Telosa

Building a World-Class City:

The Importance of Community Connections

Best practices from around the world

Telosa Community Foundation

November 2023

Excerpt

Case Study: Portland, Maine - Arts, Culture, and Recreation



Vision and Goals

Portland's vision is based on six interconnected themes: Portland is **equitable, sustainable, dynamic, secure, authentic, and connected**.

These themes emerged out of over four dozen stakeholder meetings, five City-wide community forums, and a survey effort which resulted in over 2,000 responses. They were influenced by new residents as well as those with Portland roots that stretch back centuries, business and neighborhood interests, emerging and traditional industries, grandparents and students, renters and homeowners, shapers and makers.

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Background

Portland, Maine, is often considered a good example of a city with a strong sense of community. Its close-knit atmosphere, active engagement, and shared values contribute to this perception. Portland's relatively small size allows for a tighter sense of connection among residents. Portland has been a leader in sustainability and equitable climate resilience in the United States. The city's approach to sustainability has been to engage with citizens, making equitable and inclusive climate action a community activity and collaboration across city government. Portland's visitors can immerse themselves in a rich cultural scene reminiscent of major metropolitan cities, but with the added charm of a more accessible and manageable scale. Within a ten-minute stroll, you'll find an array of cultural treasures, dance, music and other community events.

Facts and Figures

- Population of 68,408 (2020)
- Size - 69.4 square miles (44,416 acres)
- The city of Portland was incorporated on July 4, 1786
- In 1820 Maine was established as a State with Portland as its capital.
- Portland is a resilient city that has been destroyed and burned down four times in its history
- Well known for its marine industry, arts, architecture, growing culinary scene, and Microbrewers
- Recognized for serving the freshest lobster and seafood and has earned a national reputation for top restaurants, craft beer, and award winning chefs

Social Capital and Belonging

- Portland residents are known for their active involvement in local affairs. Participation in local government, community groups, and initiatives contributes to a shared sense of responsibility.
- Residents take pride in Portland's rich history. Historical preservation efforts and a focus on local heritage help build a shared identity and sense of place.
- Community-focused media outlets help disseminate information, highlight local stories, and connect residents with each other's experiences.
- Portland Maine is known for its integration of placemaking guidelines to create spaces in Maine that build social capital. Placemaking includes projects, programs, or initiatives that "inspire people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative

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process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value." Project for Public Spaces

Access to Effective Government and Services

- Portland has a citizens initiative, which is a grassroots process in which citizens gather petition signatures to force the Maine Legislature to either act on an issue or put it before the voters.
- Portland has joined a growing number of cities and counties in Maine that will allow voters to rank candidates in order of preference beginning in the 2024 November election.
- The City of Portland has a digital town hall and gathering place: Engage Portland! is the City's hub to share, discuss, inform, and collaborate on creating sustainable solutions for important issues, challenges, and opportunities in our community.

High Quality Jobs and Economic Opportunities

- The city places a strong emphasis on supporting local businesses. This focus promotes a sense of economic interdependence, local pride, and a unique community character.
- Portland relaunched its **Business Assistance Grant Program for Job Creation** with grants of $10,000 per full-time job created, up to $20,000 per business. The purpose of the $300,000 program is to create jobs for low- and moderate-income individuals by providing startups and existing businesses with grants that can be used for rent, utilities, payroll, equipment, inventory and other expenses.
- Portland, Maine, has less than one-tenth of San Francisco's population, but it's home to multiple companies that have raised tens of millions of dollars in funding for start-ups. Backing these early-stage companies with support and resources is a collection of organizations such as the Maine Technology Institute, the Finance Authority of Maine, Scratchpad Accelerator in Bangor, Maine Center for Entrepreneurs, Maine Venture Fund, and Startup Maine

Education and Lifelong Learning

- The presence of universities and educational institutions in Portland fosters an environment of intellectual engagement and lifelong learning, contributing to a vibrant community.
- Portland Adult Education empowers adult learners to achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals. PAE offers programs designed to prepare Greater Portland area residents for a better, more fulfilling life. They are a wide-ranging community program that brings people and resources together for

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academic, English for speakers of other languages, and job skills training or personal enrichment courses.

Arts, Culture, and Recreation

- The city hosts a variety of events throughout the year, such as festivals, farmers' markets, and cultural celebrations. These events bring people together and encourage interaction.
- The city of Portland created and runs Creative Portland, the go-to resource for all things in the ARTS. As the City of Portland's official arts agency, their mission is to elevate the artists, makers, and cultural institutions that make the city by the sea one of a kind.
- The city has a thriving arts and cultural scene, with galleries, theaters, and music venues. Cultural offerings contribute to a shared cultural experience.
- Portland's diverse neighborhoods have distinct personalities and often host their own events, creating micro-communities within the city.
- Access to outdoor activities like hiking, biking, and water-related sports encourages residents to engage in healthy and social activities.
- Portland centers immigrant community voices through the The Greater Portland Immigrant Welcome Center which provides programming, classes, employment and case management, networking opportunities, and other services designed to help New Mainers, of all professions, overcome barriers to enter the US workforce.

Design and Environmental Stewardship

- ReCode Portland is creating a new, unified development code to serve Portland for the 21st century. The new code will be more user-friendly, will advance the goals of the city's comprehensive plan, Portland's Plan 2030, and will better equip the City to address needs in areas such as housing, design, preservation, conservation, the working waterfront, energy, and transportation.The code evaluation focused on key issues for the city, like how the code could encourage more equitable housing creation, foster climate change resilience, and support transportation choice.
- Portland created its first **Climate Action Plan** with an aim to decrease carbon emissions by 80 percent by 2050 (compared to 1990s levels), plus a goal of transitioning to 100 percent clean energy for municipal operations by 2040.
- The Portland planning department recently updated its technical design manual for parking. Any parking lot with 10 or more spots needs to have faster-charging level 2 EV chargers at 25 percent of the parking spots.

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Success/Failure Factors

- Strong sense of community and neighborhoods with low crime rates
- Access to natural resources and seasonal outdoor activities (oceans, mountains, rivers, etc.)
- Quality education
- Leading restaurants and vibrant cultural scene

Drawbacks

- Home prices and rentals have become increasingly unaffordable
- Career development has been challenging

Best Practices for Telosa

While Portland, Maine, is often praised for its strong sense of community, it's important to note that no community is without challenges. As with any city, Portland faces its own unique issues and dynamics. However, its emphasis on local engagement, shared experiences, and a vibrant community life has contributed to its reputation as a place with a strong and closely-knit community. Portland has successfully integrated nature into community development and has included a range of healthy outdoor recreational opportunities. In addition, Portland has a vibrant nightlife, diverse food and cultural scene with a high quality of life for residents.

Additional Reference Information

The City of Portland - Municipal Climate Action Plan
https://content.civicplus.com/api/assets/2095292c-5c8a-41a1-bda8-4bc749ee8316?cache=1800

The City of Portland - Climate Resilience
Climate Resilience | Portland, ME - Official Website

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