

Portland, Oregon, USA

Alison Blake + Vanessa Lee

'The City that Works'



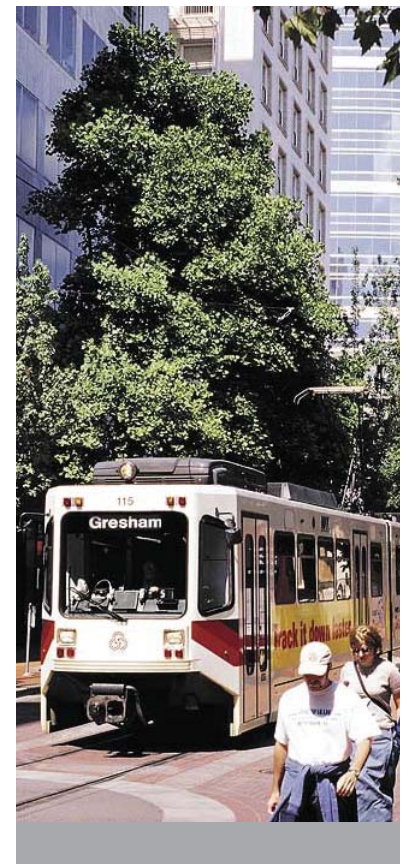
Left:
Portland Skyline and Mount Hood

Below:
MAX, Portland's Light-Rail Transit

(credit: Portland Visitors Association)

Portland, Oregon is an environmentally progressive Northwest city that has taken the concept of open space planning to heart. The development of a regional government system (Metro) and the adoption of an urban growth boundary in 1979 have helped protect lands outside of the city while encouraging density and vibrancy within the city limits. Portland is notable for having almost 6,000-acre Forest Park, the fifth-largest municipal park in the country. At the same time, master planning efforts have given equal attention to livability and open space within the city, so that Portland today boasts a total of 247 parks and recreational sites including 196 neighborhood parks.

Today, Portland is renowned for the efforts it has made to integrate public infrastructure in the name of livability and planning for the future. Attention to the environment and specifically to open space are at the heart of these planning efforts, which include the completion and expansion of Portland's original park systems plan, known as the Forty-Mile Loop. Yet at the same time, Portland's facilities are aging and require attention if they are to meet the needs of an expanding population. Still thinking ahead, Portland Parks adopted their plan for the future, the *Parks 2020 Vision* in the year 2000. (See page 5)



We need to blur the boundaries between Park and City. Let's start thinking of Portland itself as a garden. If we invest our city with the same care, love, attention and patience we extend to our private gardens...

City Statistics

City Population: 481,000

City Area: 79,808 Acres

Density Level: 6.0

Park Acreage: 12,591

Park acreage per 1000 residents:
21.4

Governing bodies:
Metro
Portland Parks
+ Recreation

Expenditure per person:
\$136

Timeline of Portland's Parks + Open Space

1903: Master Plan

John Olmsted Develops Master Plan for Portland's Parks, proposing the "40-Mile Loop" and the acquisition of land on the West Hills for a wilderness "Forest Park"

1913-1942: Parks on Hold

Very little new lands is able to be purchased by the City and only small segments of Olmsted's Plan are put into action. Subdivisions are slated to be built where Forest Park was proposed and a wood-cutting camp is set up on Tualatin Mountain

1943-1948: Forest Park Reborn

Robert Moses revives the Forest Park proposal. A series of fortuitous events result in the city acquiring the land for the Park

1950's & 60's: City In Decline

Portland experiences a major decline including loss of industry, a rise in poverty, and an urban exodus to the suburbs.

