Many of us who are neighborhood activists today wonder about why and how Portland's neighborhood system was created. PSU Professor Carl Abbott presents a very informative and readable description of the origins of Portland's neighborhood system in Chapter 9 of his excellent history of planning in Portland: *Portland: Planning, Politics, and Growth in a Twentieth-Century*, published in 1983.

The chapter describes "Portland's political revolution" in the 1960s and early 1970s in which community members first organized to stop destruction of their older neighborhoods as part of urban renewal plans of the time and then to champion revitalization of these neighborhoods. Southeast Uplift was created in 1968 as part of this community empowerment movement. Understanding these origins helps us all understand some of the underlying tensions in the system today and the often very different organizational cultures in different parts of the city.

Neighborhood activists may find that the descriptions of struggles between city government, development interests and community members still ring true today. The current struggle by community members to ensure a strong community voice in the development of the Portland Plan (the review and updating of Portland's Comprehensive Plan) echoes many similar struggles and controversies around the creation of the original Comprehensive Plan in the late 1970s.

Some terms Abbott uses for different types of neighborhoods may be unfamiliar. He defines and maps these neighborhoods types in Chapter 1:

-- "stopover neighborhoods": the inner neighborhoods around the central downtown that offered cheap housing for transient workers, European immigrants, and different minority populations; these were Portland's highest density neighborhoods (parts of NW, neighborhoods south of downtown, inner SE neighborhoods by the river, neighborhoods in NE along MLK)

-- "everyday neighborhoods": many of the neighborhoods in North Portland and SE Portland west of 82nd.

-- "highlands": the West Hills, Laurelhurst, Eastmoreland.

-- "automobile suburbs": much of SW Portland, and outer East Portland
Chapter 9: The New Public Interest: Neighborhood Planning, 1957-80

The Lair Hill neighborhood is a triangle of twenty small blocks wedged between high-volume traffic arteries just south of downtown Portland. Three dozen commercial buildings are scattered among one hundred residences. The typical block holds eight to ten frame houses of one and a half or two stories. Most were built between 1876 and 1910, and had scrollwork, ornate brackets, projecting porches, and bay windows. Reinvestment and rehabilitation since 1970 have ranged from rainbow paint jobs to completely refinished interiors and solar energy systems. In the real estate market of the early 1980s, fully renovated Lair Hill houses retailed for $100,000 or more. Neighborhood residents are a mix of elderly survivors from Italian and Jewish immigrant communities and members of the middle class who have moved in during the late seventies and early eighties in search of an urbane style of life.¹

The fate of Lair Hill exemplifies the neighborhood revolution in Portland planning. For more than a dozen years, in the 1950s and 1960s, it was on the urban renewal list of expendable neighborhoods. The Preliminary Project Report on the South Auditorium district in 1957 showed the Lair Hill remnant as suitable for rehabilitation and clearance for low-density apartments. A decade later, Portland planning director Lloyd Keefe wrote Mayor Schrunk that Lair Hill was appropriate for "clearance type urban renewal," since it had "few buildings which merit preservation or enhancement" and would never be a family neighborhood. Instead he suggested large-scale subsidized housing for the elderly or for Portland State University students. The next year, the Community Renewal Program did mark the area for potential rehabilitation but set a low priority because it was too deteriorated to save at a reasonable cost².

The culmination of this evaluation was an application for an urban renewal planning grant that the Development Commission filed with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in 1970. The PDC described Lair Hill as the worst area on the west side and called for clearance of all 143 buildings, which would displace 20 businesses, 45 families, and 95 single individuals. "Rehabilitation as recommended by the Community Renewal Program," continued the planners, "would only prolong inefficient land use ... and give a few
more years of life to structures, a majority of which were built before 1900, of mediocre construction, and crowded on the land." The proposal called for a new street system to occupy roughly half the land area and subsidized housing for faculty and students from Portland State and the University of Oregon Health Sciences Center. With endorsements from the two universities, the Planning Commission, and the Housing Authority, the Portland City Council approved the application on August 6.³

Although the PDC asserted that it did not need to consult the people in Lair Hill, residents formed a Hill Park Association in October, 1970. With the support of new city commissioner Neil Goldschmidt and county commissioner Mel Gordon, the Hill Park Association forced the Development Commission to treat them as legitimate participants in the neighborhood planning process. Although the city council voted four to one to continue with a modified renewal application in July, 1971, the protest delayed the project long enough for it to lose funding when President Nixon suspended urban renewal spending.⁴

Development of a viable alternative started a few months later in reaction to a private proposal to redevelop abandoned industrial property three-quarters of a mile south of Lair Hill as the massive John's Landing project. As early as 1966 and 1967, residents of the Terwilliger neighborhood west of industrialized Macadam Avenue had banded together in a community league to fight the loss of residential land to zone changes. They secured zoning changes that helped to preserve their moderate-income community by establishing a buffer zone of apartment houses against new warehouses and factories. The three neighborhoods below the hills in southeast Portland that would be affected by the new housing, stores, offices, and traffic at John's Landing—Corbett, Terwilliger, and Lair Hill—now joined together to form a neighborhood council and a planning committee. Assisted by a professional planner from the Planning Bureau, the neighborhoods prepared a plan for Corbett-Terwilliger-Lair Hill between the fall of 1972 and the fall of 1974. One of its primary goals was to "retain Lair Hill as a residential neighborhood" by encouraging new housing on vacant land, limiting new construction to three stories, and accepting additional neighborhood-oriented commercial uses.⁵

The most recent planning change came in 1977, when the city council designated Lair Hill as one of the first historic conservation districts in Portland. The designation represented an attempt to preserve the architecture and social character of the community by giving residents the power to delay demolitions and to examine new construction in
comparison with design guidelines. The joint report by the Planning Commission and Historic Landmarks Commission noted that the neighborhood contains "one of the richest collections of Victorian residential architecture in the city." Neighborhood residents and the Corbett-Terwilliger-Lair Hill Planning Committee were strongly in favor of historic designation, in the early 1980s, residents continued to work on writing effective design guidelines.  

