

Chapter 13

Portland: The Most Livable City?

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A visitor to Portland from the frenetic East coast would be impressed immediately by its relaxed pace. It is a city that "has never bustled. It doesn't today. It ambles . . . with some loitering along the way" (O'Donnell and Vaughan, 1976, p. 9). In 1947, however, journalist and former senator Richard Neuberger was concerned that Portland's "general quietude" and "leisurely meandering" might come to an end. He viewed Portland as "poised indecisively between its pastoral past and a future which the late President [F.D.] Roosevelt once prophesied might be that of 'a new Pittsburgh of the West'" (Neuberger, 1947, p. 23). Has Portland been able to retain its "pastoral past" while growing into a metropolitan area of over a million people? Or has it become another Pittsburgh, which ironically ranked in 1985 as the most livable city in Boyer and Savageau's (1985) *Places Rated Almanac*? How does the quality of life in Portland compare with other cities in the United States?

WHAT IS LIVABILITY?

Attempts to compare the well-being or quality of life in American cities have a history dating back to at least 1939, when the psychologist E.L. Thorndike wrote *Your City*. Thorndike developed indices of the "general goodness of life for good people" that included health

(largely mortality rates), education expenditures and school attendance, recreation expenditures, poverty and unemployment rates, and "creature comforts". Portland ranked 42nd, tied for 15th place, out of the 310 cities. Thorndike's approach clearly favored the upper-middle class suburbs of the day: Pasadena, Berkeley, Cleveland Heights, Brookline, MA, and Evanston and Oak Park, IL were top rated.

In 1976 Portland received national attention when Ben-Chieh Liu, a geographer with the Midwest Research Institute, ranked Portland at the top in a monograph comparing the quality of life in 65 American cities (Liu, 1975). His rankings were based on five sets of indicators of the economic, political, and social characteristics of each city, the quality of the health/education system and the quality of the environment; Portland was the only city receiving an "A" rating in all five categories. More recently, Boyer and Savageau's 1985 edition of *Places Rated Almanac* ranked Portland 63rd among the 329 cities rated.

These are only three from a long list of empirical studies comparing cities. Has Portland changed, or are the differences among studies due to differences in the rating systems? The answer is more likely to lie in the rating systems. In trying to resolve the differences between the studies, a number of

methodological issues arise.

First, some of the studies use data for only the incorporated city while others use the standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA) composed of the county in which the city is located and the surrounding counties that are economically interdependent. Cities vary widely in the degree to which their suburbs have been incorporated into the city. Those which have incorporated more of their surrounding area will generally have more favorable social indicators because the more affluent part of the population is included.

Second, studies differ in their choice of indicators, and in how these are weighted in developing a composite score. The studies generally lack a component that asks residents what *they* think is important in judging the livability of a city. Robert N. Pierce, a geographer at the State University of New York at Cortland, (Associated Press, 1984) did ask what potential residents considered the most important factors in choosing a city in which to live, using a sample of New York State residents. When he used the importance they placed on various indicators to recompute the city ratings from Boyer and Savageau's data, Portland moved from 62nd to 13th place.

Another approach to assessing the importance of objective indicators is to determine how well each indicator is able to predict people's "well being" or "life satisfaction". It appears, however, that people's life satisfaction is much more a function of their private lives, e.g. their marriage and family, than of those aspects of life over which the public sector has control (Milbrath, 1979; Campbell, Converse and Rodgers, 1976). Thus, the characteristics that vary among cities (such as quality of

the environment or education system) may not be the major determinants of perceived quality of life.

Third, different segments of the population are likely to have somewhat different values and thus attitudes toward livability. A city that is wonderful for the well-educated is not necessarily good for the poor. Those things that most contribute to satisfaction with geographical location vary as we move through the stages of life, and vary by social status, gender, and cultural background. Is it more important to have an excellent opera or a professional football team? Lakes for boating or mountains for climbing? We would not all agree. So any attempt to capture the livability of a city in a single score, regardless of how derived, is an oversimplification.

IMPRESSIONS OF PORTLAND

Recognizing these problems, we will nevertheless try to characterize Portland in terms of both objective and subjective measures. For the subjective we have tried to capture what Portland residents think is unique about their city, and also what aspects most contribute to, or detract from its livability. A short questionnaire was sent to 50 members of the City Club, a civic organization engaged in studying a wide variety of local issues. Although admittedly unrepresentative of the population as a whole, the sample does tap a particularly knowledgeable and well-travelled group. Respondents were asked to describe Portland and to comment on both its unique or distinctive features and those that make Portland a particularly good or poor place to live. Forty people responded (Table 13.1).