1977: Metro Created

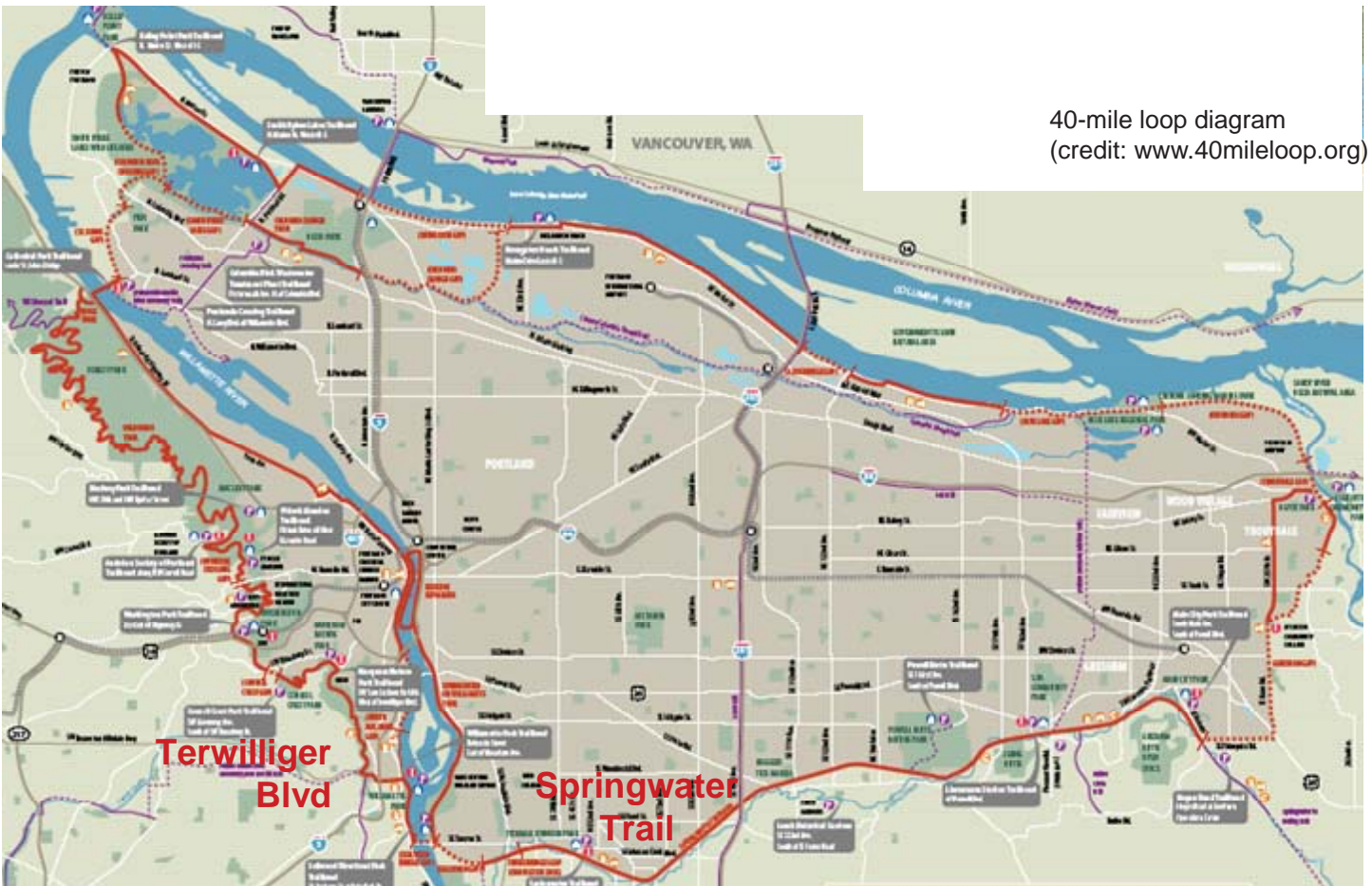
State Legislature approves creation of Metropolitan Service District, refers it to voters

1979: Urban Growth Boundary Created

Metro adopts the first Urban Growth Boundary

1984: Pioneer Courthouse Square

Portland Residents successfully rally to replace the demolished downtown Portland Hotel with an urban park instead of an 11-story parking garage.