The experience of Lair Hill illustrates the change in attitude toward older neighborhoods between the start of Terry Schrunk's mayorality in 1957 and the end of Neil Goldschmidt's administration in 1979. By the standards of most Portland planners in the 1950s and early 1960s, Lair Hill was in rapid decline as a residential community. It suffered increasing absentee ownership, encroachment of commercial uses, loss or deterioration of surviving housing, and a shift toward transient residents whom Ira Keller characterized as "street people of the type who inhabit the fringe of a university." A decade later, this "extremely blighted" area was singled out for admiration and preservation precisely because of its small frame cottages left over from the last century and its "broad mix of people in terms of income, age, lifestyles, and race." Similar changes have occurred in the public image of older neighborhoods in Northwest, Northeast, and Southeast Portland.

Neighborhood policy and planning changed along with popular attitudes between 1966 and 1980. Until the mid-1960s, planners ignored the stopover neighborhoods as viable residential areas. Instead, they tried to concentrate high-intensity uses in inner neighborhoods in order to isolate and protect the everyday city, the highlands, and the automobile suburbs. The policy was based on the premise that Eliot, Buckman, Goose Hollow, Lair Hill, and similar areas within three miles of downtown Portland were beyond salvage. Changes came with a neighborhood revolution that erupted in every sector of the city between 1967 and 1972. Albina, Corbett-Terwilliger, Northwest Portland, and other old neighborhoods demanded new attention to their needs. By the 1970s, policymakers recognized that stopover neighborhoods could be reused as residential areas, either with new types of residents (as on the west side) or with a mix of old and new (as on the east side). Sections of the city that had been ignored or damaged in the 1960s now received specific support through housing rehabilitation, historic preservation, public improvements with Housing and Community Development money, and the creation of neighborhood plans. Changes in public tastes, political leadership, federal programs, and the housing market all combined to convince citizens, planners, and politicians that neighborhood change is not
necessarily a one-way street leading to urban blight.

Portland's professional planners in the late 1950s and early 1960s conscientiously applied nationally accepted planning principles to their city's neighborhoods. They took for granted that neighborhood decline is an inevitable process, "the end product of a long slow process of erosion." Their belief was founded both on practical experience with changing land values in Portland in the 1920s and 1930s and on the most common model of urban structure, which assumes that land-use zones grow outward like ripples in a pond. Every concentric zone is assumed to be in transition as new land is developed on the edge of the city and as land uses expand from the center. The model indicates that inner residential neighborhoods naturally give way to institutional and fringe commercial uses as the city grows and demands space for its central functions. Housing in the intermediate zones is passed down from higher- to lower-status occupants. The implication is that public policy can only hurry or rationalize the natural transitions. Such an urban-growth model justifies urban renewal on the edge of the business core and supports the "trickle-down" theory that dominated housing policy during the generation after 1945.  

When decision makers for Portland planning applied their belief in one-way change, they looked in particular at the stopover neighborhoods. The residential areas that hugged the lower land along the Willamette appeared to have outlived their role as staging areas for newcomers to the city (with the possible exception of the black neighborhoods of Northeast Portland). Land in these areas was in demand for central uses by a growing downtown office district, by light industry, for warehousing, and by expanding institutions such as hospitals, the state university, and shopping centers. Given the consensus that blight "continues to get worse until clearance of an area may be the only feasible solution," the city accommodated the demands by obliterating substantial parts of two neighborhoods in the late 1950s to make room for the coliseum and the South Auditorium renewal project. For inner-southeast and inner-southwest Portland, the corollary was the replacement of single-family housing by cheap apartments to hold the land at an increased return until it was needed for more intensive use.  

The complement to writing off the inner ring as a residential area was the effort to hold middle-class population in the everyday neighborhoods and highlands by making them as "suburban" as possible. The Planning Commission and its staff applied the ideas
about the characteristics of a neighborhood unit that had been defined by Clarence Perry in the 1930s and incorporated into the planning consensus. At the time when Portland politicians were beginning to worry seriously about the flight of population from the central city, their model of an ideal city neighborhood bore a striking resemblance to a well-designed tract development. They hoped to retain low population densities, to block out nonresidential activities, to insulate the neighborhood from traffic, and to increase open space.\(^{12}\) The plan for the St. Johns district published in 1959 summarized the principles of neighborhood design: "It is generally accepted that the 'neighborhood,' an area inhabited by persons who are likely to have some common interests and activities, should not be broken up by major trafficways, should contain some local shopping facilities, and should have an elementary school and neighborhood park as a focal point for common activities at this level."\(^{13}\)

