

Portland Plan

continued **▲** from Front

the room where he further explained aspects of the plan.

He pointed out that 50 percent of Portland's current population was not living here when the last time the city formed its comprehensive plan in 1980, and the document would be affecting policy at the city level for the next 30 years.

"It's got to be more than land use and transportation," said Adams of the parameters of the plan. "It's also got to be about people."

He pointed out that Portland was becoming increasingly diverse, especially with its Hispanic population. Adams added that one third of Portland, primarily on the city's east side, was annexed since the last time the plan was revised.

From there, Adams polled the audience using devices that allowed them to respond to a series of questions, which revealed that participants attitudes on various issues.

Adams polled the crowd on a range of issues covered by the plan, which revealed general support for public-private partnerships, arts and education opportunities for students, improved walk-ability of neighborhoods, retention of teachers, and a host of other initiatives.

Adams also presented statistics and figures that show that Portland is a city that has many challenges,

but also has a lot going for it.

The Willamette River is getting cleaner, and Portland's tree canopy is expanding. The number of people with bachelor's degrees in the city is higher than the national average. It also has the second highest rate of volunteerism in the country, and 86 percent of Multnomah County voted in the last election.

However, Adams pointed out that 50 percent of Multnomah County is overweight. Wages are also lower in Portland than the rest of the country, with about a third of the population being considered working poor.

Affordable housing is another issue facing the city. Portlanders shell out 46 percent of their incomes on average for housing, above the national 36 percent average, and the median price of home in the city is out of reach for people who make median income.

At the end of the meeting, Commissioner Nick Fish, who heads the Housing Bureau, thanked the crowd for their time. He noted that he learned a lot about the concerns of Portlanders, and was pleased that people conducted themselves in such a respectful fashion, referencing the explosive health care reform town hall meetings that occurred during the summer.

"It's nice to know civic engagement is still alive and well in Portland," he said.



PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Jennifer Broussard helps run the Northeast Emergency Food Program at Luther Memorial Church. She's seeing more people turn to them for help because of dire economic conditions.

Fighting Back Hunger

continued **▲** from Front

Ukrainian women shuffle in and out of the basement door carrying sacks of fresh lettuce and squash. Volunteers hoist hefty cardboard boxes of food from the back room down the hall to the front room where recipients take numbers and wait.

"The majority of the people who come here are employed," said Jennifer Broussard, the assistant director of the program.

Broussard said her program, which moves about 2,000 pounds of food a day, has definitely seen an increase in demand. Many people who come to the church for food are immigrants, or people who had family members move in to cut down on costs.

But Broussard is also seeing more people coming in for the first time, many of which have had their incomes drained from medical bills.

Jean Kempe-Ware, spokesperson for the Oregon Food Bank, also experiences the growing number of hungry people in Oregon.

"We had an unprecedented increase and they're staying at that high level," Kempe-Ware said.

An Oregon Food Bank survey of clients reveals that most people

struggling with food insecurity in Oregon are seniors or disabled people on fixed incomes. Many are also among the working poor, who simply don't make enough to cover their grocery bills after paying high rent and other utilities.

Kempe-Ware added that the agency is seeing many new faces, including laid-off architects who never thought they'd be down and out.

According to the USDA report, there's an even larger group of people in Oregon who may not be experiencing hunger, but are close.

Thirteen percent of Oregonians are categorized as "food insecure," meaning that they lacked access to adequate amount, or end up eating starchy foods that fill up their stomachs, but are lacking in nutrition.

Portlanders spend, on average, 46 percent of their income on housing and transportation, which is higher than the national average. Lower-income people might spend up to 79 percent.

Kempe-Ware explained that many people reason that they can't skip on rent or utilities, but they can cut back on food.

In 1989, the Oregon Legislature created the Oregon Hunger Relief Task Force to coordinate the efforts of

business, non-profits, government, and communities to end hunger in the state. It's currently in the process of forming a five-year plan to confront the issue.

"A lot of what we're talking about right now is how do we wrap our arms around this issue," said Jessica Chanay, program and communications director for the task force.

Chanay explained that the task force is looking at the root issues of hunger, like lack of affordable housing and access to steep medical bills.

Last legislative session, lawmakers passed bills aimed at making healthcare more affordable and directed tax dollars toward affordable housing initiatives.

But Chanay, said that more can be done, and some programs can be improved. For example, low-income parents whose children get reduced-price breakfast at school still have to pay 30 cents per day, which can really add up.

