



Neighborhood Associations

- Arnold Creek
- Ashcreek
- Bridlemile
- Collins View
- Crestwood
- Far Southwest
- Hayhurst
- Hillsdale
- Homestead
- Maplewood
- Markham
- Marshall Park
- Multnomah
- South Burlingame
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- West Portland Park

Committees

- Equity & Inclusion
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Watershed

News and Events

Community

- Meetings and News
- SW Trails PDX

Calendar

- Neighborhood Meetings
- SWNI Committees
- Community Events

A Chilling Effect

Winter Storm Wreaks Havoc on SW Portland

Hardly a family escaped the merciless winter storm in January that brought down hundreds of trees, squashed cars and houses, and made life miserable for those who lost power for hours and days.

In this issue of *SW News*, you'll find out more about how our community handled the inconvenience — and dangers — of such a widespread event.

On Page 4, you'll learn what our Neighborhood Emergency Teams (NETs) were able to do, and what some have learned as power outages and travel constraints hindered their activity. You'll also find out more about NETs and their importance.

Beginning on Page 5, read about how our neighborhoods coped with the storm and how good old-fashioned neighborliness rose to the occasion

All Too Familiar Scene?



The aftermath of our January storm not only included removing lots of trees and debris, it also resulted in inconvenient street and path closures.

Photo: Marita Ingalsbe

Participatory Democracy in Portland: 1974 - 2024

A Half Century of Neighborhood Empowerment

February 7th marks 50 years since the City of Portland adopted its nationally-recognized system of community engagement.

It's time to celebrate this important milestone!

Emerging from an era of political turmoil and a surge in grassroots activism, a novel program of publicly funded citizen participation was enacted by the Portland City Council in 1974. It has proven to be an enduring model for encouraging effective, informed participation at the community level.

As Portland's governmental structure changes and new voices emerge on the political landscape, what have we learned and what should we fight to maintain of the vaunted program that has become a textbook case of participatory democracy?

*Paul Leistner, one of Portland's foremost authorities on Section 3.96 of City Code, which outlines the purposes, objectives and mechanisms of the program now administered by the Office of Community and Civic Life, guides us through the history, visions and value of the City's system – and what we should continue to strive for in ensuring full-throated community participation in public policy and governmental programs and services. **See story on Page 2.***

Celebrating Portland’s Community Engagement Program 50 Years of Informed, Grassroots Public Involvement

By Paul Leistner

MPA, Public Policy Analysis, University of Washington

PhD, Policy Analysis and Community Engagement, Portland State University

This year, 2024, marks the 50th anniversary of Portland’s nationally and internationally recognized citywide community and neighborhood engagement system in 1974.

Over the past 50 years, Portland developed strategies, programs and approaches that made it a recognized leader in community engagement across the country and around the world.

This anniversary is important because the system is at a crossroads. In recent years, some feel that Portland’s community engagement work has lost its way. Many good programs and policies have been neglected or abandoned.

Others believe it has not fully engaged the entire – and increasingly diverse – community we now live in.

What does that mean?

It’s time for all of us in the community to get engaged and help chart a more positive and inclusive path forward.

This is the first in a series of articles in SWNews that will focus in the coming months on a different aspect of community and neighborhood engagement in Portland.

This first installment looks at the origins of Portland’s system, its key elements and what this approach to participatory democracy has meant to Portland.

Origins

The 1960s were a time of great upheaval in Portland and around the country. People were taking power back to the community through many movements – civil rights, women’s rights, the environment, disability rights, etc.



“Some enlightened City planners realized that community members actually knew a lot about their community’s needs and resources and, rather than adversaries, could be valuable partners in planning efforts.”

Federal programs, such as Model Cities, began requiring local community leaders to involve their community in their work. The “neighborhood democracy” movement led cities around the country to create neighborhood systems to support better community engagement.

Some organized neighborhood associations existed in Portland prior to the 1970s. Many neighborhood groups stepped up to oppose the

Organized, community-based resistance emerged in force. PSU professor and historian Carl Abbott aptly termed it “Portland’s political revolution”. It was a period when organized, community-based resistance emerged in force.