The application of this goal can be analyzed from the Planning Commission's *Comprehensive Development Plan*, a citywide map of proposed land uses and public facilities prepared in 1958 and revised in 1966, and from its *Community Renewal Program* published in 1967. The highlands needed little change, for the West Hills, Laurelhurst, and Eastmoreland were well-defined and well-maintained areas that could easily compete with upper-status suburbs. Planning director Lloyd Keefe considered Eastmoreland to be nearly an ideal neighborhood unit with its purely residential character and its well-buffered boundaries. For Southwest Portland, the Planning Commission tried to provide a neighborhood unit framework within which new neighborhoods could develop. In particular, its *Comprehensive Development Plan* and its report *Land for Schools* (1957) helped to determine the locations for more than a dozen new schools. The Planning Commission and its staff led the fight against a public housing project in Hillsdale in order to preserve the area's social isolation. Proposals for the remaining east-side neighborhoods—the everyday city— were more drastic. The *Comprehensive Development Plan* suggested the relocation of five schools in Southeast Portland and fifteen schools in Northeast and North Portland in order to reconstruct neighborhood patterns. It also called for fifty miles of new east-side freeways and expressways in addition to I-5 and I-205 in order to define neighborhood borders and to make the area appealing to auto-oriented residents. In a summary written by Keefe and signed by Planning Commission president Harry Sroufe, the commission's efforts were "directed toward restructuring our residential sections into secluded units protected from the encroachment of conflicting urban uses."\(^{14}\)

The process of neighborhood planning between 1957 and 1967 was as
straightforward as its content. City Planning Commission reports make no reference to neighborhood groups or citizen involvement. They were prepared by city employees for their colleagues in city hall. The commencement of an Albina Neighborhood Improvement Program by the Portland Development Commission in 1961 was one more example of planning for neighborhoods. The PDC was eager to follow its South Auditorium land clearance with a rehabilitation project. Both PDC executive director, John Kenward, and chairman, Ira Keller, believed sincerely in the importance of the Albina effort, but the fact remains that it was devised by the agency and sold to the community. Kenward first suggested the idea to the Urban League in January, 1960. Keller and his wife spent Sunday afternoons knocking on doors to recruit participants. The PDC staff defined the project area—thirty-three blocks between Fremont, Skidmore, Vancouver, and Mississippi—and worked to organize an Albina Neighborhood Improvement Committee in 1962-63. Plans for the area were prepared by the Planning Commission and recommended the sort of natural neighborhood unit called for in the Comprehensive Development Plan. The Development Commission not only made rehabilitation assistance available and cleared several dozen rundown buildings for new construction but also tore out two blocks of housing in the middle of the area to build Unthank Park."

Planning agencies ignored the opinions of Northeast Portland citizens in their treatment of the heart of Albina south of Fremont. The Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project area had been chosen for its small size, the quality of its housing, and its fifty-fifty ratio of blacks and whites. In 1967, more than a thousand Albina residents petitioned the city council to extend the PDC's project southward. The agency replied by citing the Planning Commission's Central Albina Study, which described the new area as a "disordered collection of mixed land uses [and] deteriorated and dilapidated buildings" suffering "an advanced stage of urban blight." At the same time, the Comprehensive Development Plan was designating the area south of Fremont and west of Williams for new public facilities such as a community college, and the PDC was preparing a multiblock land clearance project in cooperation with Emanuel Hospital.16

Portland’s Community Renewal Program of 1967 summarized neighborhood policy over the preceding decade. It was prepared by the Planning Commission staff between 1964 and 1967 for use by city bureaus and the Development Commission. Similar to reports in other cities, it was intended to satisfy federal worries that earlier urban renewal efforts had been conceived without awareness of the full set of
urban needs. The recommended program set the preservation of high-quality middle-class neighborhoods through code enforcement as its first priority. The second priority was the assistance of middle-class areas that were feeling the first effects of blight, such as Sellwood, Montavilla, Irvington, and University Park. It gave a lower priority to blighted areas with lower income levels, since they had fewer resources for helping themselves. These low-priority areas included most of the stopover neighborhoods—Brooklyn, Buckman, the Williams-Union Avenue corridor, and every west-side neighborhood below the hills.¹⁷

Portland planning went through startling changes between 1966 and 1972, as the emergence of active and often angry neighborhood organizations made local residents the actors rather than the objects in neighborhood decisions. The new "planners" expressed different values than those held by the staff and commissioners of the central planning agencies, altering the content of neighborhood plans and the processes by which they were formulated, in turn, the political context for the new neighborhood planning was the change of generations on the Portland City Council in 1969-70. Lloyd Anderson, Connie McCready, and Neil Goldschmidt were less committed to old policies and personnel than William Bowes, Stanley Earl, and Buck Grayson had been. With the partial exception of Goldschmidt, they did not initiate the neighborhood revolution, but they were willing to respond to neighborhood requests. Neighborhood groups and city agencies also needed to adapt to changing requirements for federal assistance. The federal demand for citizen participation in city spending decisions through the Community Action program of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Model Cities program, and finally the Housing and Community Development program has been well documented.¹⁸ The requirement for environmental impact statements under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 gave neighborhood groups another tool for influencing major capital investments that had previously been beyond community control.

Despite the suburban boom of the 1950s and 1960s, many Portlanders continued to live in the stopover neighborhoods and everyday neighborhoods. Sixty percent of the population within the city limits in 1970 lived in housing built before World War II. In the later 1960s, the files of the PDC show a growing interest in substantial neighborhood rehabilitation through public improvements and low-interest loans. The city’s code compliance program, which was directed at Irvington and University Park, was a starting point.¹⁹ However, most older neighborhoods were interested in community revitalization that went beyond code enforcement.
The neighborhood planning revolution was the cumulative result of efforts by a score of largely self-defining neighborhood organizations. Nearly every one of the stopover neighborhoods and another half dozen of the everyday neighborhoods began to argue vigorously for their own versions of revitalization in 1968, 1969, and 1970. Neighborhood associations were not new in themselves, but the positive character of their agendas was a significant departure. Rather than reacting against unwanted changes, neighborhood groups in the late sixties planned and advocated improvements in public services and coordinated changes in land-use regulations and public facilities. By 1971 and 1972, active neighborhood associations and planning committees were a presence that politicians and planning administrators could not ignore. Indeed, their numbers required attention not as single problems or single neighborhoods but as a neighborhood movement.