The subjective impressions of Portland focus on somewhat different

Table 13.1: *Subjective impressions of Portland, from questionnaire responses of 40 Portland City Club members.*

Categories of Responses	Number of Responses	
	Positive/Neutral	Negative
Physical Environment		
Geography or location	36	1
Aesthetics, architecture	15	0
Size or density	27	0
Environment and scenery	26	1
Downtown vitality	11	1
Climate	12	8
Social Environment		
Characteristics of the people	19	8
Ambience (provinciality, formality, etc.)	24	10
Crime or safety	1	2
Education system	7	1
Government and politics	29	7
Neighborhoods	14	3
Social, political openness	12	0
Economic climate	11	15
Transportation	9	1
Health and health care	1	0
Arts and Recreation		
Organized sports	0	1
Outdoor recreation	13	0
Arts and entertainment	9	5
Openness to change, innovation	2	0

characteristics than those usually included in quantitative measures of city quality. Portland's physical environment generated the most positive comments -- the diversity of its surrounding environment; its size, reflecting the amenities of a large city as well as a small town atmosphere; its scenic setting. In the social environment the strongest impression is of the honest, open political climate and the informal, slow-paced ambience of the city. The negatives center on the poor economic conditions in recent years, the provincial populace, and the wet climate.

A number of aspects that constitute the uniqueness of Portland are not captured by the objective data relied upon

by Liu (1975), Boyer and Savageau (1985) and others. Although the responses may be skewed somewhat by the sample, i.e., the City Club members may be more aware of and interested in the political climate than most Portlanders, the responses were surprisingly consistent. Several themes appeared that cut across a number of categories. The first of these is moderation. Portland was described as moderate in size, climate, political activity, and in the pace of life.

The second recurring theme is of accessibility. The accessibility of natural beauty and recreational opportunities in the mountains, the seashore, and the desert was mentioned often. But

Portland is also seen as a city in which people can easily become involved in social and civic affairs. The social, political, and business worlds are all described as “open”. This accessibility extends to the transportation system; the city is easy to get around in both by car and on foot.

THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

One of the problems with over-all scales that attempt to compare all cities on the same measures is that they do not capture the possibility that being truly outstanding in one area may outweigh many negatives. For New York, the outstanding element is the diversity and excitement of the city’s cultural life. For Portland, judging from the City Club members’ responses, it is the geographic location of the city, and the city’s scenic beauty and recreational opportunities. One person characterized the city as “an island of urbanization in a region of wild scenic beauty”. In the following sections we review how Portland ranks in some of the social indicators commonly used in livability studies, with an emphasis on those which are particularly characteristic of the city.

Aesthetics

Two ingredients in determining the aesthetic character of Portland will be discussed: imageability and urban design.

Imageability

The MIT planner Kevin Lynch (1960) argued that imageable cities are beautiful cities. By imageability he meant the extent to which the city structure was easy to comprehend--how easy is it to know where you are, to get from one place to another, to visualize the form of the city? An imageable city, then, is

one in which there are districts with clear identities, and a system of landmarks, activity nodes, pathways and edges that work together to create a comprehensible whole.

If you were spirited to Portland in the middle of the night, how would you know where you were? Characteristic of the Pacific Northwest are the tall Douglas Fir trees, and the wooden frame houses (brick and stucco are relatively uncommon). The terrain is river valley with lines of hills punctuated by the small volcanic cones (see Chapter 1) and in the distance the towering volcanic peaks of the Cascades. The weather would likely be mild: relatively dry summers and cool, damp winters with rain coming in mists rather than sheets. The symbol of Portland is the rose, and indeed the climate is ideal for a diversity of shrubs and flowers.

By combining a recent report on the imageability of Portland (Harrison, 1977) and our own observations together with Lynch’s (1960) framework, the city’s image is defined first of all by the edges provided by natural features: the Tualatin Hills to the west and the Willamette River to the east define the downtown district, which nestles into an area of only two to three square miles. There are other districts that are also well-defined, neighborhoods such as Ladd’s Addition, Laurelhurst and others that were platted early in the century and stand out in the area east of the Willamette River due to their housing styles, their break from the grid street pattern, and their solidly residential character (see Chapter 5). The grid street pattern through most of the city is predictable and has the added advantage of allowing vistas. The west side is somewhat less imageable due to the more rugged terrain and the irregular road patterns.

The primary activity node of the downtown area is Pioneer Courthouse Square. This square is located at what has been called the 100 percent location -- the activity and symbolic center of the city (Whyte, 1980). The square was completed in 1984, replacing a two-story parking lot. Although it has generated some controversy because local youth immediately began to congregate there, it has also become a natural gathering place for the city, for the lunchtime crowd, and for those who drop in for outdoor concerts and festivals.

There are also many visual landmarks. The Interstate Bank and US National Bank towers essentially form bookends at the north and south edges of downtown, since they loom above buildings conforming to the more recent height limitations. Michael Graves' Portland Building is a gaily gift-wrapped post-modern temple generating controversy in architectural circles nationwide -- but definitely a visual landmark.