40-mile loop diagram
(credit: www.40mileloop.org)

...Portlanders will be rewarded with stunning beauty, ecological health, and gentle spirit of place."

~ Tess Beistel, SE Portland resident

Major Components

a. Connective corridors

40-mile loop (in red on the diagram on p.2)

Terwilliger Boulevard ~100-acre parkway; City created a special design zone to retain its "heavily wooded character."

Springwater Trail: 16.5-mile multi-use trail for walkers, joggers, hikers, bicycles, wheelchairs, and strollers; abandoned rail corridor

b. Anchors/ Large Nature Areas

Forest Park ~5000 acres (to be 6000 acres); 5th largest municipal park

Powell Butte Nature Park ~ 600 acres; on former volcano

Delta Park ~700 acres; includes sports field complex

Mt. Tabor Park ~200 acres; contains an extinct volcano

c. Civic

Pioneer Square Park - 1.5 acres of red brick hardscape (see story)

Ira Keller Fountain ~ designed by Lawrence Halprin

Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade - 1.5 mile accessible walkway; demo project for improved fish habitat and wildlife and riverbank restoration.

Tom McCall Waterfront Park - tore down Harbor Drive to build public space

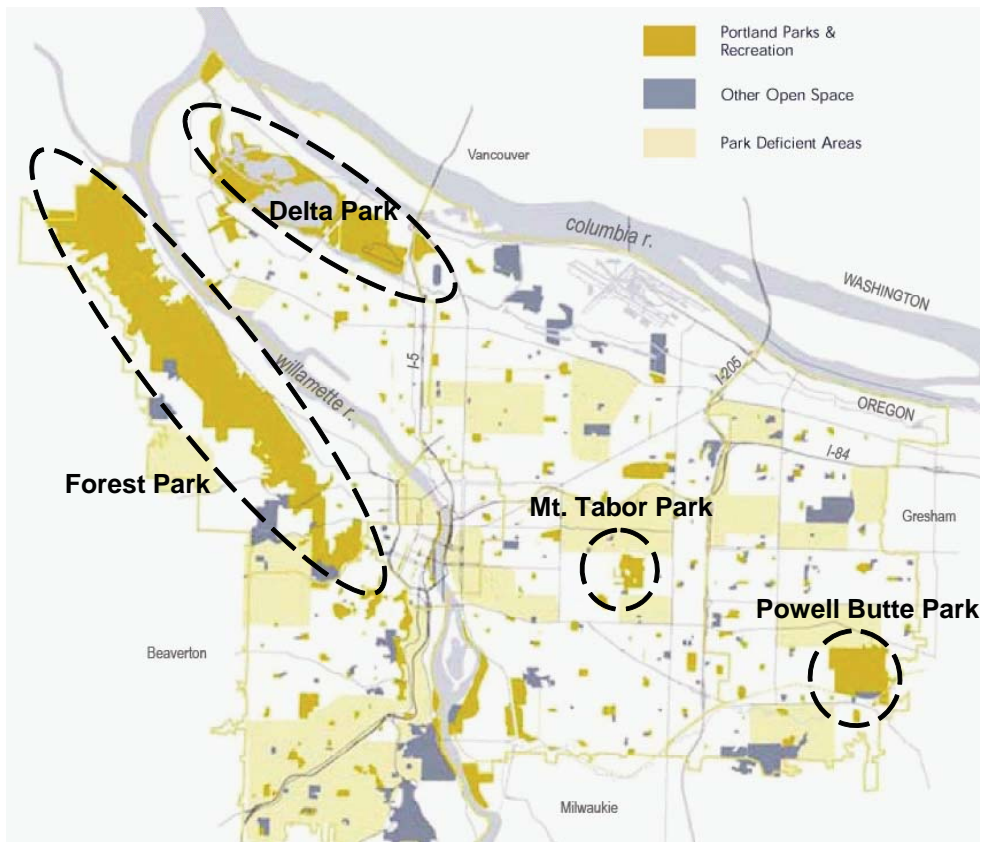
d. Neighborhood Parks

246 other parcels aside from Forest Park + Pioneer Courthouse Sq.