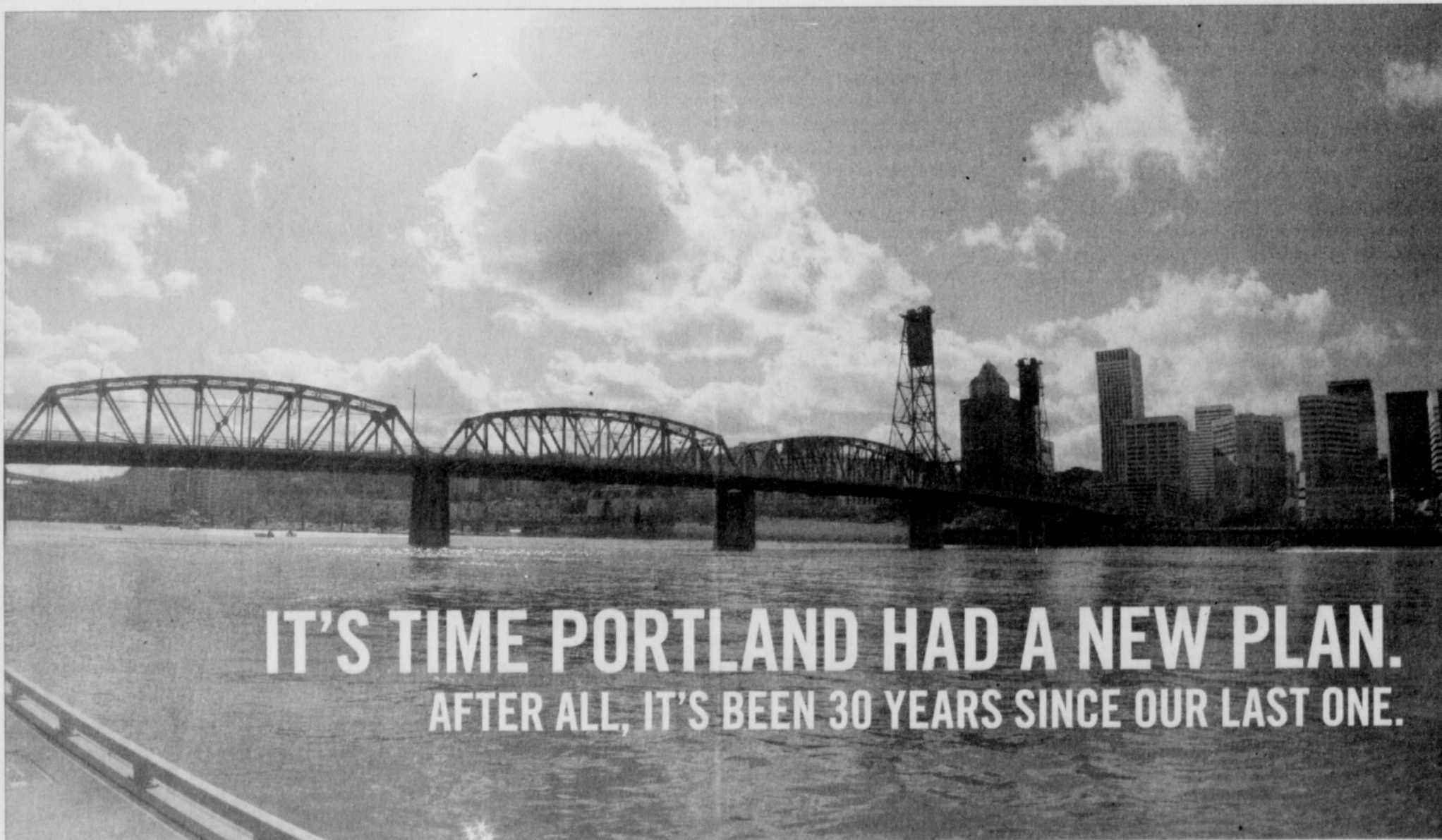
Despite her hardship, Chan remains cheerful. She created a center-piece for the food program made out of imitation grape and leaves. She also said she enjoys the company of the people who also rely on centers like this for food.

"I like it here. People so nice," she said.



PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

About 100 people gather to give input on the Portland Plan during a meeting last week at Beaumont Middle School in northeast Portland.



A CITY IS ONLY AS GOOD AS ITS LAST PLAN. And our last one brought to life some of the very things we admire most about our city. It laid the groundwork for one of the best transportation infrastructures in the country and enabled us to develop a vibrant central city. That was 1980. And almost 50% of us weren't even here then.

TIME FOR A NEW PLAN. Today we face many new challenges. Only 61% of our students graduate on time. 45% of our electricity comes from coal. Our unemployment rate tops 11%. And there's the human toll — a growing gap between the haves and have-nots. We want to share opportunities equitably among our city's increasingly diverse population. But rather than just present a plan for all to follow, we'd rather have a lively discussion with you about it.

GET INVOLVED. GREAT THINGS RARELY HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT.

In the coming months, you will have many opportunities to weigh in. Join us at a workshop session or go online to help us define priorities, guide investments and set the course for our city for the next 25 years. Whichever you choose, we want you to participate in the discussion. Because more voices means better choices.

12.01.2009	6:30-9:00pm	St. Johns Community Center, 8427 N Central Street*
12.03.2009	8:00-9:30am	World Trade Center, 121 SW Salmon Street
12.05.2009	10:00am-12:30pm	Mt. Scott Community Center, 5530 SE 72nd Avenue*
12.07.2009	6:30-9:00pm	Wilson High School, 1151 SW Vermont Street
12.15.2009	6:30-9:00pm	University of Oregon - Old Town, 70 NW Couch Street

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City of Portland | Metro | Multnomah County | Portland State University | Portland Public Schools | Parkrose School District | Centennial School District | David Douglas School District | Reynolds School District | Oregon Health & Science University | Portland Community College | TriMet | Portland Development Commission | Housing Authority of Portland | Worksystems, Inc. | Oregon Department of Transportation | East Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District | West Multnomah Soil & Water Conservation District | Multnomah County Drainage District

The City of Portland will make reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities. Please notify us no fewer than five (5) business days prior to the event by phone 503-823-7700, by the City's TTY at 503-823-6868, or by the Oregon Relay Service at 1-800-735-2900. Childcare available at the Mt. Scott (12/5) workshop: RSVP by 12/2 at 503-823-2041. *Interpretación simultánea en español disponible.