Urban design

San Francisco-based landscape architect Lawrence Halprin (1986a) refers to Portland as "one of the greatest cities in the world". Why? He likes (and has had a part in creating) the network of open spaces in the downtown area. He speaks of Portland's "pedestrian network -- a network of places, interesting walkways, like pearls in a necklace" (Halprin, 1986b). Among these are the squares and fountains he created in the late 1960's (Ira Keller Fountain facing the Civic Auditorium and Lovejoy Fountain in the Portland Center redevelopment area), as well as the new Pioneer Courthouse Square, and the transit mall running through downtown that is floored with brick and furnished with benches, flowers,

and sculptures.

A recent issue of *Architecture*, the journal of the American Institute of Architects, featured Portland as an example of innovative approach to urban design (Canty, 1986). The city's Downtown Plan, adopted in the mid-1970's and the work of the Portland Development Commission have remade the downtown in the last decade. Harbor Drive, a four-lane expressway along the west bank of the river was demolished, the waterfront park expanded and refurbished, and new development begun -- e.g. RiverPlace, a low-rise development of apartments, a hotel, restaurants, shops, and a marina (see Chapter 3). Thus the plan has created better access to and visibility of the river, the most basic element in the imageability of the city. Amidst much new construction, the city has also made extensive efforts to conserve and find creative re-uses for older downtown buildings in historic districts: Skidmore-Old Town, and Yamhill. Boston architect Joan Goody, comparing Portland and Seattle, says "there's a much greater sense of order here. The old and even the new are built in a framework that still holds together" (Hayakawa, 1986).

Climate

The climate of Portland is generally quite mild (Figure 13.1). Boyer and Savageau (1985) rank the city as 16th in overall pleasantness of climate among the 329 cities ranked. Only January is classified as winter using their definition of the period during which the mean monthly low temperature is below freezing. In an average year, Portland receives one or more inches of snow only twice. Summer is also mild--it ties for fifth place with Portland, Maine as having one of the

Portland, OR

Terrain: Situated 65 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and midway between the northerly oriented low Coast Ranges on the west and the higher Cascade Range on the east, each 30 miles distant. The long growing season, with its mild temperatures and ample moisture, favors local nursery and seed industries.

Climate: A rain climate in winter, marked by relatively mild temperatures and cloudy skies. Summers are pleasantly mild with northwesterly winds and very little precipitation. Fall and spring are transitional in nature. Fog occurs frequently in fall and winter. At all times, incursions of marine air are a moderating influence. Extremes in winter and summer come from the continental interior. Destructive winds are infrequent.

Pluses: Short winters; long, pleasant summers; ample precipitation.

Minuses: Daily rains during winter and part of spring, often cloudy.

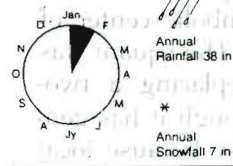
Places Rated Score: 768

Places Rated Rank: 16

Elevation: 39 feet

Relative Humidity: 74%
Wind Speed: 7.8 mph

Seasonal Change



Annual Rainfall 38 in
Annual Snowfall 7 in

Precipitation Days 152 Storm Days: 7

Average Temperatures

	Daily High	Daily Low	Monthly Mean
January	43.6	32.5	38.1
February	50.1	35.5	42.8
March	54.3	37.0	45.7
April	60.3	40.8	50.6
May	67.0	46.3	56.7
June	72.1	51.8	62.0
July	79.0	55.2	67.1
August	78.1	55.0	66.6
September	73.9	50.5	62.2
October	62.9	44.7	53.8
November	52.1	38.5	45.3
December	46.0	35.3	40.7

Zero-Degree Days: 0
Freezing Days: 44
90-Degree Days: 10
Heating- and Cooling-Degree Days: 5,092

Figure 13.1 A summary of Portland's climate (Boyer and Savageau, 1985, p. 46).

coolest average daily high temperatures in July. Only four of the 80 indicator cities are cooler than Portland's average high of 79°F: Seattle (76°), San Diego (75°), Anchorage (66°), and San Francisco (64°) (Bowman, Giuliani, and Minge, 1981). Another index of summer comfort is the "sweat factor", an index of temperature and humidity. Portland ties for fifth among the 74 cities ranked in this comfort rating (Bowman, Giuliani, and Minge, 1981).

Weather extremes are generally rare. Portland is tied for second place with nine other cities in scarcity of tornadoes, there are no hurricanes, and relatively few thunderstorms (Bowman, Giuliani, and Minge, 1981). Ice storms in the winter are more likely, as the cold east wind through the Columbia Gorge meets the warm marine air, turning rain to freezing rain (see Chapter 2). Midwesterners are alternately amused and annoyed as they find the city closing schools and generally coming to a halt after a light snowfall.