e. Other

Community + Public Gardens: Rose Garden, Hoyt Arboretum

'The City that Works'



Above:
top:
Springwater Trail

middle:
Ira Keller Fountain

bottom:
Vera Katz Eastbank Esplanade

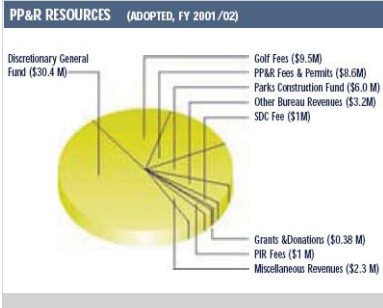
(credit: Portland Parks + Rec.)

Left:
Anchors diagram
(credit: Parks 2020 Vision)

For the benefit of our children, their children and the wildlife that depend on these special places, we have an obligation to protect what makes the Portland area so wonderful. ~Jim Desmond, SE Resident & Vision Team member



(credit: 2020 Vision Report)



Funding Mechanism and/or Planning

Portland’s Park System is the third best funded system after Seattle + Minneapolis (\$136/resident). The Parks Department is allowed to keep all the revenue it raises (rather than send most to the City’s general treasury). In fiscal year 2001/02, PP&R spent just under \$60M to operate, maintain, and expand Portland’s park system (see *Resource Allocation Pie Chart*). The Vision 2020 report found funds insufficient for effective park maintenance. For example, there were only two staff people to maintain Forest Park.

Metro acquires undeveloped open space and operates 18% of the system, while Portland Parks develops the facilities and operates 77%. In the case of Forest Park, there is an issue of jurisdiction as Parks is not likely to turn over the greatest single natural area in the region to Metro.

Additional Mechanisms include:

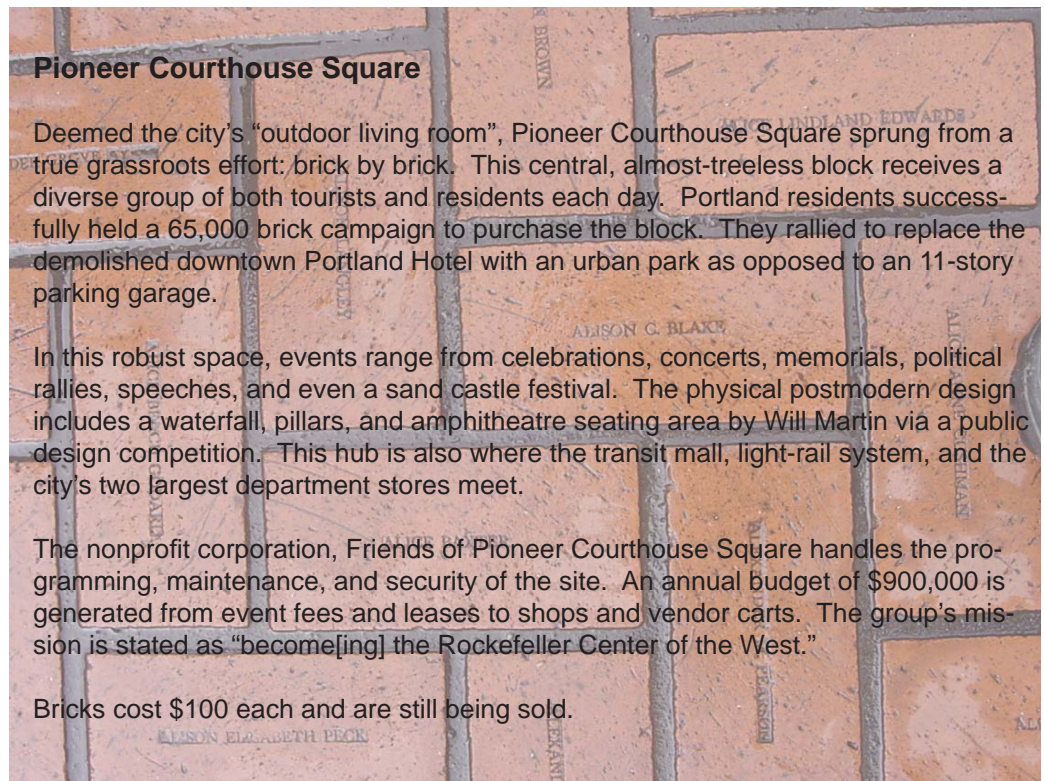
- System Development Charge (SDC) - passed in 1998, this residential development fee generates about \$1.5M a year for park capital improvements.
- 5-year Parks Levy – started in July 2003; will restore 2.2M in recent cuts; to reopen some recreational facilities, increase amenities, and reduce erosion of park maintenance infrastructure; 1.5M/year to provide access to rec. programs; \$3.95 million/year to provide safe places to play; 1.7M/year - restore, renovate and maintain parks.

