But by learning from other cities' transition plans and focusing on equity by taking steps such as making information available in a variety of languages and formats, Portland will be able to ease the transition if reforms are adopted.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Stephan, Chair

Jordan Cole

Shanice Clarke

Jenny Lee

Paulina Leperi

Ricardo Lujan

Nathan Nayman

Carissa Page

Robin Ye

Appendix A

Research Methods and Activities

The research committee began its work with a literature review, guided by a bibliography compiled by City Club staff. Committee members read extensively on their own but also began to share and discuss other relevant sources, especially news stories related to voting reform in other cities. While consensus developed quickly about the importance of transitioning away from an at-large system, discussions about alternative voting methods did not lead to such a clear-cut consensus.

Initially, the committee sought to convene three panels, and the group added interviews with individuals closely connected to Portland's city government. The first panel included academic researchers, and the next two panels were a mix of policy analysts and practitioners who had been closely involved in reforms in other cities. During these interviews, witnesses were asked a series of prepared questions, with additional discussion emerging from their responses. A final panel interview included representatives from three culturally-specific/multiracial community-based organizations in Portland. This panel was invaluable in challenging the committee to be mindful of the perspectives and biases we were bringing into our work.

Following a process similar to previous research committees, the committee assigned a member in charge of setting up interviews with witnesses. The committee combined information received from City Club staff with information gleaned from our literature review and from the personal knowledge of committee members. At every step of the way, the committee did its best to find interviewees with diverse viewpoints about voting methods. Finding witnesses who supported the current voting methods for city council, and did so for reasons beyond a fundamental support for the current form of government, was challenging. Some witnesses were found, but the preponderance of witnesses interviewed felt that some kind of change was needed to Portland's voting methods. When it came to support for, or opposition to, a variety of voting methods, there was less consensus. For example, support for instant runoff voting or cumulative voting varied among witnesses. But less than a handful of those we spoke with expressed clear support for first-past-the-post voting and at-large elections.

Appendix B

Past City Club Studies of Local Government in Portland

1930s through 1950s: During this period, City Club issued a recommendation in 1933 and again in 1958, both in favor of adopting a council/city manager form of government.

1960s: During this period, City Club completed an in-depth report concluding that Portland's city government was being weakened by having management power spread among the five commissioners, and that legislative effectiveness was impaired by the inherent conflict between bureau-specific priorities and citywide needs. The research committee unanimously recommended adopting a strong mayor-council form, with an expanded city council whose members would be elected at large. Following overwhelming approval of the report by City Club's full membership, City Club assembled a sub-committee to draft a proposed city charter incorporating the report's recommendations. The proposed charter was the basis for a ballot measure created by a coalition of local civic and political groups. The measure itself was then endorsed by City Club, but went on to be rejected by Portland voters in 1966 by a two-to-one margin.

1990s: City Club issued a report on city planning in 1999, titled *Increasing Density in Portland*. While focused on city development, the report also concluded that the commission system "inhibits more coordinated and effective management," that the mayor and city council lacked a comprehensive plan for Portland, and that the planning and development were badly fragmented across multiple bureaus.

2002: Measure 26-30 proposed a mayor/council form with an expanded city council of nine members—seven elected from geographic districts, and two elected at large. City Club assembled a committee whose majority report supported the measure, finding it would increase government efficiency and equitable representation. However, City Club's membership ultimately voted to adopt a minority report which demanded a more detailed review by the charter review commission organized by the city. Measure 26-30 itself was ultimately rejected by Portland voters by a wide margin.

2007: The mayor/council system was proposed again by Measure 26-91, which would have balanced increased mayoral power by also strengthening the city's chief administrative officer. The chief administrative officer would be appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the council, and would oversee the city bureaus, as well as coordinating the city's overall operations and finances. Measure 26-91 also differed from the 2002 ballot measure by withholding veto power from the mayor and by keeping the number of council members at four. The City Club research committee tasked with reviewing the Measure ultimately announced its unanimous opposition, finding that the Measure's proponents had failed to make their case, and that changing the current form risked sacrificing the "resiliency and creativity" of Portland city government. Like the 2002 attempt, Measure 26-91 was easily defeated by Portland voters.

2019: The City Club issued a research report studying Portland's form of government, which concluded that the commission system is inequitable and has ceased to meet the needs of a growing city.

Appendix C

Questions Addressed

1. How should we elect our city commissioners in order to ensure the most equitable representation of all Portland residents?
2. How does the form of government impact the committee's recommendation? Should the method of electing our representatives be different if we retain the commission form of government versus moving to a Mayor/City Manager form of government? [The committee may choose to recommend different reforms based on different forms of government.]
3. What are the legal or constitutional barriers (local, state, or federal) that dictate how we elect our representatives?▶

The committee did not address this question in the report because we found no major concerns to be aware of in Portland.

Appendix D

Witness List

Jack Santucci

Department of Politics at Drexel

Steve Mulroy

Law professor at the University of Memphis

Paul Gronke

Professor of Political Science at Reed College

Todd Donovan

Political science faculty at Western Washington University

Kristin Eberhard

Sightline Institute

Maurice Henderson

Former chief of staff to Mayor Ted Wheeler

Pedro Hernandez

Senior policy analyst with FairVote

Eugene Wasserman

Co-coordinator of Seattle Districts Now campaign

Paul Kumar

Former Political Director of both SEIU and Save the Bay and an independent consultant

Julia DeGraw

Candidate for Portland Commissioner

Amanda Fritz

Portland Commissioner

Jo Ann Hardesty

Portland Commissioner

Andrew Riley

Unite Oregon

Darren Harold-Golden

Urban League of Portland

Violet Nazari

IRCO

Appendix E

Criteria for Map-Making

If Portlanders decide to adopt district-based elections, there will be complex decisions involved: how many districts, and how should they be drawn? The committee offers a few guidelines.