The origins of this movement were different in every section of the city. Portlanders now tend to remember the group with which they were directly involved as the first to storm the barricades of the city hall establishment. The movement gained its most articulate spokesmen among middle-class "colonists" of the stopover neighborhoods on the west side, especially those involved in the Northwest District Association. However, the process of neighborhood mobilization began in the 1960s on the east side with local efforts to influence federally assisted programs.

Between 1966 and 1968, the effective control of the new Model Cities program for Northeast Portland shifted from downtown agencies to neighborhood activists. The initial application for a planning grant was prepared between November, 1966, and April, 1967, by John Kenward and Oliver Norville from the PDC, Lloyd Keefe from the Planning Bureau, Donald Jeffrey from the city attorney's office, and Frank Ivancie. The PDC and Planning Bureau staff helped to write the proposal on the basis of questionnaires to city agencies and dropped it in the mail without seriously expecting the Washington bureaucracy to fund it. Officials at HUD criticized the application because its suggested citizen-participation component was "mostly at the level of informing residents rather than involving them" and because it ignored the problems of working with lower-income groups. Nevertheless, HUD funded a year of Model Cities planning, perhaps because of Terry Schrunk's position as president of the National Conference of Mayors.
Timeline:

**Northeast Portland**

1965  Irvington Community Association organized

11/1966-4/67  Model Cities Planning Grant application prepared

1968  Citizens’ Planning Board—Model Cities Planning

2/1969  Irvington down-zoning

7/1970  Irvington and Woodlawn Neighborhood Development Programs

1/1972  King-Vernon-Sabin Neighborhood Development Program

1972-73  Neighborhood policy plans for Model Cities areas

**Southeast Portland**

1967-68  Buckman, Sunnyside, Richmond, Brooklyn, and Hosford-Abernathy neighborhood associations organized with the help of Portland Action Committees Together

5/1968  Southeast Uplift program started

1972  Southeast neighborhoods challenge Mount Hood Freeway

8/1974  City council withdraws approval of Mount Hood Freeway

10/1974  Inner Southeast Coalition formed
Northwest Portland

5/1969 Northwest District Association organized 12/1969 City council agrees to fund Northwest neighborhood plan


Southwest Portland

1966-67 Terwilliger Community League active
10/1970 Hill Park Association organized
12/1971 Johns Landing development proposal
1972-73 Corbett-Terwilliger-Lair Hill neighborhood planning
10/1974 City council approves Corbett-Terwilliger-Lair Hill plan

North Portland

1972 North Portland Citizens Committee organized
1974 NPCC separates from North Community Action Council

Paul Schulze, the new director of the Model Cities program, made a key decision at the start of 1968 to base the planning more heavily on input from citizens than from public agencies. Because neighborhood residents feared that the program was another guise for urban renewal, Schulze reiterated that the Development Commission was providing specific expertise for the Model Cities program but did not control the plan itself. Local protest that the program should have a black rather than a white director certainly made the emphasis on citizen participation politically expedient. The working rules for the program gave a Citizens' Planning Board the power to veto staff suggestions and to shape the Model Cities plan. Most of the planning staff were on loan from the Development Commission, City Planning Commission, school district, and Tri-County Community Council. Delays in the planning process and other administrative problems brought the resignation of Schulze in the fall and the appointment of Ken Gervais from the Urban Studies Center at Portland State College as interim director. Although professional staff largely drafted the plan, it followed the outlines set by the Citizens' Planning Board. Throughout the year, Mayor Schrunk and the city council were happy to
keep their hands off and let the strange creation in Northeast Portland chart its own course.21

The Comprehensive City Demonstration Plan that reached the council members on December 16, 1968, followed HUD's three-part requirement for a problem statement, a first-year action plan, and a five-year plan. The product shocked Portland bureaucrats, for it was one of the first official statements that expressed residents' own perceptions of the problems of Northeast Portland neighborhoods. Since the Model Cities area was nearly 50 percent black, the problem statement spoke directly about racial discrimination.22 It embarrassed political leaders who maintained that blacks in Portland faced no special problems because of race. Indeed, commissioners Earl and Ivancie carefully edited the word "ghetto" out of the document. It also enraged members of the school board, the Multnomah County Public Welfare Commission, and the Portland Development Commission because it singled out their agencies for criticism. The school board called the problem analysis "vicious," "irresponsible," "inaccurate," "prejudiced," "bitter," "erroneous," and "subjective." Ira Keller tried to delay council approval, asked Portland State to fire Lyndon Musolf as director of its Urban Studies Center, and argued that "what we have is an unworkable, visionary set of plans which cannot help but cause disappointment in the black community and great trouble for those who are trying to help govern the city." Behind the unanimous statement of opposition to the Model Cities plan that the PDC adopted on January 13, 1969, was the fear that the Citizens' Planning Board would replace the Development Commission as the body setting physical development and housing policy in Northeast Portland.23