The most famous part of Oregon's climate is the rain. If one looks only at

the amount of rain -- 38 inches in Portland -- the image of rusting Oregon residents is puzzling. Many cities meet or exceed that average, including New York, Boston, and Miami. But Portland's rain falls as mist or drizzle, not as thunderstorms. Thus, the number of days in which it rains .01 inches or more is 154, a number exceeded only by Cleveland, Rochester, and Buffalo among 80 indicator cities (Bowman, Giuliani, and Minge, 1981). Portland also ranks low in the percentage of sunny days (48 percent); only Akron, Anchorage, Seattle, and Pittsburgh have more cloudy days.

Of course, the mist and mild climate are excellent for vegetation. A number of our City Club respondents were willing to endure the rain for the lushness that accompanied it: "a big plus -- springtime -- it may be wet but I love the camellias, rhododendrons and azaleas". Horticultural maps show the growing climate to be similar to the Carolinas and the central parts of the Deep South, despite sharing the same latitude as Minneapolis and northern Maine.

Environmental Quality

Air and water pollution

How good is Portland's drinking water? According to Marlin and Avery (1983), the water is exceptionally soft (ranked at the top of 69 cities) with a neutral pH of 7.0 (ranked second among 51 cities), and clear (ranked second among 63 cities). Ranging from .4 micrograms per liter of suspected carcinogens in Fresno to 250 in Houston, Portland's water supply, with only 20, is the 12th among the 52 cities ranked (Bowman, Giuliani, and Minge 1981).

With the occasional exception of carbon monoxide levels, the air in Portland is safe to breathe. According to a report by the Environmental Protection Agency (Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, 1985), Portland meets National Ambient Air Quality Standards for suspended particulates, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, and lead but has unacceptable amounts of carbon monoxide. Compared with 22 SMSAs of comparable size (1-2 million) in 1983, the Portland metro area ranked as the fourth worst in the concentration of carbon monoxide in the air.

There have also been great fluctuations in the levels of suspended particulates. Compared with 22 SMSAs of comparable size, Portland ranked as the fifth worst in 1981 but then jumped to the second best in 1983. Between 1980 and 1983 there has been an approximately 47 percent drop in suspended particulates, more than double the national decline of 22 percent. This decline was partly due to the closing of a carborundum plant in Vancouver, Washington, but it also reflects an artificially high level in 1980 caused by the fallout from Mt. St. Helens. In 1980, the volcanic eruption blanketed the

Portland area with hazardous ash, elevating suspended particulate levels.

Allergens

For allergy sufferers, the Portland environment can create severe discomfort. The Willamette Valley has been called the "Sneeze Capital of the Country" by *Oregon Magazine*. They quote Dr. Emil Bardana (1986), allergy specialist at Oregon Health Sciences University, who says "the Willamette Valley has more grass pollen than anywhere else in the world." He notes that "weed pollen, tree pollen, molds, house dust and mites are also common allergens". However, Portland has little ragweed pollen, based on a Ragweed Pollen Index devised by The American Academy of Allergy (Boyer and Savageau, 1985). Although ragweed flourishes in such Midwestern and Eastern cities as Chicago, Cincinnati, Rochester, and Philadelphia, western cities are relatively free from ragweed pollen.

Environmental consciousness

Oregon has a reputation for environmental consciousness. According to a study by the Conservation Foundation, it ranks fifth among states in its effort to protect the environment and the quality of land use (Duerksen, 1983). The Foundation rated states on 23 environmental and land-use indicators ranging from "voting records of a state's congressional delegation on selected national environmental issues to existence of state laws that address specific environmental problems. The overall focus was on regulatory programs and expenditures for environmental quality" (Duerksen, 1983, p. 218). In addition to Oregon, the other states ranked in the top five were Minnesota, California, New Jersey, and Massa-

chusetts. Although these were state rather than city ratings, the Portland area supports environmental controls more strongly than the rest of the state. In the late 1960's, under Governor Tom McCall's leadership, the state made a major commitment to cleansing the Willamette River and reclaiming its banks as a "greenway" with public access. The redevelopment of the river front in downtown Portland is part of this process (see Chapter 3). Other legislation

that has been at the forefront nationally is the requirement that bottles be recycled (1971), the establishment of the Land Conservation and Development Commission requiring statewide land use planning that meets state goals (1973; the first such planning body in the nation), state and city of Portland noise control regulations (1974 and 1976 respectively), and most recently pollution standards for wood stoves (1986).