Role of Advocacy Groups:

Portland Parks Foundation was established in 2001 in response to the Parks 2020 Vision. It created a Parks Expansion Fund to ensure that all neighborhoods have access to parks and green spaces, and to provide financial aid to low-income youth in the face of shrinking public funding.



(credit: Portland Parks + Rec)



Pioneer Courthouse Square

Deemed the city’s “outdoor living room”, Pioneer Courthouse Square sprung from a true grassroots effort: brick by brick. This central, almost-treeless block receives a diverse group of both tourists and residents each day. Portland residents successfully held a 65,000 brick campaign to purchase the block. They rallied to replace the demolished downtown Portland Hotel with an urban park as opposed to an 11-story parking garage.

In this robust space, events range from celebrations, concerts, memorials, political rallies, speeches, and even a sand castle festival. The physical postmodern design includes a waterfall, pillars, and amphitheatre seating area by Will Martin via a public design competition. This hub is also where the transit mall, light-rail system, and the city’s two largest department stores meet.

The nonprofit corporation, Friends of Pioneer Courthouse Square handles the programming, maintenance, and security of the site. An annual budget of \$900,000 is generated from event fees and leases to shops and vendor carts. The group’s mission is stated as “become[ing] the Rockefeller Center of the West.”

Bricks cost \$100 each and are still being sold.

Portland was named America's Most Livable City by Money Magazine in 2001.

'The City that Works'

Current Issues

Funding Population Growth Aging Facilities Unequal Access

To the casual observer and even user, our city's park system appears impressive. And in some ways it is. However, virtually every part of the city is lacking in important ways many of our facilities are old and inadequate, we have a large deferred maintenance problem, and we are not adding the capacity we need to be the livable city we want to be as we grow and change. We need to gear up on parks in fundamentally new ways during the next 20 years or we will lose the quality of life we enjoy."

~Jim Zehren, SW Portland resident & Vision Team member

The Means of Achieving Open Space Goals

- Establish a Parks and Recreation Board to advocate for parks and ensure that the recommendations of the Parks 2020 Vision are carried out.
- Establish a Parks Foundation to bring new resources and expertise to long-term stewardship of parks and recreation.
- Develop a 20-Year Capital Plan to identify park system needs.
- Develop a Marketing and Communications Plan to inform the public about the value of parks, as well as the services available from their park and recreation system.
- Develop a Comprehensive Partnership Plan to coordinate activities and enhance partnerships with public schools.
- Develop Long and Short Term Funding Plans to stabilize park funding and provide needed renovations, acquisitions and improvements.

From the *Parks 2020 Vision*



Above:
Forest Park

(credit: Portland Parks + Rec)

Parks 2020 VISION

Portland's current goals are summarized in a new report published in 2000 that analyses the state of parks today, highlights areas of needs in each of Portland's neighborhoods, and defines methods for achieving established goals in the 20 years following.

