

“Residents of East Portland have rated the job of City government lower than the city as a whole and all other neighborhood district areas in each of the twenty years that we have asked the question.”

*- East Portland: History of City Services Examined
April 2014*

The East Portland Action Plan (EPAP) was created and continues to operate because of the obvious disparity between East Portland and the rest of the city. The 2009 Plan describes concerns raised by Jeff Merkley – then Speaker of the Oregon House and now US Senator. He believed that the shift in poverty to East Portland, the poor quality and design of its new housing, missed opportunities for economic development and concerns about public safety placed East Portland at a “tipping point” and ought to be addressed immediately.

The East Portland History provides important information about unequal service levels in the City and is a powerful tool in combination with City Budget Mapping data. However, the History also puts forth a false narrative: that East Portland was annexed “only” 30 years ago, so it is to be expected that it lag behind other districts. Three decades is plenty of time to show significant progress across the board. The History shows that significant inequities persist in every bureau studied. There has been progress in the five years of EPAP, but it has not been enough to narrow the gap between it and other districts of the city. It is vital that EPAP articulate its role and continue to advocate so that a report 30 years from now does not retell this same story of woe.

Chapter 1 of the History tells the City’s side of the story. It says, “the area now known as EPNO was not truly annexed by 1994” despite the fact that most of Lents was annexed more than 100 years ago and much of East Portland was annexed in the 1960s and 70s. It describes 1983’s Resolution A, when Multnomah County decided to stop providing municipal services to unincorporated areas, and the Mid-County Sewer Project, which essentially forced the East Portland area to annex in order to satisfy a state mandate to install sewers. The History states that property owners in our area paid the \$255 million cost of sewer installation and notes that “the construction costs were partially subsidized by city residents living outside of East Portland (through sewer rates).”

This is one version of history. Another version is that tens of thousands of East Portland property owners paid thousands of dollars to be added to the City’s

sewer system, just in time to pay for the “Big Pipe.” For many years, all ratepayers have seen 8-10% annual increases to fund the system that prevents sewage from the older parts of Portland from flowing directly into the Willamette River. In other words, East Portland got to pay for new sewers twice.

Here are some of the most significant findings from the East Portland History. East Portland has approximately 25% of the city’s population and 20% of its “users,” which the city defines as population plus jobs. An equitable share of city services for East Portland would be in that range.

- 1. The document questions EPAP’s impact and could be used to justify the elimination of future funding.** Actions questioned include items that have been high EPAP priorities because of poor bureau responsiveness, including police outreach to non-English speaking and ethnic minority people; lack of diversity in police hiring; storefront improvement grants; economic development assessment; housing rehabilitation; graffiti abatement; park acquisition and development; and water system improvements. (pp. 22-23 and 83-84)
- 2.** Despite public perception, crime is lower in East Portland than citywide. (p. 30) The **Police Bureau** reports that East Portland has fewer dispatched incidents, officer-initiated calls, Part I crimes, Part I arrests, Part II arrests and crashes than the city average. East Portland police response times and police officers assigned per capita are lower, too.
- 3.** The Auditor’s report confirms EPAP’s analysis that **Fire Bureau** resources are the most equitably distributed of any of the bureaus reporting. (pp. 34-35) Stations, incidents, fires, and Emergency Medical Services all correspond with East Portland’s share of the population. The one exception is code enforcement inspections, where East Portland accounts for only 2% of the city’s total.
- 4.** East Portland accounts for a higher than average share of the **Water Bureau’s** low-income bill discounts. (p. 38)
- 5.** East Portland has a low percentage of **Bureau of Environmental Services** street stormwater facilities, but a high percentage of street trees, re-vegetated watersheds and stream improvements. (p. 42)

6. **The City has not enforced policies in East Portland** that resulted in other districts' development with complete streets and sidewalks. (p. 15)
7. **Lack of sidewalks on arterials is a health and safety issue.** (p. 45) In East Portland, only 57% of busy streets have sidewalks on both sides compared to 76% citywide. During 2013, 7 of the City's 10 pedestrian deaths were east of 82nd Avenue. Forty-one percent (41%) of the City's fatal crashes were in East Portland.
8. East Portland has only 11% of the City's total of 911 **traffic signals**. (p. 49)
9. The City's policy of not maintaining **unimproved streets** means people who live on unpaved streets pay gas taxes without receiving services in return. (p. 46)
10. **Budget mapping allocates a portion of spending to East Portland on parks that are miles away from East Portland**, including Waterfront, Forest and Washington Parks. (p. 19)
11. **Park access:** Only 63% of East Portland residents live within half a mile of a park, compared to 80% citywide. (p. 51)
12. **Park quality:** "For 22 years, residents in East Portland have rated overall Parks quality lower than all other neighborhood district areas. One year, East and North Portland were tied for the lowest rating... For 21 of 23 years of Community Surveys, East Portland residents have rated the overall quality of recreational centers and activities lower than residents in all other neighborhood district areas." (p. 53)
13. **Park inequity:** East Portland has only 13% of the City's park acreage and a 6% of its developed park acreage. (p. 55) East Portland has 40% of the City's school-age children, but only 9% of the City's park restrooms, 13% of trails, 14% of baseball/softball fields, 12% of basketball hoops and 17% of soccer/football fields.
14. When the Community Survey began in 1993, East Portland residents rated **livability of their neighborhood** higher than the city average. By 2013, East Portland livability was 18 points below the City average. (p. 57) In every year since 2002, residents in East Portland have rated neighborhood livability lower than residents in all other neighborhood districts.

15. **Portland Development Commission** service levels are relatively equitable, with the exception of Commercial Property Redevelopment Loans (0% of city total loan dollars and 9% of city loans budgeted). East Portland had no Main Street funding, but NPI funding is available starting in FY2014 (p. 59)
16. **Portland Housing Bureau:** The History states, “Since rents are lower in East Portland than the City as a whole, according to PHB management, the market is providing sufficient affordable housing opportunities in East Portland.” In fact, 72% of renters citywide who earn less than \$50,000 per year are paying unaffordable rents. The Auditor is ignoring both the massive and growing citywide housing affordability crisis and the housing quality problems in East Portland. (p. 60)
17. In 1997, Community Survey responses about the **physical condition of housing** were the same citywide as they were in East Portland. The percentage of people citywide who say housing conditions are good are very good is about the same as it was in 1997, while in East Portland, that percentage has plunged 15 points. (p. 61)
18. **Housing inequity:** (p. 63), East Portland lags in rental units produced (7% of city total), investment in rental units (5%), number of lead abatement grants (11%), amount of lead abatement grants (6%), number of major home repair grants (11%), and amount of major home repair grants (10%).
19. **Areas where East Portland receives a larger share of housing services:** East Portland rates favorably in number of short term rent assistance payments (34% of city total), amount of short term rent assistance payments (28%), number of down payment assistance grants (46%), amount of down payment assistance grants (45%), number of limited tax exemptions (53%), amount of limited tax exemptions (53%), number of system development credits (47%) and amount of system development credits (52%). (p. 63)
20. “Residents in East Portland have rated the City’s job in **planning for future land use** lower than all other neighborhood district areas 15 of the 16 years since 1998.” (p. 69)

21. Only 15% of the **Bureau of Planning and Sustainability's** public contacts and 8% of businesses assisted through the Sustainability at Work Program are in East Portland. (p. 71)

22. The only performance level category listed for **Office of Neighborhood Involvement** that exceeded East Portland's share of the City's population was "Number of basic problem location cases (e.g., drug house)." The other categories ranged between 3% and 21%. (p. 74)