Looking at environmental consciousness at a more individual level, Kathy Ferguson (1986) measured environmental consciousness as it is reflected in membership rates per capita in ten environment organizations, e.g., the Wilderness Society, Defenders of Wildlife, and Environmental Defense Council. Oregon tied for third with Connecticut

Figure 13.2 State scores on the percentage of population who were members of ten national environmental organizations in 1984. State size has been graphically distorted to reflect the relative size of its population (Ferguson, 1985, p. 90).



and New Hampshire, and was particularly high in membership in Sierra Club, Friends of the Earth, and the Audubon Society (see Figure 13.2). It is not surprising that a city whose populace rates its access to the outdoors as its most distinctively positive feature is also actively involved in preserving that environment.

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Demographic Characteristics

Who are Portlanders? In a study of the demographic characteristics of the 100 largest U.S. cities, Portland is ranked as the 35th largest city (Robey, 1985). An inspection of Table 13.2 reveals its relative homogeneity. Several of our City Club respondents identified the lack of ethnic diversity as a draw-

back to living in Portland. There are relatively few black or Hispanic residents. There is a relatively high proportion of foreign born residents, perhaps accounted for by the high percentage of Asians and Pacific Islanders (ranked 14th out of 94 cities; Marlin and Avery, 1983). Residents are more likely to be older and more highly educated than the average urbanite, and are less likely to live in a household that includes a married couple. Economically, Portlanders tend to be somewhat better off than average, but it is not a wealthy city (Table 13.2).

Crime and Safety

Despite its longstanding reputation for livability, the data surprisingly portray Portland as a city ridden with crime. According to 1985 F.B.I. Uniform

Table 13.2: *Demographic characteristics of Portland, indicating the rank order and number of cities ranked for each characteristic.*

Characteristics	Rank order among cities ranked	Percentage or numerical
Population size, metro area b	32/305	1,242,594
Percent black b	216/305	2.7
Percent Hispanic b	66/305	2.1
Percent foreign born a	34/100	7.1
Median age (years) a	13/100	31.4
Percent college graduates a	21/100	18.2
Percent women in labor force a	45/100	53.2
Percent married-couple households a	76/100	44.2
Median household income (\$) a	57/100	\$14,782.00
Average housing value (\$) a	30/100	\$60,349.00
Percent families in poverty a	30/36	6.1
Percent unemployment a	26/77	10.7

a from Robey (1985), ranking 100 largest cities.
b from U. S. Bureau of the Census (1982), ranking 305 Metropolitan areas.
c from Martin and Avery (1953).

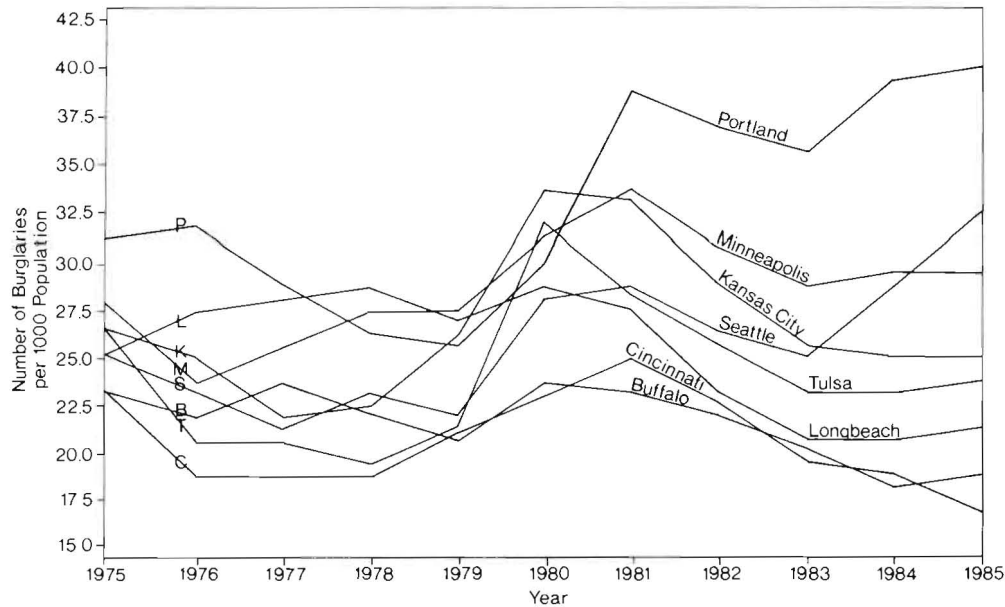


Figure 13.3 Burglary rates between 1975 and 1985 per 1,000 population for eight Project C.U.R.B. (Comparison of Urban Rates of Burglary) cities (McCluhan, 1986).