Goals:

Acquire 1,870 acres of park land, including 620 acres of protected habitat

Provide 100 new sports fields; 6 new full-service community centers.

Provide 150 additional miles of trails; complete the 40-Mile Loop Trail.

Increase the urban forest on streets and in parks.

Create public plazas in each regional and town center and "green connections" along each designated main street in the city



Left:
Portland waterfront and skyline looking north

(credit: Portland Visitor's Association)

“Portland could be the Walking City of the West – known for its pedestrian-friendly system of urban trails, paths and walkways that link parks, plazas, community centers and natural resource areas.” –Barb Scharff, PTLD resident+ VisionTeam member

Lessons Learned

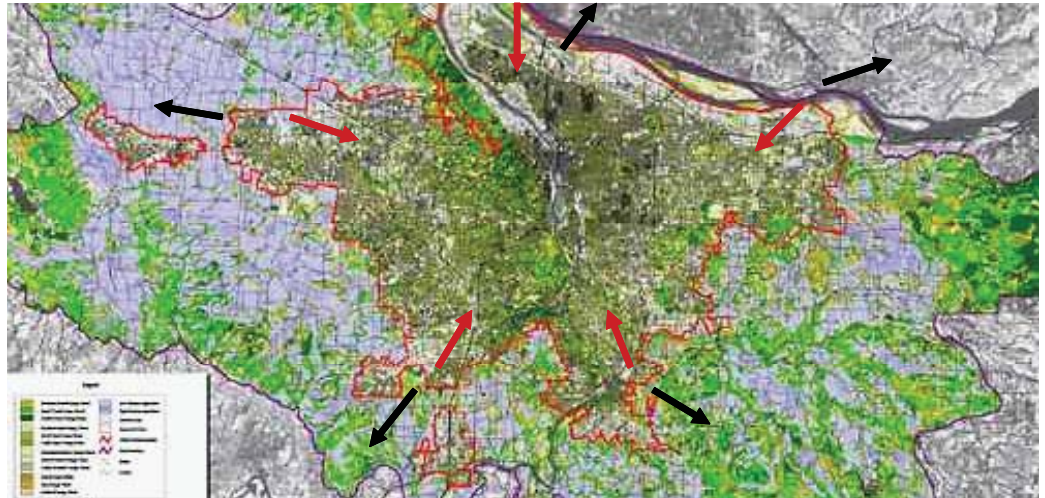
- Blending infrastructure (transportation nodes with parks) helps to secure open space.
- Master planning and public support are effective tools for protecting open space.
- Establishing an Urban Growth Boundary can be an effective means of protecting open space outside of cities while fueling growth into a downtown core
- In order to create “Livable Cities”, development of interior is just as important as the exterior.

URBAN GROWTH BOUNDARY

Ensures an orderly development pattern, working from the core out.

INSIDE: require each town and city to maintain a 20-year supply of residential, commercial, + industrial lands.

OUTSIDE: protects productive rural areas; ultimately contributes to broader matrix of connective wildlands.



(credit: Michele Dailey)

Resources

Harnick, Peter. *Inside City Parks*. Urban Land Institute, WA: 1997.

Parks 2020 Vision
<http://www.parks.ci.portland.or.us/PlansReports/2020/2020.htm>

Urban Growth Boundary
<http://www.conservationeconomy.net/images.cfm?PatternID=33>
 The metropolitan Portland urban growth boundary (in red).
 Image by Michele Dailey.

<http://www.40mileloop.org>

<http://www.parks.ci.portland.or.us>

<http://www.pioneercourthousesquare.org>

<http://www.portlandonline.com>

<http://www.portlandparksfoundation.org/>

<http://www.travelportland.com/>



above: Eastbank Esplanade
 below: Jamison Square
 (credit: Vanessa Lee)