A city council that had limited enthusiasm for the Model Cities program left the job of finding a consensus with Gervais and the Citizens' Planning Board. The Planning Commission did offer essential support for the housing and physical development proposals. Model Cities advocates combined political pressure and negotiation to reach compromises with the school board and the public welfare establishment. They counterattacked the Development Commission by raising the issue of Ira Keller's predominant influence in Portland and refuting specific PDC complaints. The plan received final council approval in April and federal funding in July, 1969. Residents continued to participate in the development of annual Model Cities action plans until the program was terminated in 1974. Opinion surveys showed that Model Cities residents trusted the Citizens' Planning Board more than they did the city council.24
The citizens who joined in local planning through the Model Cities program defined new goals for their neighborhoods. As we have seen, professional planners in 1962 and again in 1966 wrote off the entire Eliot neighborhood south of Fremont and west of Union for commercial and institutional reuse. By 1971, however, the *Comprehensive Development Plan for the Model Cities District* admitted that "since that time, there has been a shift in residents' attitudes.... Many people, particularly the elderly, want to remain.... Rehabilitation and rebuilding of the Eliot neighborhood for residential purposes is consistent with a broad community goal of improving the variety and quantity of housing opportunities in the central Portland area." Since residents had been requesting housing assistance since the mid-1960s, it was actually the planners whose attitudes had changed. The neighborhood suffered additional damage in the early 1970s from the Emanuel Hospital Urban Renewal Project, which the PDC carefully reserved from the Model Cities planning process despite bitter neighborhood opposition. Nevertheless, in the early 1980s the area headed everyone's list of Portland neighborhoods that are ripe for private reinvestment.  

Plans for Irvington, the highest-status residential area included within the Model Cities area, showed a similar though less dramatic change. The Irvington Community Association (ICA) worked diligently in the later 1960s on community promotion and an "Escape Suburbia—Live in Irvington" campaign. The ICA also requested that the Planning Commission do a neighborhood plan, which Planning Bureau staff worked on through 1967. One suggestion that gained city council approval in February, 1969, was to rezone the southwest corner of the neighborhood from medium-density apartments to single-family homes. However, the PDC turned down a housing rehabilitation program. A year later, as new breezes blew from HUD, the Development Commission reversed itself and implemented a federally funded Neighborhood Improvement Program. The published plan restated the neighborhood unit concept of the 1966 *Comprehensive Development Plan*. It suggested the construction of three new schools and the expansion of interior park areas to allow the development of small, compact residential islands in the quadrants divided by Knott and Fifteenth. Three years later, the Irvington Community Association prepared its own neighborhood plan for Model Cities programming with the help of professional consultants and the new community planning division of the Planning Bureau. Residents themselves had no interest in a massive restructuring of the neighborhood. They wanted support for community activities, housing rehabilitation loans, and installation of bus shelters, drinking fountains, and bulletin boards.
Neighborhood organization in Southeast Portland was a direct response to the Model Cities program. Five neighborhoods in the inner southeast had already organized for economic development and social service planning through Portland Action Committees Together, a local antipoverty agency. Representatives from Buckman, Brooklyn, Sunnyside, Sellwood, other neighborhood organizations, and southeast PTAs argued angrily at city council hearings in February, 1968, that their communities had the same types of problems and needed the same sorts of help as the Model Cities area. Since HUD regulations limited the Model Cities district to 10 percent of the city's population, Frank Ivancie proposed a separate program to be staffed by the Development Commission. Militant neighborhood associations continued to apply pressure on the city during the formative months of Southeast Uplift. The Buckman, Brooklyn, Sunnyside, and Richmond neighborhood boards formed their own ad hoc SEUL committee in April. Terry Schrunk appointed his own Mayor's Advisory Committee in May, with five of thirteen members representing neighborhood organizations. Several neighborhoods simultaneously organized a Portland Planning Institute, which applied to the Office of Economic Opportunity for a planning grant, to the annoyance of Schrunk and the fury of Keller, who again saw the issue as agency versus neighborhood control.

By 1969, a functioning Southeast Uplift program covered the entire southeast sector of Portland. It assisted neighborhood organizing outside the PACT area and focused on housing, schools, and jobs. Eight southeast neighborhood organizations joined to challenge the environmental impact study for the Mount Hood Freeway in 1971. Their consistent opposition placed the freeway and its neighborhood effects on the public agenda and provided necessary support for the 1974 decision against construction. Seven neighborhood associations also joined as an Inner Southeast Coalition in September, 1974. Its purpose was to generate the neighborhood planning data and policies that the Office of Planning and Development required before allocating HCD money to neighborhood needs.

The Northwest District Association (NWDA) was another neighborhood association that took control of its own local planning. In the spring of 1969, the Development Commission began to plan a multiblock land acquisition and clearance project at the request of Good Samaritan Hospital and Consolidated Freightways. Since local organizers had failed to start a neighborhood group, the PDC itself met federal
requirements for citizen participation in helping to organize a Northwest District Association "to encourage, coordinate, plan and participate in orderly rehabilitation and renewal." The result was more than the agency or its clients bargained for. Four hundred fifty people packed a chaotic meeting on May 20 to attack the hospital and the PDC. In the next several months, the NWDA separated from the Development Commission. In November and December it argued before the city council that Portland should not apply for an urban renewal planning grant without a comprehensive plan for the district. With prodding from Commissioner Lloyd Anderson, the council agreed to set aside $75,000 for a neighborhood plan involving neighborhood participation at the same time that it forwarded the grant application. The commitment of staff time and money to a planning partnership with NWDA legitimized the organization and its objectives. The next five years brought initial work by NWDA committees and Planning Bureau staff in 1970 and 1971, completion of a preliminary NWDA Comprehensive Policies Plan in 1972, adoption of goals for the district by the Planning Commission in 1974, and approval of the Northwest District Policy Plan by the city council in July, 1975.²⁹