Crime Reports for 184 cities of over 100,000 population, Portland ranks first in property crime (burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson) and ninth in violent crime (criminal homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault). Similarly, according to a recent, comparative study of a small group of cities conducted by Michael McCluhan (1986) of the Portland Police Bureau (Figure 13.3) Portland has had the highest burglary rates since the early 1980's. Even when SMSAs rather than cities are used as the unit of analysis, the Portland metro area emerges as glaringly unsafe. Based on F.B.I. statistics for violent and property crimes, Portland ranks as the 25th most dangerous metro area out of 329 (Boyer and Savageau, 1985).

However, the respondents in our survey did not perceive Portland as an unsafe city. Concern about crime was not a pervasive theme. There were only three responses regarding crime and safety and one was a positive comment stating that women were safe downtown at night. Recently, Bob Hicks (1986) of *The Oregonian* shared this perspective, observing that "Portland, with a higher murder rate than New York, feels safer, more sedate, more manageable."

Although these impressions may not be representative of Portlanders in general, they are in sharp contrast to the facts. Why is the crime rate in Portland so high? Charles Tracy (1986), administration of justice professor at Portland State University, suggests that "Portland's high burglary rate may be partly the result of a public that is more likely to report burglaries than in other cities." In 1980 and 1982, the national average for reporting burglaries was 51 percent, compared to 62 percent for

the same years in Oregon (28 percent of the reported Oregon burglaries were committed in Portland). Burglary rates may also be impacted by participation in neighborhood-based burglary prevention programs such as those begun during the 1972 High Impact Anti-Crime Program. Involved citizens are more likely to report burglaries to the police, resulting in higher rates (Schneider, 1975). In addition, a 1985 *Oregonian* survey conducted by the Columbia Research Center, found that 83 percent of Portland residents viewed the reporting of crime to the police as worthwhile (Hallman, 1985). In contrast, a Bureau of Justice Statistics report indicated that during the 1980's only 35 percent of the nation's victims reported crime to the police (Harlow, 1985).

As a result, we must interpret the crime data with caution. Without comparative data from other cities on the reporting rates of crime victims as well as citizen attitudes towards police, we cannot determine whether Portland is truly an unsafe place to live. We can say, however, that this does not appear to be the perception of the average resident.

Stress

Although Portlanders have a reputation for being "laid back", the results of two recent studies indicate that they experience surprisingly high levels of stress. A 1985 Urban Stress Test of 184 cities (Zero Population Growth, Inc.) found that Portland's overall rating was 3.1 with 3 meaning "warning" and 4 referring to "danger." Eleven criteria were used including population change, crowding, education, violent crime, community and individual economics, births, air and water quality, hazardous wastes, and sewage treatment facilities.

The second study (Straus 1985), com-

pares state rather than city stress levels with similar findings. Comparing data on such stressful events as divorces, abortions, and unemployment, Oregon ranks as the fifth most stressful state – even higher than New York, which was only 16th. Nevada, home of the 24-hour cities of Las Vegas and Reno, was number one. The current and past image of Portland is diametrically opposed to this image of the city as a stressful place to live. Throughout its history, Portland has been portrayed as a relaxed and calm place that "has a way of slowing down newcomers to its own pace" (Neuberger, 1947, p. 108). In 1890, Harvey Scott, editor of the *Oregonian*, noted "the general quiet and tranquility and good order of the place is quite marked" and "the people of Portland are not mercurial or excitable" (cited by O'Donnell and Vaughn, 1976, pp. 32-33).

Based on our survey, Portland's ambience has changed very little since the 1940's. Its residents do not see it as a pressured, stressful city but rather as open, accessible and manageable. Portland is described as "slow-paced," "quiet," "informal," and "pleasant but unexciting."

If the number of psychoanalysts is an indication of stress levels, there are also very few of these in Portland compared with fast-paced, East Coast cities. Based on membership in the American Psychoanalytic Association (1983), Portland has only two psychoanalysts per 100,000 persons compared with 11 in Boston, 28 in Washington, D.C. and 35 in New Haven. Oregonians also have a higher life expectancy than residents of 40 other states (Boyer and Savageau, 1985).

Recreation

As Suzie Boss, associate editor of *Oregon Magazine* (1986, p. 34) observes,

"the 'great outdoors' somehow transforms Oregonians, sets them apart from their fellow humans in Texas or Nebraska, New York or Pittsburgh." With such easy access to Oregon's vast natural playground, it is not surprising that the respondents in our Portland City Club survey praise the city as being recreation-oriented. There are 13 comments referring specifically to outdoor recreation. In addition, many of the 36 geography/location responses highlight Portland's unique proximity to the mountains, coast, and desert (Table 13.1). One respondent noted that "the city's easy access to every environment from seashore to desert, from farm to mountaintop, with all the activities and interests they stimulate can hardly be matched." Other comments include "diversity of recreational opportunities," and "access to outdoors is biggest plus."

