



Signs of Progress: Successes Worth Building On

When the public and private sectors work together, problems can be solved urgently and effectively. Recent progress includes:

- Downtown foot traffic continues to rise year over year, with an overall 3% increase from 2023 to 2024 highlighted by a growth in daily employee traffic of 8%.
- After the formation of the Auto Theft Task Force in 2023, vehicle thefts have declined to 2014 levels after reaching record highs in 2021-22.
- Reported crime in the central city is down a whopping 84% year over year, and public perception of safety in downtown has improved by 20%.
- Multnomah County has opened its first-ever drug deflection center and is on track to open a 24/7 drop-off sobering center in the first half of 2025.
- The City of Portland has laid the groundwork for strong future economic growth with significant foundational policy actions taken by the city over the past four years.



Coalition Partners



An Economic Foundation to Build Upon

It will be incumbent on the new generation of leaders at the City of Portland to build off of these accomplishments and continue Portland's economic revival.

- Consolidated permitting services into a single bureau.
- Required that all new proposed fees and fee increases undergo an economic impact analysis.
- Approved two new Tax Increment Finance Districts in East Portland and the Central City.
- Adopted the widely praised Advance Portland economic development plan.
- Created partnership agreements with the entire family of historic development opportunities in the Central City: New Albina, Rose Quarter, OMSI District, Broadway Corridor, and Major League Baseball (MLB) to PDX.
- Approved fully modernized Enhanced Service District policies that will allow this global public-private best practice to flourish and spread to neighborhood business districts.
- Adopted one of the most aggressive downtown leasing incentives in the nation.

More Details
Online:



Working Together for Portland's Future

In recent years, voters have sent a clear message that they expect our elected leaders to return to the basics, restore Portland's livability, and take steps to get Portland's cost of living under control. A new city council and county leadership have been elected, pledging to address these issues.

Governor Kotek has followed through on her commitments to housing production and the Portland region's success.

The City of Portland Mayor Wilson has pledged to end unsheltered homelessness by the end of 2025. Multnomah County has an entirely new commission that is united in its promise to make the county more urgent, effective, and transparent.

Facing Economic Realities

Since 2020, Portland has faced a cascading series of crises that have measurably damaged our city's reputation and spurred the realization that the quality of public services is not commensurate with record-high taxes. After decades of growth, Portland has lost population for four consecutive years. The region now faces one of the largest unsheltered homeless populations in the nation and record levels of drug overdoses. The extremely high tax burden, combined with housing costs that are 30% higher than the national average, continues to drive population loss and undermine our tax base. Job declines across nearly every industry sector, plummeting commercial property values, and businesses relocating outside the region threaten the general funds of cities, counties, and school districts across the region. The City of Portland alone faces a \$100 million budget deficit.

UNDERSTANDING PORTLAND'S CHALLENGES SINCE 2020:

- Population loss, driven by high housing costs and taxes, is eroding the region's economic stability.
- Following a staggering 82% increase in business taxes in just the past five years, businesses are relocating and reducing the size of their workforces.
- Commercial property values have dropped precipitously resulting in governments struggling to fund basic services, while dedicated specialty taxes continue to have surpluses.
- Unsheltered homelessness and record drug overdoses strain public services.
- Housing production in the Portland region is at a virtual standstill, threatening to deepen the region's housing and economic challenges.

Portland and the region must grapple with three key economic truths:

1. In the next decade and beyond, the Portland region must compete with other metropolitan regions for population growth, businesses, events, and jobs.

2. The region's housing crisis is at a breaking point with housing production virtually ground to a halt.

3. We must incentivize and accelerate the growth of businesses to ensure we have the revenue we need to fund the state and local services that our residents expect and count on. New or increased taxes will only dig our region into a deeper hole. We must look for ways to reform or reduce our tax burden to put the region back on a competitive growth trajectory.

What Portland Needs Now: Collaborative Solutions, Not Division

Collaboration will be necessary to get through an extremely difficult budget and kick start economic growth. This is going to be challenging work and will involve changing the way we do business based on best practices learned from our peer metro regions. Success will require the public sector to work with business and community leaders from across the region.

We cannot afford to be divided or distracted by performative proposals or novel policies that put us at a competitive disadvantage with our peers.

2050 Agenda: A Thriving Future in Portland

This long-term vision highlights the critical need for collaboration between public and private sectors to create a future of equitable and shared prosperity for all. By working together, we can build a vibrant Portland for generations to come. We urge local leaders to prioritize the following.

Actions to take:

- ⇒ Make Portland more affordable:
 - Adjust the overall tax burden to be consistent with peer regions. Prioritize core services over specialty programs.
 - Urgently build more housing of all types.
- ⇒ End unsheltered homelessness by the end of the decade by providing enough warm and dry places for individuals to sleep and outreach to urgently move unsheltered Portlanders into services and housing.
- ⇒ Invest in safe, livable communities and protect public safety investments and programs from budget cuts.
- ⇒ Incentivize and invest in economic growth to grow revenue for public services and provide opportunities for all Portlanders to raise their families and thrive.
- ⇒ Prepare for a healthy climate future through public-private collaboration.