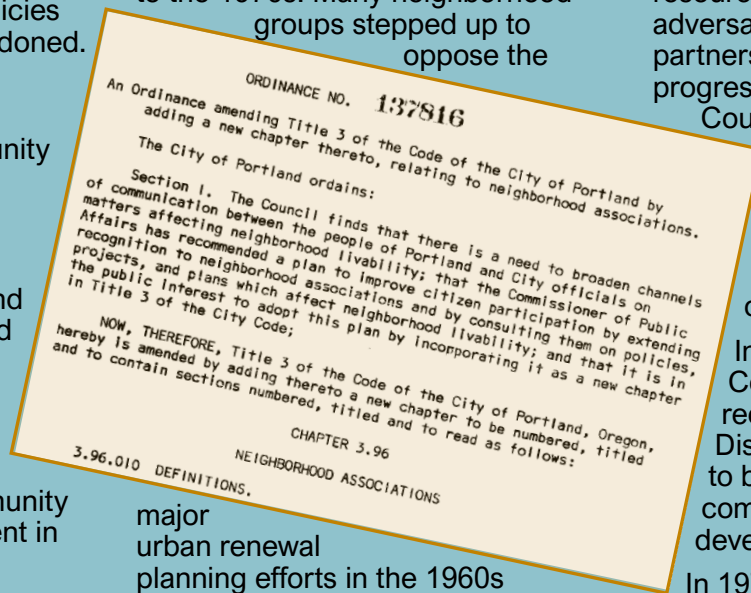
Fortunately, some enlightened City planners realized that community members actually knew a lot about their community’s needs and resources and, rather than adversaries, could be valuable partners in planning efforts. New progressive leaders on the City Council – such as Lloyd Anderson, Connie McCready and Neil Goldschmidt – also supported greater partnership with the community.

In 1971, the City Planning Commission issued a report recommending the creation of District Planning Organizations to bring City planners and community members together to develop local plans.

In 1972, the City Council created a follow-up task force that recommended the creation of a two-tiered neighborhood and district system.

After extensive community input, Portland City Council, adopted Ordinance 137816 on February 7, 1974. Portland’s community and neighborhood engagement system was born.

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major urban renewal planning efforts in the 1960s by the City of Portland. Plans for a “Mount Hood freeway” through Southeast Portland further fueled grassroots activism at the neighborhood level.

These projects tended to identify certain older, inner neighborhoods as “blighted” and targeted them for demolition and replacement with institutional structures, high rise residential buildings, and freeways. They also threatened some of Portland’s historic buildings and neighborhoods.

President's Corner — Andrew Baker

Community Spirit Shines During the Winter Storm

A Storm for the Ages

I hope everyone reading this stayed warm and safe during the winter storm this past month. Ice and wind made this storm particularly perilous, and I am grateful for the tireless work of City staff who helped clear roads, fix broken pipes and worked to keep our community safe.

Many of us choose to live in SW Portland at least in part because of the abundance of trees and natural beauty in our neighborhoods. However, we were reminded that this natural beauty we enjoy can also be dangerous during winter storms.

Many trees fell in SW, damaging power lines as well as homes. As we continue to face an unpredictable and changing climate, I encourage everyone to have a plan to prepare for future storms.

NET Teams Step Up

Preparation is key, and I want to express my deep appreciation for the preparation and hard work of neighborhood NET teams who are at the forefront of responding to these events.



Andrew Baker

(See the several stories in this issue of *SW News* about the role of NETs in our neighborhoods during natural disasters and other events, what our Southwest NET teams were up to during this storm, and what each of us should do to be better prepared).

These teams, trained to provide emergency assistance to neighbors, are a critical piece of human infrastructure in our city. I encourage everyone to learn more about what NETs do and how you can get involved.

They are a further representation of the importance of neighborhood engagement and involvement.

Our community is at its best when neighborhoods are engaged and collaborative, and how our neighbors helped respond to the winter storm is a great example of this.

Coalition Update

NWNW will officially be the new District 4 Coalition as of July 1, 2024, and the City is going to wait to issue a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) for District Coalition services until some point in the future.

Our SW neighborhoods have spent months talking with our counterparts in District 4, which incorporates 32 neighborhoods, about the best ways to organize this new coalition.

I continue to appreciate the collaborative spirit in which NWNW is approaching this change.

As NWNW makes the transition in becoming the District 4 coalition, SWNI is doing everything in its power to assure that there is a smooth transition for SW neighborhoods. I will continue to provide updates as we move through the process.