The goals of the NWDA in its first two years were clear but modest—to influence the route and design of the planned I-505 connector and to hold the blocks west of Twenty-first Street for housing. Its objectives expanded with experience as the association dug into neighborhood planning. It joined with the Willamette Heights Neighborhood Association in the fall of 1971 to file a suit that challenged the I-505 environmental impact study prepared by the state highway department, blocking construction until the city council rescinded approval of the freeway in May, 1974. The Planning Commission's goals by 1974 had included expectations of a highly urban neighborhood with a diverse population living in "a wide variety of... housing at all prices and rent levels" and supported a mixture of land uses that would contribute to a diversity of life styles and a stimulating environment.³⁰ Since 1975, the NWDA has reviewed all requests for zoning changes, variances, and conditional-use permits against its policy plan. The existence of the plan has placed the burden on petitioners who want to transfer residential properties to commercial or institutional use. The success of the NWDA also provided a training ground for many of Portland's liberal activists of the 1970s—Vera Katz, a state legislator since 1973; George Sheldon, an NWDA president who became president of the Planning Commission; Ogden Beeman, another NWDA president who chaired the District Planning Organization Task Force; Mary Pedersen, the first director of the Office of Neighborhood Associations; William Scott, an assistant to Neil Goldschmidt and member of the school board after
Cooperation between the Planning Commission and the NWDA was the catalyst for the definition of a formal role for neighborhood groups in city decision making. Planning Bureau employees such as Frank Frost and Dale Cannady had worked on assignment for the Model Cities program and SEUL in 1968 and 1969, balancing the desires of neighborhood committees against the citywide interests of the Planning Commission. The planners detailed to NWDA found themselves cast even more directly in the role of neighborhood advocate without formal delineation of the responsibilities of advocate planning. In April, 1971, the Planning Commission drafted guidelines on district planning to assist its northwest neighborhood staff. One week after noisy council hearings on the Lair Hill renewal project, Commissioner Lloyd Anderson urged the city council to state its support of neighborhood involvement in planning and to establish a system for neighborhood input. Andersen's idea picked up the endorsement of Neil Goldschmidt and support from the NWDA, the Irvington Community Association, and the Sellwood-Moreland Improvement League. With Anderson and Goldschmidt pressing for a committee with a broad mandate to study community problems, Frank Ivancie introduced the resolution by which the council established a District Planning Organization (DPO) Task Force on November 24, 1971. The task force was to define the role for neighborhood groups in planning decisions, establish criteria for their recognition, identify funding needs, and describe channels of communication between neighborhoods and the council.  

The DPO Task Force appointed by Mayor Schrunk consisted of twelve citizens and four representatives from the Housing Authority, Planning Bureau, and Development Commission. When Schrunk's choice to head the task force failed to attend the first meeting, the group elected NWDA president Ogden Beeman. The most active participants were activists from Irvington, Corbett-Terwilliger, SEUL, St. Johns, Goose Hollow, and other older neighborhoods. Beeman and the majority of members looked for realistic ways in which to fit neighborhood associations within the existing city structure in order to regularize the process of consultation. The first report, in December, 1972, recommended a two-tier system of neighborhood organizations and district planning organizations. Existing and future neighborhood groups were to be defined by citizens and to have access to the city planning staff for the development of a neighborhood comprehensive plan. The District Planning Organizations were copied from San Diego and Fort Worth. They were to include 30,000-40,000 residents each, to be defined by the Planning Commission, and to be used by other city agencies for service planning. The task force proposed that each district have full-time staff to assist
neighborhood access to city bureaucrats. Half the members supported an additional proposal for a district council of neighborhood representatives to advise the city council.\textsuperscript{32}

Implementation of the DPO proposal fell to Nell Goldschmidt in his first year as mayor. Goldschmidt included a Bureau of Neighborhood Associations in his 1973-74 budget and assigned the operations to Commissioner Mildred Schwab to avoid charges that he was using city money to build a personal political organization. Schwab's choice to coordinate the new function was Mary Pedersen, a former Reed College professor who had recently served as executive director for NWDA. Public hearings on a draft ordinance revealed deep hostility to the district planning tier, which neighborhood activists feared would override the interests of specific neighborhoods. The council agreed on a structure in February, 1974, when it established an Office of Neighborhood Associations (ONA). The essential function of ONA has been to assist neighborhood organizations through a central office and five area offices. Its purpose is "to provide standards and procedures whereby organized groups of citizens seeking to communicate with city officials and city bureaus on matters concerning neighborhood liability may obtain assistance from staff... and to provide certain minimum standards for said organizations." The city requires neighborhood associations to be open in membership and to record minority as well as majority opinions. In return, the Office of Neighborhood Associations facilitates local activity. Since 1975 it has coordinated "neighborhood needs reports" that introduce neighborhood shopping lists into the city budget process. The planning department also notifies neighborhood associations of zoning change requests and has worked with individual communities on down-zoning and district plans.\textsuperscript{33}

Neil Goldschmidt's years as mayor from 1973 to 1979 were marked by a set of decisions that brought a wide range of city policies into line with the interests of older neighborhoods. In his 1972 campaign, Portlanders had perceived Goldschmidt as the candidate of the new neighborhood activists. The election results showed that his appeal was strongest in the stopover neighborhoods and the everyday neighborhoods most threatened by land-use changes.\textsuperscript{34} Goldschmidt's central goal was to make all of Portland's neighborhoods attractive to a diverse population that included families with children as well as the poor, the elderly, and childless households. Since one of the potential advantages of older city neighborhoods was accessibility to jobs and downtown activities, one policy was to shift the emphasis of transportation planning from freeway building to public transit. An improved public transportation
system would also support a revitalized downtown, whose expanded opportunities for shopping, work, and recreation would make inner neighborhoods increasingly attractive. Other objectives were to provide direct city assistance for neighborhood associations and to continue efforts to upgrade buildings and public facilities in older sections of the city.