The single most important consideration when drawing districts is community engagement. Hearing directly from communities most impacted by this change is essential in order to ensure that the resulting district map is equitable. There should be no assumptions made about communities of interest that are not raised directly by residents in neighborhoods throughout Portland.

The Brennan Center for Justice offers a set of rules to guide the creation of districts. We quote the two most essential rules here:

- Districts shall provide racial minorities with an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and shall not dilute or diminish their ability to elect candidates of choice whether alone or in coalition with others.
- Districts shall minimize the division of communities of interest to the extent practicable. A community of interest is defined as an area with recognized similarities of interests, including but not limited to economic, social, cultural, geographic, or historic identities. Communities of interest shall not include common relationships with political parties, officeholders, or political candidates.

Some of the remaining rules deal with the geometry of districts: they must be geographically contiguous, respect the geographic integrity of subdivision boundaries as much as possible, and be as compact as possible. Further, the Brennan Center suggests making the districts as competitive as possible. Research is mixed on the impact of competitive elections, with some suggesting that increased competition increases voter engagement and accountability of incumbents. Others argue that competition does not impact lawmakers' behavior. It is up to Portland communities to decide how important competitive elections are relative to other factors.

Appendix F

Reference Links

- ↗01 www.sightline.org/2017/06/13/portland-city-government-doesnt-represent-portland-very-well/
- ↗02 www.pdxcityclub.org/new-government/
- ↗03 docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vnPQoKcoeXtXV-lgZ3nkpTD9lqxJ-ge1QEFNEUlrV1Q/edit#gid=0
- ↗04 docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n76fG3Tncz6neJQdhIKvCrdADWDhsDsp0bLAZ6_goec/edit?usp=sharing
- ↗05 law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/658/1015/2361593/
- ↗06 docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1n76fG3Tncz6neJQdhIKvCrdADWDhsDsp0bLAZ6_goec/edit?usp=sharing
- ↗07 www.governing.com/gov-data/census/city-renter-population-housing-statistics.html
- ↗08 multco.us/elections/voting-oregon-vote-mail
- ↗09 www.demos.org/policy-briefs/oregon-automatic-voter-registration
- ↗10 www.whovotesformayor.org/cities/5755a099db1eab405dd5f182#takeaways
- ↗11 www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/27116
- ↗12 www.portlandoregon.gov/oea/article/709376
- ↗13 ballotpedia.org/New_Jersey_General_Assembly_elections,_2019
- ↗14 ballotpedia.org/Electoral_systems_in_Oregon
- ↗15 [ballotpedia.org/New_York_City_Ballot_Question_1,_Elections_Charter_Amendment:_Ranked-Choice_Voting,_Vacancies,_and_City_Council_Redistricting_Timeline_\(November_2019\)](http://ballotpedia.org/New_York_City_Ballot_Question_1,_Elections_Charter_Amendment:_Ranked-Choice_Voting,_Vacancies,_and_City_Council_Redistricting_Timeline_(November_2019))
- ↗16 www.fairvote.org/rcv#how_rcv_works
- ↗17 www.fairvotemn.org/ranked-choice-voting-2017-elections-report
- ↗18 www.electionscience.org/voting-methods/runoff-election-the-limits-of-ranked-choice-voting/
- ↗19 www.census.gov/quickfacts/minneapoliscityminnesota
- ↗20 www.fairvotemn.org/ranked-choice-voting-2017-elections-report
- ↗21 archive.fairvote.org/factshts/comparis.htm
- ↗22 www.fairvote.org/_cumulative_voting_comes_close_but_not_all_the_way_to_fair_representation
- ↗23 www.fairvote.org/_cumulative_voting_comes_close_but_not_all_the_way_to_fair_representation

- ↗24 [ballotpedia.org/Austin, Texas](https://ballotpedia.org/Austin,_Texas)
- ↗25 www.nlc.org/resource/cities-101-at-large-and-district-elections
- ↗26 www.naacpldf.org/files/about-us/Ltr.toColumbusCityCouncil11.17.17_0.pdf
- ↗27 <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/12/columbus-the-last-at-large-city-council-in-america/547274/>
- ↗28 [ballotpedia.org/Columbus, Ohio, Issue 3, Local Government Structure Charter Amendment \(May 2018\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Columbus,_Ohio,_Issue_3,_Local_Government_Structure_Charter_Amendment_(May_2018))
- ↗29 radio.wosu.org/post/activists-will-sue-put-columbus-council-overhaul-may-ballot#stream/0
- ↗30 www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/rod/docs/pdf/0/2018/2018-Ohio-1286.pdf
- ↗31 blogs.edweek.org/edweek/school-law/2018/07/at-large-school-board-in-fergu.html
- ↗32 www.justice.gov/crt/cases-raising-claims-under-section-2-voting-rights-act-0
- ↗33 www.documentcloud.org/documents/717244-supreme-court-decision-in-shelby-county-v-holder.html#document/p32
- ↗34 www.sightline.org/2017/06/15/could-portland-create-a-city-council-that-looks-like-portland/
- ↗35 [ballotpedia.org/Washington, D.C.](https://ballotpedia.org/Washington,_D.C.)
- ↗36 www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/article/385818
- ↗37 www.portlandoregon.gov/citycode/49288
- ↗38 www.rankedchoicevoting.org/education