Meanwhile, we will continue to serve the community between now and then even as we begin the process of closing shop after 45+ years of service to the community.

One aspect of that is our decision to close our office in the Multnomah Arts Center at the end of this month. However, be assured that all of our support services to our neighborhood and business associations will continue during this transition.

Please feel free to reach out to me or other Officers and Board members if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Andrew Baker

SWNI President



Storm Spared Few

This home in Hayhurst was among the many properties throughout the area that suffered significant damage during the frigid, windy and icy storm.

Many were out of power for days and had to rely on themselves, their neighbors and SW Portland's multiple Neighborhood Emergency Teams (NETs).

Photo: Marita Ingalsbe

The Storm of '24

January's Icy Blast Challenges Local NETs

“Well, it was a heck of a storm.”

That pretty well sums up how it felt to Neighborhood Emergency Team (NET) leaders in Southwest Portland as they struggled against the elements to help their neighbors cope with the brutal storm that hit the area on January 11th and lingered for well over a week.

Dave Manville, a NET leader for AshCrest NET, which serves the Ashcreek and Crestwood neighborhoods, had been deployed to downed powerlines on SW Huber.

“It was cold, windy, bad,” he said, “so bad after two hours that PBEM [Portland Bureau of Emergency Management] recalled all NETs around town to go home.”

[Ed. Note: PBEM says it recalled deployed NETs because they felt it wasn't safe for the teams to be out during the peak of the storm.]

Unfortunately for the folks on SW Huber, they faced being “without power for days as a tree fell and took out their power pole to the ground,” Manville said. But Manville, like other trained NET volunteers, had backup resources when he temporarily lost power at his home – 4-kW batteries that can keep his house in power for several days.

Storm Presents Challenges

Such was the life for other NETs in the area. Some found that losing power at their own homes made it more difficult to mobilize their teams. Others found having to dodge downed trees and slick streets made them only able to help their immediate neighbors.

Kandy Scott, a member of the Maplewood NET, was able to help a neighbor new to the area locate their curbside water shut-off for their home after a pipe burst.

“They dug through the snow until they located their box with the shut-off,” Kandy said. “We were also able to work together to locate the needed



Above, storm damage caused SW 45th Avenue – a major route to and from the neighborhood – to be closed for a while.

Photo: Marita Ingalsbe

T-handle tool to shut the water to the house off.”

“I took the Basic NET Training in 2014 and shutting off water to a house was one of the skills we learned,” she said. “Neighbors helping neighbors is what NET teaches,” she said. “Today I was able to provide a large container of water to the family while they are waiting to get water restored.”

Merilee Karr, Team Leader of the South Burlingame NET, took on three voluntary 4-hour shifts from home in the first weekend of the storm. She dispatched rides to connect chilly people with rides to warming shelters.

“This is literally life-saving work/ I signed on as a dispatcher in extreme weather events for a couple of years, until the program moved this year from PBEM to Multnomah County.

“As Multnomah County spun it up, on deadline (before the snow fell), they were grateful for experienced NET dispatchers like me,” she said. “It’s hard, fast, detailed teamwork, and after each shift I felt very tired, but

satisfied.”

While loss of power, downed trees and icy streets made a full mobilization nearly impossible, NET volunteers did what they could.

For instance, Tom Boeker of South Burlingame eventually got out of the house using ice cleats on his shoes. When the sewer system in his condominium complex failed, he went door-to-door to encourage everyone to limit their water use so it would last. Later, he went door-to-door offering hot coffee to those without power.

West Portland Park’s NET leader, Vicki McNamara, had “a huge tree” fall into the second story of her house. “Hence, we have not deployed,” she said. However, she added, “neighbors who are not NETs have been superb” in providing assistance while her family waited to have a crew remove the tree.

A Learning Opportunity

“There are lots of lessons learned from this storm,” Merilee added. “We don’t have to wait for a big earthquake to face loss of cell and internet.”

Maplewood NET’s Ed Kraus acknowledged that some of the limitations of a disaster can make it hard to provide the support needed.

“Neighborhoods to the west and south, such as Maplewood and Multnomah, experienced power and internet outages that prevented them from making calls, text messages, and sending emails,” Ed said. “The storm exposed vulnerabilities where some residents had no way to contact 911 for hours or days at a time.”