Given the origins of the Office of Neighborhood Associations, it is no surprise that Neil Goldschmidt and his allies on the city council gave it strong support after 1974. Goldschmidt assigned responsibility for ONA to a new commissioner, Charles Jordan, previously the executive director of Portland’s Model Cities program. The count of active neighborhood groups doubled from about thirty to about sixty between 1974 and 1979. Southeast neighborhoods have concentrated on basic problems of housing rehabilitation, commercial zoning, and economic development. The fiercely independent neighborhoods of North Portland reflect that area’s origin as a separate city and its longstanding feeling of neglect by city hall. Economic development issues have dominated the North Portland agenda. Neighborhood groups in the automobile suburbs of the southwest have worked on immediate street, drainage, and service delivery problems. City commissioners now expect neighborhood associations to testify on zoning and land-use issues and in several instances have come to rely on neighborhood input in budgeting. The election of Margaret Strachan to the city council in 1981 put a former staff person for ONA’s northwest area office in a position to support the agency directly.  

City hall emphasized visible changes to build public confidence. Goldschmidt organized a Bureau of Neighborhood Environment to give citizens a single number to call about neighborhood nuisances, from abandoned cars to overgrown lots. The Planning Commission downzoned one hundred blocks in Buckman in 1977 “to promote the maintenance and reinvestment in existing residential structures.” The Landmarks Commission and Planning Commission expanded initial work by architect Al Staehli into an ordinance authorizing historic conservation districts for residential neighborhoods, a preservation tool used for Lair Hill and Ladd’s Addition.  

As federal legislation and funding changed, Portland replaced the Neighborhood Development Program of the early 1970s with Housing and Community Development (HCD) assistance to twenty-five neighborhoods. Since the HCD area included approximately 140,000 residents, it was possible to use federal funds for a general housing rehabilitation program. Three-fourths of Portland’s HCD money went to housing rehabilitation in the second half of the seventies, in contrast to 10 percent in a comparable city like
Seattle. Part of the credit goes to a PDC that received new leadership in the middle seventies and ventured into new programs such as a nationally respected Public Interest Lender program. Credit also goes to Goldschmidt. Louis Scherzer, a savings and loan executive who chaired the new Development Commission, commented in 1977 that Goldschmidt had "gotten some of these archaic local lenders to turn around. These are high risk neighborhoods we’re going into through the Public Interest Lender program, but he convinced us, [and] got a staff together that knows rehabilitation....The basic thing is keeping these neighborhoods attractive. The gut issue is the little guy who takes out a loan for a paint job or a new furnace. It has a tremendous ripple effect throughout the neighborhood."38

The trend of private reinvestment in older neighborhoods was more than a local occurrence. Portland’s policies skillfully exploited aesthetic, ideological, and economic changes that affected metropolitan housing markets all over the country. The revaluation of Victorian and bungalow architecture, for example, was essentially a phenomenon of the 1970s. It now requires an act of will to remember the aesthetic consensus of the middle 1960s, before the enormous success of the historic preservation movement and the intellectual rediscovery of Victorian taste. In Portland, the renovation of a set of townhouses on Northwest Irving Street by architect George Sheldon is an identifiable event that marks the local evolution of taste.39 Social changes of the 1960s also convinced many middle-class Americans that residential integration by race and perhaps by class was a positive good. The self-conscious maintenance of Irvington as a stable integrated neighborhood during the 1970s, for example, paralleled the experience of similar areas in other cities. Finally, the rising costs of new construction in the 1970s made older housing increasingly a bargain. One expert has pegged the change squarely at 1974, finding upturns in central city homeownership, private housing rehabilitation, and neighborhood revitalization.40

The 1980 census showed the significant effects of the neighborhood revitalization strategy. Despite a fall in total population within the city limits during the 1970s, the number of Portlanders in their twenties and thirties increased by more than 30 percent. There was also an increase in home ownership, from 81,800 owner-occupied houses in 1970 to 84,000 in 1980. Many families with school-aged children continued to prefer the suburban ring, bringing a sharp drop in enrollment in Portland public schools. However, an increase in the total number of households from 145,000 to 159,000 meant continued demand and reinvestment in Portland houses and apartments.
The new comprehensive plan that Portland prepared and adopted between 1976 and 1980 can be understood in terms of neighborhood policy and neighborhood reactions. Neighborhood associations had enough influence during the first year of work to interrupt the ponderous citizen participation process that the Planning Bureau had devised. They were able to force at least token consideration of their own suggestions in addition to three options defined by the professional staff. Areas with their own district plans were especially concerned that their hard-won schemes were not incorporated automatically into the citywide document. The process included neighborhood and district consultation in 1977-78, publication of a preliminary plan in January, 1979, revisions during 1979, and city council adoption after prolonged debate in August, 1980. The comprehensive plan continues the Goldschmidt policies by encouraging reliance on public transportation and allowing increased density and diversity of population. The key policy objectives are to (1) "promote a range of living opportunities and employment opportunities for Portland residents in order to attract and retain a stable and diversified population"; (2) "improve and protect the city's residential neighborhoods while allowing for increased density"; (3) "reinforce the downtown's position as the principal commercial, service, cultural, and high density housing center in the city and the region"; (4) "provide a mixture of activities along major transit routes." 41