With its accessibility to recreation and the outdoors, Portland has earned a reputation for its fitness orientation. In a recent survey conducted by *The Runner*, Portland was designated as one of the best running cities in America, receiving Gold Medal Status along with Atlanta, Boston, Boulder, Eugene, Honolulu, San Diego, and San Francisco. In particular, it was noted that "Portland may have the most lovely runs of any major city" (Flippin, 1984, p. 28). Only Johnson City, Tennessee, ranked higher. Portland, headquarters of Nike shoe company, was also cited for the size of its running community, with 6,500 members in The Oregon Road Runners Club.

Health

With its outdoor and fitness orientation, it is not surprising that Portlanders are very concerned about their health. Based on subscriptions to *Health*

and *Prevention* magazines, Portlanders rank 12th highest out of 83 metro areas in their number of "health enthusiasts" (Marlin and Avery, 1983). Compared with other cities, Portlanders also have reasonable access to health care. Portland ranks 38 out of 91 in physicians per 1,000 population and 24 out of 88 in registered and licensed practical nurses in community hospitals (Marlin and Avery, 1983). Although the hospital occupancy rate is low (17th lowest out of 89), hospital costs are relatively high. Comparing the daily community hospital costs of 75 cities, Portland is the 11th highest.

However, what is unique to Portland is its accessibility to alternative health care. According to Martin Milner, N.D. at Portland's Center for Holistic Medicine, "Portland represents a mecca of holistic and alternative health care in the country." Based on personal communication with the American Association of Naturopathic Physicians, only seven states (Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, Connecticut, and Alaska) currently license naturopathic physicians. Comparing cities within these states, Portland with 80 licensed naturopathic physicians per 100,000 persons, has more than any other city. Seattle with 14.9 is second. Anchorage has 6.25 and Phoenix has 4.3. Portland is also a training center for alternative health care practitioners. A school of naturopathic medicine (one of only two in the country), a chiropractic college, and a college of massage therapy are all located in Portland. As Martin Milner, N.D. suggests, "people come here for training, stay here, and spread the culture."

The Arts

If we rely on the rankings in *Places Rated Almanac*, Portland would certainly

not be considered as a thriving cultural center; it ranks only 55th out of 329 metro centers, in the arts. However, Carl Abbott, professor of Urban Studies at Portland State University and regular contributor to *The Business Journal*, suggests that by emphasizing major art institutions these rankings misrepresent the cultural offerings in Portland. "A look at world-class institutions tells only part of the story for Portland is a genuinely democratic cultural center" (Abbott, 1986, p. 5). There are 30 art galleries, 19 bookstores and 10 museums in downtown Portland alone. Along with New York and Los Angeles, Portland is one of 12 metro areas that has three or more fine arts or public radio stations (Boyer and Savageau, 1985). Based on books loaned per capita, it also has a well-used library system, ranking 18th out of 95 cities (Marlin and Avery, 1983).

Portland's Oregon Symphony scores well by *Places Rated Almanac* standards (Boyer and Savageau, 1985). Opera fans, too, will find that while Portland does not compare with New York or Houston, it ranks eighth out of 45 in the number of months of scheduled performances (Marlin and Avery, 1983). Portland has also earned a reputation for jazz. It hosts the annual Mt. Hood Jazz Festival, and is the home of several nationally-known jazz musicians including Tom Grant, Mel Brown and David Friesen. Several "transplants", such as saxophonist Michael Bard, guitarists Dan Perz and Matt Schiff and drummer Chris Conrad, have also joined the local jazz ensemble. In fact, pianist Tom Grant comments: "Portland probably ranks among the top five cities in the country in terms of the seriousness of the local jazz scene" (Broadhurst, 1986, p. 31). For those who consider rock and roll to be a

cultural event, Rick Mitchell, Portland free lance writer, musician and disc jockey, observes that several local bands have developed international or national reputations, and five or six more have the "potential to break nationally".

Portland fares well in its diversity of cultural activities and in its level of participation in the arts but lacks "five-star attractions that make the national guidebooks" (Abbott, 1986, p. 5). However, according to Dan Monroe, President of the Oregon Art Institute, the current variety and involvement in the arts are insufficient for Portland's economic development and growth (Monroe, 1986). Portland has such major institutions as the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, the zoo, the Oregon Art Institute and the Oregon Symphony. But state-level support of the arts has been dismally low. Based on legislative appropriations for 1985-86, Oregon ranks 55th of 56 among the states, the District of Columbia and five territories.

Political Climate

Although our City Club respondents did not always agree in characterizing the politics of Portland, some common themes did appear. Politics were described as "politically clean and open compared to the East"; as open, "civic involvement is encouraged and real"; and as concerned about the quality of life and of the environment in the city. The place of the citizenry on the conservative-liberal dimension was variously described as "progressive", "mildly progressive", "on the conservative side" and as "a unique blend of conservatism and liberalism that has resulted in government reforms". Gordon Dodds, history professor at Portland State University, describes Oregon's

progressive roots as springing from conservative soil. "Paradoxically, even the innovations were designed to preserve the best of the past" (Dodds, 1986, p. 317). What has been progressive is the methods. The objective has been conservative.