For his part, Ed focused on his nearby neighbors. He checked on them and reminded them that carbon monoxide poisoning can build up from burning fuels, e.g., gas, wood, propane or charcoal – indoors. He also organized a radio check for his NET team.

(Continued on Page 5)

First Responders Among First Responders

NET Program: Neighbors Helping Neighbors

The prolonged storm this past month was a reminder that it isn't just the "big one" earthquake that can cripple a community.

In what may be referred to for years to come as the "Icy Blast of '24", it was the combination of snow, freezing rain, ice and – worst of all – wind that created havoc and hardship through the Portland metropolitan region.

own neighbors who volunteer on [Neighborhood Emergency Teams](#) (NETs) coordinated by the Bureau of Emergency Management (PBEM) which, along with Portland Fire & Rescue, provide training.

"Volunteer neighborhood rescuers will likely be first on-the-scene when firefighters and police are slowed by impassable

"NETs see their neighborhoods as systems; not just individuals. Protocols make sure that no one falls through the cracks."

Merilee Karr

Team Leader, South Burlingame NET

The City received more than 700 reports of trees and branches that had fallen onto roads and other public property – and that didn't include those that toppled on private property and homes.

Known for our vast canopy of more than 4 million trees in Portland alone – they are a source of pride for all who live here. Almost 3/4ths of them are on private property, which helps explain why so many homes and businesses were directly impacted by downed trees and tree debris in this storm.

A Coordinated Approach

In such widespread disasters, the first on the scene are our

streets or overwhelmed by calls for help," says Jaymee Cuti, public information officer for Emergency Management and Emergency Communications .

According to PBEM, Southwest Portland's 14 NET teams consist of 231 people who have been trained to provide emergency disaster assistance within their own neighborhoods.

Overall, there are some 2,000 volunteers serving on NETs throughout Portland.

"NET members are trained to save lives and property until professional responders can arrive," Cuti says.

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SW NET Teams —

(Continued from Page 4)

"These NET teams began checking in with each other daily via radio and the experience from this storm likely will inform changes to NET team procedures in the future citywide," he said.

In the end, individually and collectively, NET volunteers and individual neighbors did all they could under trying circumstances

to help each other out.

And what they reported in to PBEM is invaluable, according to Jeremy Van Keuren, Community Resource Manager for PBEM,

"The overwhelming majority of damage reports logged by NET volunteers came from Southwest Portland," he said.

"That data will help City response and recovery teams know where to look when they send help."

Reporting Tree Emergencies



January's winter storm caused a high volume of significant tree impacts in streets and parks throughout the city and, especially, heavily forested areas such as Southwest Portland.

The Urban Forestry division of the City of Portland Bureau of Parks & Recreation provides the following advice:

To report a tree emergency blocking or threatening a public street or sidewalk, **call 503-823-TREE(8733) for emergency dispatch 24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

If a tree emergency situation involves **downed wires** please contact your utility provider first. Urban Forestry is unable to respond until electrical hazards have been addressed.

- **PGE – 503-464-7777**
<https://portlandgeneral.com/outages-safety>
- **Pacific Power – 1-877-508-5088**
<https://www.pacificpower.net/outages-safety.html>

If you are contacting Urban Forestry about a **debris pile left by their team**, be aware that it may take time for them to return to pick-up debris left behind.

As an alternative, consider safely using the City's weekly compost bin service or contact a [Tree Care Provider](#) or lawn care professional to assist with your debris pile.

Visit PP&R's Urban Forestry's [website](#) for extensive information about [tree regulations and permits](#), [retroactive permits](#) for situations needing immediate attention, applying for permits on-line through the [DevHub](#), and to find a list of local [tree care provider companies](#) who have participated in our training program.

50 Years of Empowerment —

(Continued from Page 2)

What followed has been a half century of participatory democracy from the grassroots level.

Early Elements

From the beginning, Portland's system sought to shift the city's governance culture from the traditional top-down model to a shared governance partnership with the community.

One major focus was building capacity for engagement in the community. Neighborhood associations were encouraged to form and could request formal recognition from the City if they met certain standards.

