

Portland is known as one of the greenest cities in America, a reference to its commitment to greenspaces, sustainability policies and programs, and smart growth planning regime. Portland has been named the best bicycling city in America, best walking city, and the city with the best sustainable policies and programs. There are more than 20,000 artists in the Portland area, 8th highest per capita in American. It is considered one of the top three places for independent film makers. There are more Peace Corps alumni than any other city in America. The Center for Business Women's Research determined Portland to have the most women owned businesses in an American city.

It has also become one of the most favored destinations for the creative class--young, well educated, entrepreneurial young people.. In 2007 there were twice as many people in the 25-39 age group moving into the city as leaving. In all, 23,454 young adults moved in while 12,125 moved out. The fourth highest net migration in America. What lures them to Portland are not job opportunities but elements of its greenness such as bike-friendliness, growth management policies, mass transit, and social tolerance, intellectual diversity and entrepreneurial opportunity. Also mentioned are local recreation opportunities, the music and art scenes, and other "consumption opportunities," for instance, well-brewed beer. u

While Portland was awarded at least one livability award as early as 1976 (Liu 1976), the story of Portland as a "success story" and as a draw for the creative class grew dramatically in the 1990s. Writing in The Atlantic Monthly, Philip Langdon (1992,p. 134) characterized Portland as "a paragon of healthy urban development at a time when most American cities find themselves mired in seemingly intractable problems." Business Week (October 25, 1991, p. 136), in an evaluation of administrative effectiveness and efficiency, reported that "Portland is on the cutting edge of quality in municipal government." In Kiplinger's Personal Finance Magazine (October 25, 1991), Lynn and Matthews reported, "Portland is a West Coast success story. High technology and manufacturing keep expanding. Yet office space, utilities, housing and taxes are lower than in California ... Portland's squares, parks, walkable downtown and new light-rail transit system make the city a favorite" (pp. 42-43). According to the Economist, Portland is a planning paradigm that cities from New York to San Francisco are trying to emulate. It has revived its historic district, wrestled its Willamette River waterfront from the grip of ... "the demon auto," built a successful mass-transit system and nurtured some of the best architecture in North America ... urban delegations from dozens of American cities--and also ... from the British cities of Manchester and Leeds--regularly troop through Portland, looking for inspiration (September 1, 1990, pp. 24-25).

The causes of Portland's sustainability achievements and attractiveness for the young creatives has been assigned to enlightened leaders, above average and handsome planners, the landscape, and trickle down creativity from the growing silicon forest industries in and around the city. I argue there is another reason, and that is Portland's 40 year long investment in community governance. Citizens played a critical role in most all the elements that have made Portland a Mecca for the young creatives and its sustainability achievements.

Robert Putnam has described Portland as a "civic puzzle." While the rest of the country suffered declines in civic involvement over the last 40 years, Portland bucked the trend and achieved high levels of civic involvement. This book connects the dots. While civic and business leaders played critical roles in the greening of Portland, it was the grassroots that played the role of early implementer. Citizens, acting alone, but more often through collective action, occupied civic space like pioneering plants in a clear-cut. When the baton was passed effectively, community leaders who understood their role as facilitators

of the wisdom of citizens, were able to implement policies that moved Portland toward its livable and sustainable future.

Over the last forty years the city has created a civic story that has changed the vocabulary and grammar of civic life. Citizens in Portland expect to be involved. Americans for the Arts, a national arts advocacy organization, recently noted that the city's informal civic culture is one of its most important characteristics:

People, including newcomers, feel they can get involved and have impact--in politics, community development, planning, and in the cultural scene. Access and participation are easy and welcomed. Coffeehouses and cafes--the meeting places of creatives--are ubiquitous. New organizations, coalitions, and movements--from political action committees to environmental coalitions, social justice organizations, and cultural entities--are constantly springing up [and] suggest several critical "infrastructural" attributes--in addition to its beautiful setting and moderate climate--that contribute to Portland's attractiveness to creatives.

If you ask a Portlander, or an outsider, about the origins of its reputation, if they know it at all, they will most likely identify a leader. They may know that in the 1970s Mayor Neil Goldschmidt was responsible for instigating investments in the light rail system MAX, or that Congressman Earl Blumenauer led the way to invest in multi-modal transportation options. They are not likely to know about the ground work of the Southeast Portland Legal Defense Fund in stopping the Mt. Hood Freeway that freed up money for the development of MAX, or about a handful of students and a professor at Portland State University who led the charge in the early 1970s to have the bicycle taken seriously as a commuting option. They will also assume that sustainability jumped onto the civic stage in the late 1980s after the Brundtland report, and publishing of *Our Common Future*, and not know that grassroots organizations sewed the seeds of sustainability in the Northwest twenty years before.

This revisionist historical perspective is important to correct as part of a thorough history of a community, and to give adequate dues to unsung heroes and groups. But, it is also important to correct this view of history because it teaches us about how change takes place in a community. Placing too much emphasis on leader's role in a community implicitly teaches citizens that leaders lead and the people follow; not that people lead and Leaders follow. A typical history of Portland, such as Jewell Lansing's *Portland: People, Power and Politics*, while admirable, is only part of the story. Lansing credits "the people" at many times for critical public policies and civil projects, nonetheless, the history is laid out as a series of regimes, and a hopscotch pattern of good and bad leaders. I argue that Portland's history, at least from the mid-1960s to the present, is better understood as a symbiotic relationship between civic leaders and the grassroots.

In the early 1970s metropolitan Portland looked virtually identical to other U.S. metropolitan areas (including Seattle) in civic terms. Two decades later, Portland suburbs were roughly two to three times more civically active than comparable suburbs elsewhere, and Portland proper had become roughly three to four times more civically active than U.S. cities of comparable size. For example, in 1974, 21 percent of Portlanders attended at least one public meeting on town or school affairs, compared to 22 percent for residents in comparable cities. By the early 1990s, the figure for the rest of the country was 11 percent, whereas in Portland it had risen to 30-35 percent (Putnam and Feldstein (2002). Today there are about 3000 civic organizations in Portland, 350 environmental ones (compared to ten in the 1950s). One out of fifteen citizens in the metropolitan Portland area, population 2 million, are significantly involved in public life.

Portland's rise in civic stature is extraordinary by any standard. It is even more astounding if you picture Portland in the 1950s, a strikingly dull and derivative city, only a restaurant or two above a logging town. Civic Portland circa 1950s is summed up by a photograph of Portland's Redevelopment Board, a predecessor to the Portland Development Commission, Portland's urban renewal agency: all white men, sitting around a rectangular table, in suits and ties, ashtrays lined up like today's water bottles. It was a Pleasantville kind of place, if you were male, white, Christian, and patriotic.

Civic life in the 1950s in Portland was dominated by traditional civic organizations: fraternal and benevolent organizations, women's clubs, voluntary and charitable organizations, ethnic cultural groups, and direct social service organizations. The predominant civic activities of these traditional civic organizations were acts of charity and community service. Traditional civic organizations had minimal impact on political participation and decision making in the community. The formal mechanisms for citizens involvement in political decision making were limited to elite and professionally driven city commissions and boards, traditional political party organizations, and formal public hearing processes.

But, something happened in Portland in the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, what I call the civic reconstruction period. Traditional civic organizations lost their position as primary vehicles for community involvement. The rights of citizens to participate in public life were codified, and the repertoires of actions and opportunities for involvement were expanded. It was both an exciting and disturbing period for Portlanders, as close to revolution as mild Portland had accommodated. The changing of the guard during this period was a generational transaction as baby boomers entered civic life in Portland, displacing civic institutions and practices. Rather than joining established institutions, members of the baby boomer generation in Portland created new ones. Less than 20% of all civic organizations in Portland in existence in the 1950s, exist today.

During the populist pluralist period, mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, new institutions and practices took hold. Civic life incorporated the broadest cross section of citizens in public policy deliberation, and the practice of involving citizens in all manner of public policy debates and formation was taken for granted. During this time Portland fully embraced a populist or participatory view of democracy.

By the mid-1990s, while many civic institutions and practices endured and prospered, there was a recognition of some of the "excesses of democracy." The City faced more instances of policy gridlock, in part brought on by the rise of privatist, anti-government, and NIMBY (Not In My BackYard) challenging organizations. But as Friedland and Siranni have argued, civic challenges like these have often been met, as they were in Portland, through civic innovations. For example, when faced with too many well-articulated public or citizen interest groups, activists in Portland created the Coalition for a Livable Future, a federation of 60 (now 100) NGOs representing environmental, social justice, food security, and affordable housing interests. Rather than fighting among themselves, CLF helped forge policies that represented multiple interests under the common rubric of creating a socially just and environmentally sustainable region.

Even after a deep exploration of how Portland created a community governance model of the polis, there may be questions about why in Portland. Was it something about the landscape or people? It may go back to that historical anecdote repeated in a variety of ways that pioneers on the Oregon Trail, reached a juncture. There was a sign at the juncture. It was written, "this way to Oregon," pointing north, while the sign pointing south to

California, merely had a picture of gold. Those that could read the sign went to Oregon, while those that wanted to get rich went south. Abbott has also delineated some of the character of Portland and Oregon politics that might explain this civic puzzle, including: weak political parties, nonpartisan city and county elections, ethnic groups with limited political salience, and weak labor unions. He also speaks to some of the weaknesses of the political milieu, including that Oregon is always a place where strong individualism tempers and challenges strong communitarians, that the civic movement is fragile, always under challenge not from machine politics but from the values of privatism, and lastly that with all its virtues, the Portland style tends to muffle radically dissenting voices who are unwilling to work on the team.¹¹ There is an inability to hear new ideas until they fit the mold. Some of these place specific characteristics may temper the universality of the Portland story, but the underlying premise is hopefully still valid, that a healthy civic life is an essential element of creating a socially and environmentally sustainable community.