The plan has faced problems as a political document because it favors certain neighborhoods at the expense of others. It essentially recognizes and promotes the present mixture of uses and populations in the inner neighborhoods. Residents who are satisfied with the basic character of Buckman, Northwest, and similar areas and with their revitalization since 1970 are also satisfied with the comprehensive plan. However, the plan's provision for neighborhood retailing, home businesses, row-house zoning, and addition of rental units in single-family houses spreads the burdens of increased density to the highlands, the automobile suburbs, and the more affluent of the everyday neighborhoods. Under both the 1924 and 1959 zoning codes, these were the areas that became accustomed to using land-use planning as a tool for protecting large-lot, exclusively residential neighborhoods. Their residents have not been pleased at losing their special status through a plan that promotes diversity within neighborhoods as well as among them. An inconclusive effort to abrogate the plan through the initiative and referendum picked up its strongest support from Mount Tabor, Laurelhurst, Rose City Park, and half a dozen Southwest neighborhoods. 42
Portland's political revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s changed both the process and content of neighborhood planning. During Terry Schrunk's first three terms as mayor, planners worked from the top down, applying professional values and expertise to small-scale problems and informing local residents of the resulting proposals. The St. Johns plan of 1959, the Albina Neighborhood Improvement Project, the first formulation of a Model Cities program, and the initial planning for the Eliot and Lair Hill renewal projects all originated within city agencies. To the Portland Planning Commission and its staff, the *Comprehensive Development Plan* of 1966 was a substantial and serious scheme for preserving and protecting residential neighborhoods. In the judgment of Neil Goldschmidt's staff, who inherited the 1966 plan, there had been "no neighborhood planning" because residents themselves had not been involved in setting neighborhood goals.

By the 1970s, neighborhood activists had grown tired of being lectured about the substandard environments of their older neighborhoods and had learned to participate in defining their own needs for physical development and municipal services. The Office of Neighborhood Associations furnished a set of "advocate bureaucrats" whose first concern was to articulate neighborhood interests. The procedures of physical planning were viewed from the bottom up as tools for achieving the social and political goals of stable population and local control. The process for developing a new comprehensive plan in 1977-78 ran into controversy because it reemphasized the application of professional expertise on questions like energy conservation and housing styles. The political weakness of the resulting Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1980 is that it ignores the clearly expressed preferences of a large percentage of Portlanders.

The changes extended even to the definition of neighborhoods. Neighborhood associations in the 1970s largely ignored the carefully defined neighborhood units of the *Comprehensive Development Plan* when they set their own boundaries. The neighborhoods on the 1966 map are compact and tidy units that float between arterial streets like the bubbles in a carpenter's level. The map of neighborhood association boundaries maintained by ONA is an untidy hodgepodge. Several associations claim overlapping territories and still other sections of the city have no active associations. The size of neighborhoods varies substantially. Neighborhoods sandwich major traffic streets and commercial nodes that constitute natural centers of activity. Only half of the neighborhood associations carry names from the 1966 map. Especially on the east side, where neighborhood iden-
ties were set in the 1920s, the same name was applied to substantially different areas by planners in the 1960s and by residents in the 1970s.

According to the broadest rhetoric, the Planning Commission of the 1960s and the Planning Bureau of the 1970s both wanted to build a livable city that would be attractive to families with children. Disagreement centered on the sort of neighborhood environment necessary to achieve that eminently acceptable goal. The Keefe-Kenward planning strategy was to declare the stopover neighborhoods expendable. They were willing to sacrifice neighborhoods that had been built up before 1920 to commercial and institutional expansion and freeway construction in order to protect residential areas that were not yet troubled by housing deterioration or land-use changes. Newer neighborhoods were to be further insulated from development pressures through neighborhood unit planning that tried to create buffers and barricades between different types of land use. The alternative vision of the early 1970s was propounded most fully by inner-Northwest and Southwest activists and by some of the new bureaucrats. It was a down-home rewrite of Jane Jacobs. Its advocates emphasized greater density and variety of population and uses, explored the reuse of older buildings, and were uncomfortable with any significant loss of housing. On the east side, where mixed uses had always been a step toward the destruction of residential communities, the neighborhood agenda was essentially a refusal to accept a disproportionate share of the costs of metropolitan growth.

Many of the forces at work in Portland since 1960 were the product of national trends. Portlanders were not responsible for the rise of a citizen participation movement, for the crisis in the national housing market, or for the popularity of Jane Jacobs. At the same time, Portland provided a receptive environment for a new style of neighborhood planning. Neil Goldschmidt was able to lead and to personify a major change in local politics. Because of his interest in land use, transportation, and housing, he attracted and supported a new generation of city employees who worked to alter the direction of Portland planning. At the same time, Portland is a city with distinguishable neighborhood types arrayed in identifiable crescents around the downtown. It is therefore easy to analyze the ways in which planning for neighborhood change or stability allocated the effects of growth among different parts of the metropolitan area. What the neighborhood revolution did for Portland was to expose to open debate the political choices that had been implicit in the planning of the previous decade.
Portland’s neighborhood associations played a vital role in city planning during the 1970s. From a map by the Office of Neighborhood Associations.

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Chapter Nine Footnotes


30. PCPC, "Northwest District Policy Plan," (PBPL, 1975); Beeman interview.


34. This paragraph and the next are based on interviews with three of Neil Goldschmidt's assistants: Ron Buel, August 1978 and March

35. Generalizations are based on the author's interviews and contacts with ONA area offices and members of the city council as chairman of the Community Affairs Budget Advisory Committee and the Office of Neighborhood Associations Review Committee, 1978-80.


37. The Housing and Community Development project area included all of the stopover neighborhoods and half of the other east-side neighborhoods.


39. As late as 1973, the Portland Development Commission proudly showed pictures of the restorable nineteenth-century houses from which it had relocated occupants and the 1950s tract houses into which the same families had been moved.


42. Retired planning director Lloyd Keefe has been a leader of the opposition to the new comprehensive plan, which contradicts the neighborhood unit ideal that he worked to promote. See Portland Oregon/an, July 24 and November 27, 1980; Willamette Week, March 21, 1979; Keefe interview.