Questionnaires were sent to several Portland journalists, asking them to comment on the political scene. David Broder, columnist for the Washington Post described the political climate as: "open, unpredictable, participatory. Portland is a big city but its politics seem small-town. Everyone seems to know everyone else, at least the political activists do, and there is a good deal of camaraderie and tolerance . . . Change is frequent, if not constant, in Portland, reflecting the openness of its politics."

Neal Peirce, syndicated columnist, says: "open, spirited, and -- of course -- open to the unconventional. Portland politics do appear more issue-oriented than those of many cities. Hard to imagine a Neil Goldschmidt or a Bud Clark rising to the mayoralty of many cities -- the 'establishments' would have blocked them".

The unpredictability may be a function of the openness of the political scene to the citizen activist and the relative weakness of the political parties. One indicator of citizen involvement is the use of initiatives on the ballot. Ferguson (1985) has reviewed the use of the initiative by states since 1900. Citizens are allowed to use the initiative process to put measures on the ballot in only 23 states, all but six of which are west of the Mississippi. The practice evolved during the Progressive era when political institutions in the west were not firmly rooted. Between 1900 and 1982, Oregon had by far the highest number of total initia-

tives in the country. Oregon also had the most initiatives directed toward environmental issues in all time periods except 1970-1982, when California and Washington had nine to Oregon's six.

Neighborhoods

Another indicator of citizen participation in Portland is involvement in the political scene at the neighborhood level. Neighborhood associations first developed in the city in 1969 and became formally associated with city government with the establishment of the Office of Neighborhood Associations in 1974. Some funding is provided by the city for newsletters for the approximately 70 neighborhoods and for staff in five regional offices. Neighborhoods are routinely involved in such city issues as budgeting for capital improvements, and planning decisions in the neighborhood. A recent book on neighborhood organizations noted that: "Portland's government has made an unusually large commitment to neighborhood organization. Probably nowhere else has collaboration been so dominant between neighborhoods and local government. In a decade of budget retrenchment by local governments almost everywhere, Portland's Office of Neighborhood Associations keeps growing, with a budget to match the growth" (Cunningham and Kotler, 1983, p. 66).

Perhaps city size is one source of the active citizen participation in Portland. Environmental psychologists have developed the concept of "overmanning" to describe the impact of the size of a setting--whether a school, a church, or a city -- on the behavior that occurs within it (Wicker, 1979). In their study of school size, Barker and Gump (1964) found that the number of "behavior settings" in which students could par-

ticipate increased much more slowly than the size of the school. Thus, a high school with 2,000 students and one with 50 students were likely to have just one football team and one junior class play. Students in the large school on the average participated in fewer activities, played a less central role in those they participated in, and were more likely to be entirely uninvolved. If we draw an analogy to city size, it seems likely that the opportunities to be involved in city life and to play a central role become fewer and fewer as the size of the city increases. When Mayor Lindsey developed an emphasis on neighborhood government in New York City, for example, the neighborhoods encompassed several hundred thousand residents, rather than several thousand as in Portland. Although classified as a city, many people commented on its "big small town" character. The size of the city and the open political climate combine to make the residents feel that they can make a difference.

SUMMARY

Based on our indicators it appears that national experts as well as Portlanders rate Portland as among the top 25 percent in livability, although they may disagree somewhat on where it ranks within that top quartile. Many of the things that make it livable were here long before the city was settled: its geographic location, scenic beauty and climate. In recent years some aspects of the social and economic climate have been less positive, particularly the crime rate and economic stagnation. But on the whole the citizenry have created a unique and livable city. Among its prominent features are its urban form--one respondent described it as "an architectural jewel on the

banks of the Willamette" -- and its active, open political scene that has become known in part for its emphasis on preserving the area's natural gifts.

Perhaps no one has better stated the themes that we saw repeated in historical and contemporary descriptions of the city than one of our City Club respondents, who said: "Terence, who advocated moderation in all things, probably would have liked Portland. Its size is medium, its climate is equable, the pace of living is relaxed. Manners are informal. Its politics are honest and mildly progressive. Strong passions rarely sweep the voters. The population is relatively homogeneous. Extremists of the right or left are few. Wealth is present but seldom conspicuous. High culture in the arts may be hard to find. The public is educated and intelligent. To some, Portland's aspect is bland and smug; to others, restful and comparatively contented . . . The relative lack of cultural diversity is a mild drawback, but as one who enjoys moderation in human affairs and high excitement in the out-of-doors I can't think of a better place to live."

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