The City provided a wide array of support including leadership training, funding for communications and outreach, support for fun community events and a community event calendar, community summits to bring leaders together, dispute resolution, and much more.

A major decision was made early on to deliver many of these services through neighborhood district coalition offices governed by the community. The system also focused on changing the culture of City government by requiring bureaus to engage the community in developing

policies, programs and projects that affected the community and formally notifying the community when decisions were going to be made.

The City also created opportunities for community members to be involved in neighborhood planning, the City's budget process, and the prioritization of capital projects.

Evolution of the System

Portland's system has experienced many ups and downs over the years. Some City leaders and staff have tried to step back from community engagement and reduce important programs and services. Other administrations have championed major expansions of the system.

The most dramatic increase in the systems scope and activities began under Mayor Tom Potter in the latter 2000s. City and community leaders recognized that Portland's increasingly diverse community members find their sense of community not only in shared geography (e.g., neighborhoods) but also in shared culture and identity and shared interests.

The system expanded to support not only neighborhood associations but also communities of color, immigrants and refugees, youth, older adults, people with disabilities or those experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness.

Has it succeeded as intended – and what lies ahead? In future articles, *SW News* will describe these developments, the lessons learned and the fundamental elements of grassroots participation in City government and other public agencies that should be retained – and fought for.

Resources

You can find a treasure-trove of documents related to the origins and decade-by-decade evolution of Portland's engagement system archived on the Internet Wayback Machine by [clicking here](#). A good overview of the origins of the system also is available in [City archives](#).

Ed. Note: Paul Leistner has been a neighborhood activist in Portland for over 25 years. He also served for 10 years as the City of Portland's Neighborhood Program Coordinator for the Office of Neighborhood Involvement (ONI).

Mr. Leistner's PhD dissertation examined the evolution of Portland's community and neighborhood engagement system. He currently teaches civic capacity and community engagement at Portland State University.

Portland's NET Program —

(Continued from Page 5)

"These volunteers are trained to help others without putting themselves in harm's way."

Established as a City program in 1994, Cuti says NET members provide emergency assistance to their own household and immediate neighbors, then respond to their neighborhood's needs as a team.

In the current storm, NETs were able to help monitor down power lines, clear storm drains, connect people with rides to warming centers, and do damage assessments, she said.

For many, they had to do this while themselves being without power,

the ability to communicate with PBEM and their NET volunteers, or to mobilize their team due to travel constraints (see story on Page 4).

Individual Preparedness Helps

Cuti stresses that neighbors need to prepare themselves, too.

"In the event of a citywide or regional emergency such as a severe storm, flood or major earthquake, households need to be prepared to be on their own for at least two weeks," she advises.

But it helps that NET volunteers will be first on the scene when firefighters and police are slowed by impassable streets or overwhelmed by the volume of calls for help.

Join a NET!

NETs always need more volunteers who want to serve the community. In addition to receiving about 28 hours basic training, volunteers have access to advanced training and classes such as CPR/AED certification, mental health first aid, de-escalation training, wilderness first aid certification, HAZMAT awareness, radio communications training, and more.

In return, NET volunteers are expected to engage in at least 12 hours of volunteer time every year in addition to deployment opportunities, which are optional.

To sign up or get more information, [click here](#).

February 2024

Click on the calendar image below to access the live SWNI calendar.

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1 Cancelled - SWNI Public Safety Cancelled - SWNI Schools	2	3	4
5	6 Homestead NA	7 Collins View NA Hillsdale NA South Portland NA	8 Marshall Park NA Maplewood NA South Burlingame NA West Portland Park	9	10 SWTrails Hike	11
12 Ashcreek NA Hayhurst NA	13 Arnold Creek NA Multnomah NA	14 Bridlemile NA	15 SWNI Parks	16	17 SWTrails Stroll	18
19 SWNI Transportation Committee	20 SWNI Land Use Committee	21 SWNI Finance SWNI Executive	22	23	24	25
26 Cancelled - SWNI Equity & Inclusion	27	28 SWNI Board	29			

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To Support SWNI: We are a nonprofit organization powered by generous community donations. To donate to SWNI, please [click here](#) and scroll down to the **Donate** button. Thank you!



NOTE: As of February 28, the SWNI office in the Multnomah Arts Center will be closed permanently. If you need assistance, please send an email to president@swni.org.

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