

# Community Connect Goals

In 2006, Mayor Tom Potter convened Community Connect to strengthen involvement in Portland's communities, create a welcoming environment for public participation, and reinvigorate the partnership between community and government. Led by a diverse, 18-member volunteer workgroup, Community Connect talked to hundreds of Portlanders about how they would like to be involved in their city. Out of these conversations emerged a vision of a city where:

- People feel connected to one another, and to their communities;
- All Portlanders, regardless of their backgrounds, have the opportunity to be actively engaged in civic affairs;
- Government leaders are responsive and accountable to community input and priorities; and
- The inclusion of more voices in civic affairs results in a healthier and more vibrant city.

To achieve this vision, Community Connect developed a *Five Year Plan to Increase Community Involvement* which was adopted by City Council in January 2008. The *Plan* provides a comprehensive roadmap for strengthening Portland's civic life. It is organized around three interdependent goal areas representing a "three-legged stool" of effective community involvement. Each goal area has recommendations that include concrete action steps:

## **Increase the number and diversity of people involved in their communities**

The first step to an effective community involvement system is to engage the broad diversity of the community in civic life.

- \* Increase the power and voice of under-represented groups;
- \* Overcome common barriers to participation; and
- \* Provide effective communication to keep the community informed about issues and opportunities for involvement.

## **Strengthen community capacity**

Once community members are actively engaged, they need the connections, skills, and tools to be able to work together effectively to solve problems and achieve their common aspirations.

- \* Foster social ties and a sense of community identity;
- \* Support the community's capacity to take action to move forward its priorities; and
- \* Foster networking and collaboration between neighborhood and business district associations and other local organizations and interest groups.

## **Increase community impact on public decisions**

A world-class system of community involvement will only be effective to the extent that City leaders are responsive to the community's input. The third goal increases the community's ability to have an impact on local government policies and decisions.

- \* Make public decision-making more responsive and accountable to community input;
- \* Institutionalize the City's commitment to public involvement in decision-making; and
- \* Create the infrastructure to support the goals and recommendations in the *Five Year Plan* by updating the internal structure of the Office of Neighborhood Involvement.

Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI) has adopted these Community Connect goals and is working to implement the recommendations of the *Five Year Plan*.