Our Priorities in 2025

The Chamber urges local leaders to support and implement Governor Kotek's Central City Task Force recommendations to drive our city's recovery. We encourage action on the following policy agenda.

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Portland must adopt a competitive mindset in the post-pandemic era. With slower population growth and low support for new taxes, expanding the tax base is critical. Local governments should prioritize supporting entrepreneurs, growing businesses, and attracting large employers. Public-private partnerships are key to achieving shared economic goals.

- The City of Portland Advanced Portland plan represents a strong, broadly supported vision to meet this moment, and the new city government should implement and prioritize all actions in the plan.
- Permitting and development services should reform its funding model to be fully staffed, funded, and open for business at all times. The City of Portland and all local governments must adopt plans to make optimal use of all industrial lands and ensure we have the necessary land supply to accommodate economic growth.
- The city should continue to take necessary actions to rapidly advance the family of generational economic development opportunities that will pass a thriving central city onto future generations: Broadway Corridor, New Albina, Rose Quarter, OMSI District, Zidell Yards/MLB, and Lloyd District.
- Partner with the Portland Diamond Project and bring major league baseball to the Rose City.
- Invest in and grow the City of Portland Clean Industry Hub to meet Portland's decarbonization goals and support Portland's strong manufacturing industry.
- The city, county, Metro, and state should partner to stabilize and invest in our historic festivals and must collaborate with the business community to bring our entertainment venues up to modern standards.
- Prioritize transportation infrastructure investments over new projects, focusing on the I-5 Bridge replacement, Rose Quarter safety, and deferred maintenance.
- Put Old Town residents, businesses, and neighbors first by appointing a multi-governmental, public-private economic task force, empowering them to develop an urgent economic action plan recognizing the overwhelmingly disproportionate burden that homelessness, drug addiction, and mental health crises have had on this historic neighborhood.

HOUSING

Portland faces a severe housing shortage, with costs 30% above the national average, undermining economic competitiveness. High housing costs, driven by underproduction, are a major cause of homelessness and instability. Emergency action is needed to spur housing production through policies, incentives, and deregulation. Governments must invest in housing infrastructure, expand rental supply, and prioritize land availability to address the crisis.

- Urgently approve housing production deregulation and incentives as an economic development strategy to stabilize the cost of housing options.

These policy priorities and values are developed in active collaboration with members and community partners of Portland Metro Chamber.

Public Affairs
503-224-8684
governmentaffairs@portlandmetrochamber.com



Our Priorities in 2025

The Chamber urges local leaders to support and implement Governor Kotek's Central City Task Force recommendations to drive our city's recovery. We encourage action on the following policy agenda.

COST OF LIVING & TAX BURDEN

Portland's cost of living is 12% above the national average due to high housing costs and taxes. Dissatisfaction with government services has lowered support for new taxes. Local leaders must focus on economic growth instead of raising taxes to fund basic services. Governments should prioritize spending on programs with proven returns and reform the tax system to fund essential services while reducing the overall tax burden to match peer cities.

- Continue to support Governor Kotek's Central City Task Force recommendation for a three-year moratorium on new and increased taxes.
- Collaborate with public and private leaders to reform taxes, prioritizing stable funding for essential services and reducing the overall tax burden.
- Reform Preschool for All to rapidly expand universal preschool at a lower cost per child and attract large providers.
- Advocate for slower growth of taxes and fees by calling on local governments to:
 - Require economic impact statements for tax or fee increases and ballot measures.
 - Cap annual fee increases.
 - Index all current taxes to inflation

PUBLIC SAFETY & HOMELESSNESS

All Portlanders deserve clean, safe, and healthy communities. The City must prioritize restoring this basic value. Public safety services should be funded at levels similar to peer cities, and homelessness must be brief, rare, and nonrecurring. Urgent funding is needed for 24/7 sobering centers, service navigation, and drug deflection programs. Transparent collaboration between public safety agencies is essential to build an efficient, equitable, and accountable system.

- Balance budgets without cuts to public safety and economic development services.
- Reinvest in public safety services across the region to serve Portland's population size.
- Prioritize reducing gun violence, auto theft, retail theft, and enforcement of drug trafficking and open drug use regulations.
- Support Mayor Wilson's initiative to end unsheltered homelessness in Portland by December 2025.
- Continue to move forward with the planned opening of Multnomah County's 24/7 sobering center in 2025.
- Align Multnomah County's camping policy with regional standards.
- Fund Portland Police and District Attorney staffing levels to meet national standards.
- Support District Attorney Vasquez's initiative to end open-air drug use in Multnomah County.
- Establish an alternative public defense program to bring Multnomah County in line with most Oregon counties in meeting its public defense obligations.



Public Affairs
503-224-8684

More Details
Online:

