
Sustainable Portland

What We Need Is a City That Can Carry Us into the Next Century

by Steven Ames

*See simplicity in the complicated.
Achieve greatness in little things.*

—Lao Tsu

In May of 1981 a survey of planners, architects and university professors on the future of American cities was published in *Next Magazine*. The conclusion, as usual, left little doubt as to how the experts view Portland. Among the 55 largest cities in the nation, Portland was ranked second for its overall future prospects. It was also judged most attractive city for its size and finished close to the top among trend-setting cities, best-managed cities and best cities for retirement.

Here was yet another in a string of accolades for Portland and environs, an urban region already highly touted for its quality of life and livability. No doubt, some of the more visible Portland area achievements over the last decade have helped win such generous praise: the nation's first intentionally designed mass transit mall, the first major city-wide energy conservation policy, the first publicly elected regional government, a new light rail transit line, and a host of less prominent but equally impressive innovations.

Why Portland? What makes us so prone to succeed? One could argue endlessly—and many people do—as to whether it is dynamic leadership or an active citizenry or any number of other factors. But this line of argument altogether bypasses some of the more indigenous qualities at work. One such quality, so pervasive and yet so subtle, is rarely if ever acknowledged: Portland is a successful place because it is a distinct *place*.

Tucked between two mountain ranges,

at the base of one of the nation's most fertile valleys, bounded by a great waterway, this urban region is remarkably well defined. We are a place apart. Our awareness of our "portlandness" is keen. In the local language, "East" can mean anything from The Dalles to Atlantic City. We have our own spectacular setting, our own varied and beloved climate and, not surprisingly, our own unique history. Put differently, the Portland area has a sense of place about it. Should anyone be surprised if over the years we might learn to see things differently . . . or sometimes do them better?

Why is this elusive quality, a sense of place, so valuable? Because it is a reference point—both a perspective on the larger world around us and a platform for local action. Held rightly, a sense of place is a tool for framing those bigger-than-we-care-to-imagine problems and bringing them back down to local scale. It helps us to focus our awareness on who we are, where we are headed, and what our next steps might be. In so doing, we often discover that the best solutions are those that can be found in our own back yards.

In Portland, what happens locally matters. In the last decade our awareness of this has given us a subtle advantage in controlling pointless freeway expansion, strengthening our neighborhoods and conserving energy. What is hard to imagine happening in a hundred other sprawling urban regions sometimes seems to come naturally to us. Thus far, as the experts agree, we have been much more fortunate than most.

But we are not magically immune to the many headaches facing urban America. The Portland region, for example, is projected to expand by another half-million people in the next twenty years.

This would be the equivalent of adding a new city to the region, one third again larger than the entire city of Portland, by the year 2000. Most of these people would migrate from other parts of the country, seeking jobs, housing and the good life for which the region is so well known. And beyond our boundaries of place, the world is lunging headlong into larger crises. Regardless of how well we bring our own house into order, there will be no avoiding the impacts of these interregional and international developments.

In all likelihood, the coming decade will demand that the people of the Portland area maximize the resources—yet honor the limitations—of our own region. This challenge will require all the skills, determination, creativity, caring and gutsiness we can muster to pull it off in the style to which we are accustomed. More than ever, we will need to hone this special tool, our sense of place.

Driving Forces in the 1980s

The 1980s are increasingly being acknowledged as a period of intense new pressures for this nation. Like a plains thunderstorm, we can feel it coming long before it hits. Economists, politicians, and other observers of the American system do not openly savor the rumblings on the horizon of the new decade. Privately, many of them express doubt and cynicism. The public itself is not far behind in its perception that uninvited changes are in the works.

During the 1950s and 1960s, according to opinion polls, Americans characteristically believed that the present was better than the recent past and that the future would represent an improvement over the present. Writ large, this was

Mumford to City Club: Are You Good Enough for Oregon?

The time was July, 1938. The place was the Crystal Room of the Benson Hotel at the regular Friday luncheon meeting of the City Club of Portland. The speaker was Lewis Mumford, the great social thinker and conscience of the urban American landscape. Mumford had been touring the Portland region and was visibly impressed with its awesome natural setting—the bountiful trees, mountains and the Columbia Gorge. His message, characteristically probing, had that prophetic quality which becomes obvious only after a considerable span of elapsed time:

"I have seen a lot of scenery in my life, but I have seen nothing so tempting as a home for man as this Oregon country. . . . You have here a basis for civilization on its highest scale, and I am going to ask you a question which you may not like. Are you good enough to have this country in your possession? Have you got enough intelligence, imagination and cooperation among you to make the best use of these opportunities?"

"Rebuilding our cities will be one of the major tasks of the next generation. While people are grasping for personal gain the necessary cooperative spirit for this task cannot develop. . . . In providing for new developments you have an opportunity here to do a job of city planning like nowhere else in the world. Oregon is one of the last places in this country where natural resources are still largely intact. Are you intelligent enough to use them wisely?"

Shortly after Mumford's visit to Portland the Second World War began, and following that came an era of unparalleled expansion, dominated by automobiles, freeways and parking lots. Lewis Mumford's address to the City Club was filed away for history and he was never invited back.

the essence of traditional American optimism. But in the early 1970s that historic pattern began to shift, and by 1978, for the first time according to the polls, the pattern had reversed completely. Americans believed that the past was better than the present and that the future would only get worse. American optimism seems more and more to be a scarce commodity.

What are the changing social circumstances that evoke such lowered expectations? One might guess that people have been reacting to prevailing conditions—inflation, unemployment—things we have been told are cyclical and which will eventually go away. Unfortunately, the evidence has been filtering in for some time that such problems are only the symptoms of larger, structural conditions in the industrial system, or even the environment at large—things that will not go away with a change of administrations in Washington, nor be fine-tuned into oblivion. Americans are not that imperceptive. Our whole way of life appears to be undergoing some kind of major shift.

Economist Robert Theobald has captured some of these larger conditions in his concept of "driving forces." Put

simply, a driving force is a societal trend whose occurrence is extremely probable. A driving force will not likely be altered no matter how we respond to it; it can only be acknowledged, adapted to, dealt with. Several major driving forces, says Theobald, are in effect today that will have a sustained impact on the United States through the rest of the century. These include structural changes in the social system forced by past population growth, continued population migrations within the country, strong ecological pressures to mitigate the environmental impacts of industry, rapid decline of inexpensive energy and resources, and accelerated development of telecommunications and microelectronic innovations.

Of all these trends, perhaps none will have as immediate an impact on the American lifestyle as the decline of inexpensive, nonrenewable energy and resources. Dr. Ian Adams, an urban geographer and longtime observer of the Portland area, has analyzed this trend in his new book, *The Land of Opportunity in the Age of Limitations*. During the postwar period (1945-1970), he says, American technology and capital were utilized to exploit world resources on a

massive scale. In fact, more energy and minerals were consumed by Americans in those 25 years than *all* nations in *all* of history up to that time. The dominant political value during this period was what Dr. Adams calls a "politics of Yes." The political system openly promoted access to abundance for most individuals as well as large corporate interests. The result was a material standard of living unmatched by any nation on earth.

That era of abundance, Adams says flatly, is now dead. The United States is being dragged into a world economic system where such driving forces as a declining resource base and accelerated population growth have intensified competition and inflated energy costs tremendously. As these impacts ripple through our economy, the American standard of living relative to other nations is beginning to decline and our predominance in world markets is eroding. A "politics of No," not unlike the austerity politics of Britain, is emerging in the American system. Initially, this may translate into the current cutbacks in federal government programs and services. Ultimately, Adams concludes, it will mean an increasing denial of access to abundance, particularly for individual taxpayers and citizens.

One of the most telling fatalities of this decline in abundance will be our historic patterns of development. In the postwar era, American-style development capitalized on cheap energy, abundant land and lavish personal mobility. The automobile dominated our lives in every imaginable way. Our cities and especially our suburbs—those agglomerations of low-density dwelling units often miles from schools, stores and jobs—reflected the reality of a resource-rich society. But such development patterns were rife with hidden costs. By way of example, the small farms of the fertile Tualatin Valley, which up until World War II had been Portland's main source of food, began to disappear in the postwar era. From 1940 to 1978 total farmland in Washington County declined by 38 percent—a decrease mainly attributable to rapid suburbanization.

In the emerging age of limitations, inflated land, energy and construction costs—along with interest rates—are shattering such extravagant options. In 1971, for example, 45 percent of Americans could afford to enter the new

single-family housing market; by 1981, that number had shrunk to 11 percent. If gasoline costs are any indicator, this trend will only intensify. In 1971 the average cost of a gallon of gas in the U.S. was \$.25; by mid-1981 that cost had risen to \$1.16. By the beginning of the next decade, according to one industry forecast, the cost of gasoline, in 1990 dollars, will be \$10.00 per gallon. At these figures, the prototypical Portland "Street of Dreams" will be a thing of the past; a duplex in town and a moped in the driveway may look luxurious.

The point is self-evident: the way in which the Portland area provides for its people and accommodates new growth will, of necessity, change radically. A new premium will be put on low-cost, resource-conserving solutions. This lesson will not only apply to housing and transportation, but to employment, education, health care and dozens of other life support systems caught in our society's transition from an age of abundance to one of limitations. The real limits to growth are well upon us. This sobering fact is, pure and simple, the fabric of the coming decade.

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

Portland is not alone in facing this predicament—nor hardly the most seriously affected. The interplay of driving forces creating these local conditions is now manifest worldwide. Acknowledgement of this fact came from none other than the U.S. government itself last year with the release of its *Global 2000 Report to the President*. Admittedly flawed, this study was nonetheless the first attempt ever of a major government to systematically analyze the impact of world trends. Examining such factors as population, resources and the environment, *Global 2000* underscored the fact that a coming global crunch is highly probable.

According to its findings, there will be 6.35 billion people worldwide in the year 2000. All trends indicate that the resources required to sustain that population—given the existing international economic system—will not keep pace. The burden will increasingly be foisted upon the poorer nations and peoples of the world. For example, the study predicts the world's supply of arable land will increase only four percent by the year 2000 and regional water shortages will become more pronounced. Soil erosion will create new desert land



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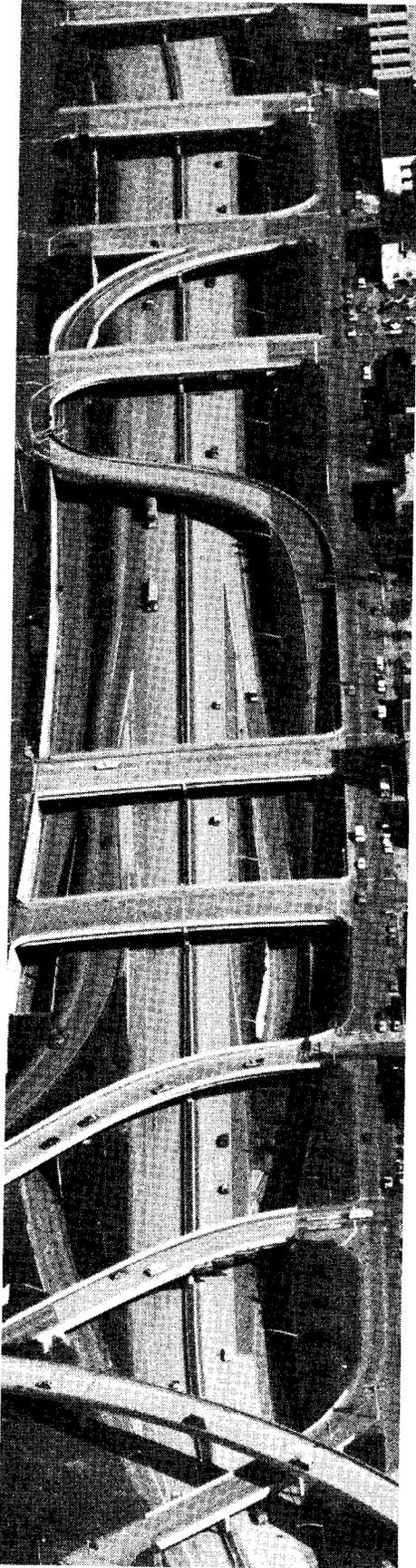
equivalent in size to the state of Maine every year, while an area half the size of California will be deforested annually. Food supplies will increase only 15 percent by the year 2000 and become increasingly maldistributed, leaving millions more in the Third World facing the prospect of famine. World oil production, upon which such supplies have become overdependent, will begin dropping off after 1990, with industrialized nations dominating the market for these and all other scarce resources.

The warnings of *Global 2000*, and its kindred studies, are so staggering they tend to elude our comprehension. We are alternately horrified or numbed. But the important message is not so much one of numbers and trends as it is of scale and interdependence. The growing industrialized demands on the world's

carrying capacity are not sustainable. As a result, the problems confronting the nations of the world, both rich and poor, have become precariously intertwined. Since 1973, the fast lane politics of world oil markets alone have demonstrated this fact time and again.

There is, however, another side to this global condition. The spread of electronic media, satellites and telecommunications have helped pull down the barriers that obscure these dangerous trends. Nations today are more immediately in touch, more connected in their awareness of our tenuous predicament than ever before. For the first time, people everywhere have the ability to identify a common goal for humankind: survival. In short, we have become the citizens of a planet.

The great paradox is that there's not



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much we can actually *do* at a global level, barring a unified world order or some undreamt of technological breakthrough. In truth, there's no such thing as the quick, global fix. The global condition is too multi-dimensional to respond to slam-bang solutions. It will only be through a multitude of diverse, localized strategies, each carried out with awareness of its larger context, that we will come together to alter the course of the planet in the next 20 years. As René Dubos first said, we must think globally and act locally.

In Toronto in 1980, the First Global Conference on the Future—the largest international symposium on the human prospect to date—chose as its theme Dubos' simple maxim. It was by no means a coincidence. The trend toward localization, though still something of a dark horse, is becoming every bit as important as the trend headed in the opposite direction. "What is happening," said conference speaker and futurist Roy Amara, "is that we are beginning to tackle problems at grass-roots levels, restructuring institutions with which we are directly in contact, initiating changes from the bottom up. In fact, participatory movements of all kinds—the world over—are likely to become one of the dominant transforming forces in the remainder of the 20th century."

Another conference participant, Bruce Stokes of the Worldwatch Institute, has since then authored a book, *Helping Ourselves: Local Solutions to Global Problems*, that begins to give measure to this new trend. Local self-help, first and foremost, is cited as the natural response of individuals and communities to make ends meet, gain a sense of control, or merely survive in a world gone awry with unsettling changes. After all, it is on the local level, as Stokes points out, that the consequences of global problems are the most obvious, the motivation to solve them most direct, and the benefits of action most immediate.

When hundreds and thousands of such localized actions take place—as is now beginning to happen—larger solutions emerge: weatherization to cut energy costs at home becomes one of society's cheapest "new" sources of energy; housing rehabilitation and neighborhood revitalization create affordable alternatives to expensive new suburban development and continued urban sprawl; community gardens and local food buying clubs reduce food importation and avoid unnecessary

processing and transportation costs; carpools and alternatives to driving cut back on air pollution and reduce the need to import oil.

For these and a host of other community self-help activities, the aggregate impact is to reduce the escalating demand for resources that feeds the existing global condition. More important, perhaps, all these actions work together to reinforce self-determination at the local level. People exercise greater control over their lives. Communities become more self-reliant. The world is not nearly so intimidating a place. We can look forward again to the year 2000.

The Evolving Portland Vision

Portland already has a certain tradition for looking forward. This was symbolized in its early days by its experience with such visionary planners as John Olmstead and Edward Bennett. But their elaborate visions were, unfortunately, seldom realized, and the city's growth and change over the years was haphazardly inspired by profit and ambition. In 1938, an important juncture in American history, Lewis Mumford visited the area and cautioned Portlanders to plan more wisely for their future. "You have a basis here for civilization on its highest scale," he said. "Are you good enough to have this country in your possession?"

But Mumford, who once said that freeways could only widen chaos, was spurned in favor of the prophets of mobility. In 1943, Portland adopted the city plan of mega-developer Robert Moses. As historian Dick Pinarich notes, the Moses plan was not intended to make Portland livable as much as to make it driveable. As a result, Portland in the postwar era was ringed with freeways and massive bridges as the nation took to wheels on inexpensive gas.

By the 1970s, however, the free ride came squealing to a halt, as area neighborhoods rose up to fight the blatant destruction imposed upon them by freeway construction. Some large projects were abandoned in their entirety. Amid signs that rapid, unplanned growth was whittling away at the region's quality of life, a new resolve to plan ahead and think long range began to appear. A great deal of this spirit emanated from Portland City Hall, but it also involved citizens' task forces, neighborhood activists, historians,

entrepreneurs and the wider public. It was as if Mumford's challenge had finally registered.

During this time Oregon's famed new land use planning law came into existence, setting into motion a statewide process that culminated in the preparation of 277 local comprehensive plans. Portland's Comprehensive Plan was an awesome three-year undertaking, designed to provide a total framework for land use and development to the year 2000. Unlike the Moses Plan, which had been drawn behind closed doors, this new effort involved the city's neighborhoods and literally thousands of people in reviewing plan alternatives. But some of the plan's more controversial ele-

ments, such as increased housing densities in the city, set up a divisive tug of war between neighborhood groups and city planners. Despite its intent to strengthen urban neighborhoods and encourage transportation alternatives, the Comp Plan did not go much beyond providing a flexible set of guidelines. It was criticized for lacking a true sense of vision for the city's future. The other plans that combined with Portland's to fill in the region's urban growth boundary were no different.

What the land use planning process alone seemed incapable of providing—definitive action—was redeemed by a series of citizen task forces and study groups throughout the decade. The

Tri-County Local Government Commission (1975-76) initiated the formation of Metro as the first part of a two-tier government reform scenario. The city's Energy Policy Steering Committee (1978-79) resulted in the establishment of a "one-stop" Energy Savings Center to promote conservation and low-cost weatherization. Additionally, the *Metropolitan Directions 1980* study (1979) indicated how rich in potential new solutions Greater Portland really was. Among other things, this survey of the area's progressive leadership recommended a regional growth policy based on a "carrying capacity" approach, programs designed to reduce peak hour traffic and discourage the use of auto-

Community Self-Help: An Idea Whose Time Has Returned

Long before government assumed responsibility for social problems, neighborly good will and local self-reliance were community standards. Families, churches, neighborhoods and voluntary groups—all essential to a vital democracy—stood between the individual and the large institutions of public life.

But in the two centuries since the American Revolution our society has grown more complex and our problems more resistant to solutions. Government attempts to provide answers—growing out of the New Deal era of the '30s and expanding in scope for nearly half a century—are now being withdrawn. Conservatives justify cutbacks in social programs on the grounds that extensive government involvement has failed to provide solutions and has created "clients of the state." Liberals counter that social cutbacks severely harm those people least able to provide solutions on their own. Disillusionment—among people of every political stripe—is now general, and the need for a fresh approach to community concerns grows increasingly evident.

As Bruce Stokes of the World-watch Institute notes in his book, *Helping Ourselves*,

By breaking up issues into their component parts and dealing with them at the local level, interdependent problems can once

again become manageable . . . if individuals and communities are to gain greater control over their lives, then they must do so by empowering themselves.

Over the past 15 years, a new type of structure—the community-based organization (CBO)—has emerged throughout the country as an important source of innovation and institutional change. CBO's are in the best American tradition of neighbor helping neighbor. They involve people directly in working for the betterment of their local community, working for the adoption of needed legislation (citizen participation) and actually administering neighborhood projects (community self-help). The roots of some of the most successful urban revitalization efforts are here: alternative schools, consumer co-ops, urban homesteading programs, crime watch block clubs, appropriate technology projects and community development corporations.

However, as Bruce Stokes also points out, self-help activities do not take place magically on their own. The role of government is vital to their success.

In the minds of many people there is an inherent contradiction in government support for self-help activities. According to this view, local endeavors can only succeed if they are free from government intervention.

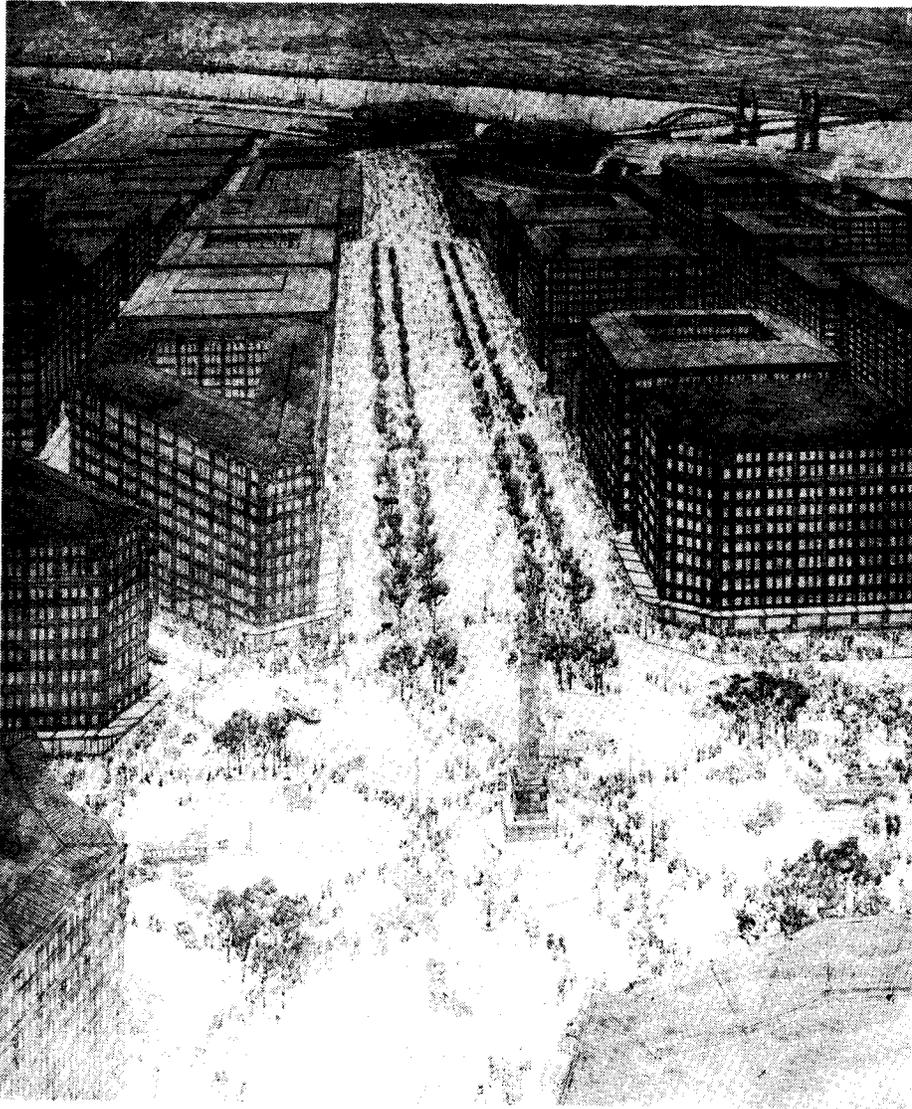
This distinction, while ideologically neat, is not appropriate for the complex issues facing society over the next few decades.

Community self-help efforts require experiments and learning processes that take time to evolve. Community-based initiatives often seem to be stymied rather than encouraged by public officials. Despite lofty rhetoric, nowhere in either current federal or state government proposals is there a mention of strong policy commitments and community capacity-building efforts (seed funding, training and technical assistance) designed to assist citizens to help themselves.

In Portland, there are some encouraging signs. Several city commissioners have been exploring ways to stimulate self-help efforts. The Housing and Community Development office has also been working on a process to establish a neighborhood self-help demonstration program.

If self-help projects are to succeed, they must be controlled by the people they're designed to assist and be based upon local partnerships among government, private business and community groups. Local government can play the crucial role of "enabler" by providing incentives and adopting policies that promote dialogue and cooperation at the neighborhood level.

—Steve Rudman



A reflection of the City Beautiful movement, Edward Bennett's 1912 plan for the city envisioned a stately boulevard running from West Burnside to a new Union Station.

mobiles, local neighborhood enhancement efforts to mitigate the negative effects of higher densities, and consideration of a *three-tier* government in the metropolitan area—regional, municipal and neighborhood.

But the question of a long-range vision for the community—anticipating where we actually wanted Portland to go, rather than being bullied along by trends and crises—was never really addressed until the City Club of Portland formed its Vision Committee. A direct response to the inadequacies of the Portland Comprehensive Plan, the Vision Committee accepted testimony from expert witnesses and conducted polls on a positive direction for the city's future. And, in a departure from the traditional role of reviewing and reporting, it recommended that the City Club

take an active leadership role in implementing its recommendations. The City Club agreed. It was a distinct commitment to the visioning process.

The committee's *Report on a Vision of Portland's Future* (1980), while recognizing the realities of a growing local population, diminished resources, inflated costs of goods and services and the forcing effect of all these things on living and decision-making at the local level, offered a potential vision for a different Portland in the year 2000, supported by scores of mini-visions. The *Vision Report* also made a serious attempt to assess the impact of "emerging issues" on the area, particularly the revolution in telecommunications and the implications of moving information rather than people. It was the first time any citizen's study in the community

had taken such an approach. Its aggregate vision for the city was positive, humanistic and noticeably decentralized. Included among its glimpses of Portland 2000:

- The city, in large part, will become a transit- and pedestrian-oriented place, with small cars used for occasional personal or business trips, and bicycles and mopeds common as auxiliary transportation.

- The intelligent use of interactive cable TV and computers will expand public knowledge of major issues and increase the public level of participation in the government process.

- Small, clean, low-capital and low traffic businesses will be run from private homes or from other locations within the district, relying on communications technology and advanced electronics in their operation.

- Condominiums and other cooperative forms of ownership will increase, being built as planned unit developments to offer the amenities of lower density housing to residents and neighbors.

- Schools will be expanded into full-time, multi-service community centers to offer, among other things, day-care, drop-in centers for the elderly, computer terminals for those without home access, and personal and vocational counseling.

- "Wellness Clinics" will be a part of neighborhood community centers, where the emphasis will be on encouraging and maintaining physical and mental health through a variety of programs.

The disarming quality of such rich, literal images was that once they had entered the public consciousness, they became impossible to ignore. Portland's legitimate concerns for the future could be seen in a newer context. Solutions of a different order were conceivable. It was in this way that the *Vision Report* began to nudge many civic leaders into the realm of the possible. It was a clear demonstration that a positive vision of the future could act as a catalyst for the necessary change.

What was now needed was a way to draw the wider community and region into an actual visioning process for the area. Government alone could not do it because it had limited ability to plan and innovate new directions and even less assurance of widespread public support. At the same time, the many local citizen and private sector efforts to innovate change would easily remain ineffective

because they lacked visibility, a comprehensive overview, or the support of responsive public policy. It was only in linking long-range planning with broad-based citizen education and action that a true vision for the community could be developed. As we entered the 1980s, with every indication that they would be as challenging as had been promised, building a common vision for the future of Portland waited on the public agenda.

The Sustainable City

The Chinese have a fascinating character for the concept of crisis. Actually, it is two characters drawn together, one meaning danger and the other opportunity. In itself, it is a sublime reflection on the paradox of life and potential choice to be found in any situation of great challenge. It could also be seen as a fitting metaphor for the challenge our society faces in 1982. For Americans, it has become a matter of choosing the right opportunities among the many dangers confronting us—and moving with them.

For those people who have long sensed that this time of choice is upon

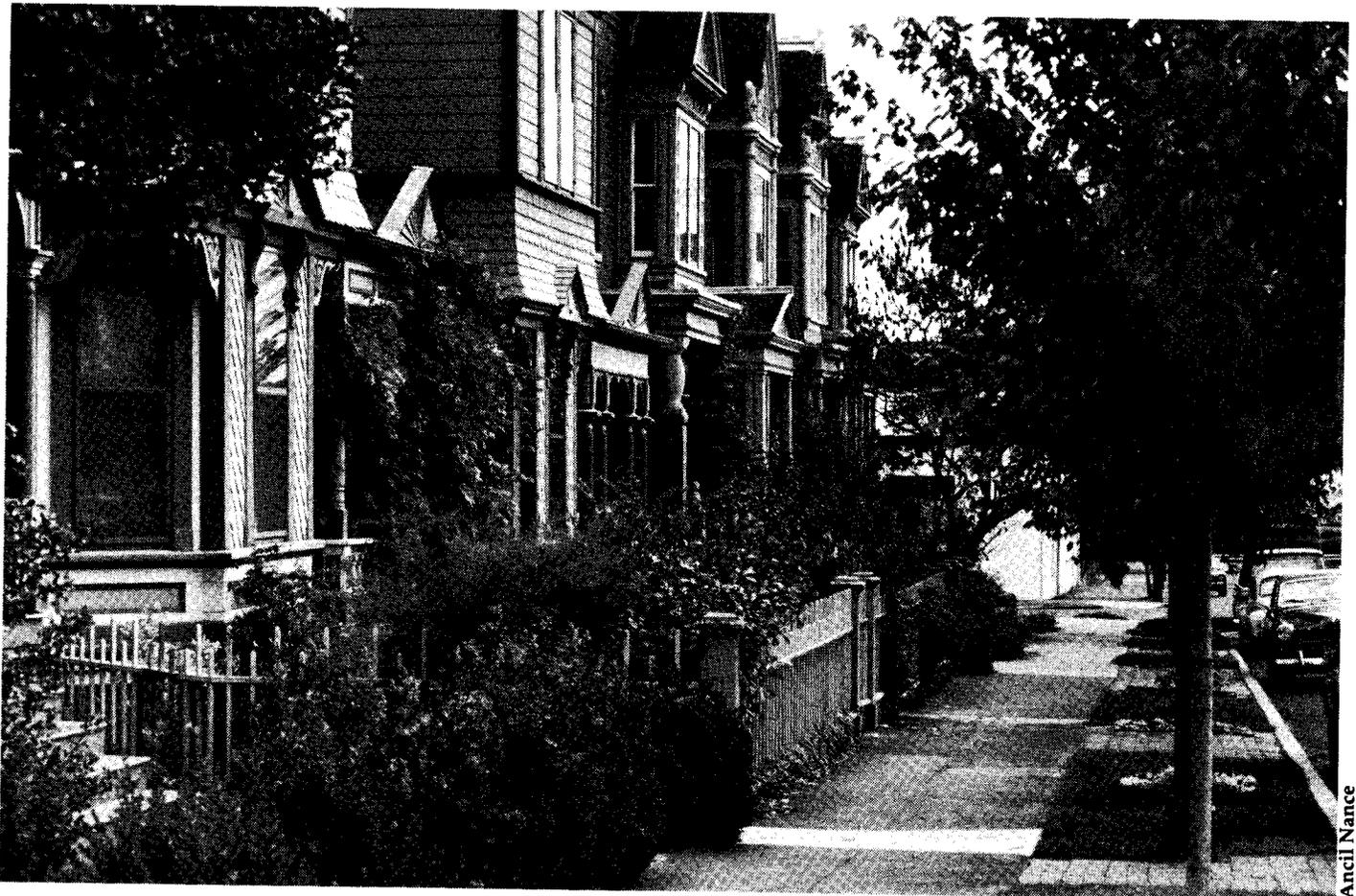
City Club to Portland: Look Ma, No Wheels!

How times change. Forty some years and innumerable freeway overpasses after the visit of Lewis Mumford to Portland, the thrill of the great postwar auto boom is beginning to wane. Gasoline prices have jumped over 350 percent in the last decade. Federal monies from the abandoned Mt. Hood Freeway project are now being used to build the region's new light rail line. And the City Club has released its Report on a Vision of Portland's Future, detailing in its scenarios how the telecommunications revolution will open up new forms of electronic "mobility" while reducing our needs to travel. Is nothing sacred?

"Year 2000. Southeast Portland . . . Jeff Jones is an accountant with a large firm in downtown . . . He works three days a week in the comfort of his den in his Mt. Scott home. He 'communicates' to work at the office downtown using telecommunications. Jeff can do basic bookkeeping and research any tax questions from his home using a microcomputer, as well as hold meetings with staff without having to be in a central location.

"The office downtown is not the place it was in 1980. Since Jeff's firm started using telecommunications and offering the home-workplace as an employment option it has benefitted in many ways. By giving people the option of working at home, the office staff was cut to a minimum, requiring less office space and freeing financial resources for other activities . . .

"Jeff sets his own hours. He is at home when his son Lee comes home from school and his "childcare" often involves joining his son for a jog in the late afternoon. The reduced number of trips to the office have meant gas and time savings for the Joneses and more family use of the neighborhood business district within walking distance of their home . . ."



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us, such opportunities are everywhere and all but insurmountable. In recent years, almost invisible to the national media, a wealth of individuals, ideas and experiments has already begun to retool our society for a major transition—some would say transformation—from a culture that cannot last our lifetimes to one that is infinitely sustainable. From the great thinkers of our time, to people simply putting in gardens and recycling their waste, a quiet movement is emerging that is giving weight to such a transition. And it is a movement big enough for everyone because the tasks before us are as many as there are people.

What will such a transition look like? For our larger society the images are unclear, in part because it is not really at the national level where change is being forged. But for our regions and localities—for the Portland area—the images are much more tangible. It is here where the transition is already underway. “The ‘80s,” says Hazel Henderson, author of the new book *The Politics of the Solar Age*, “will be a period of reconceptualization and innovation, redirected investments, recycling, redesign for conservation, rehabilitation and reuse of buildings for new life, revival of small towns and small businesses, and resurgence of neighborhood-based and local enterprises, co-ops and community development, which release human energy and potential in new local and regional economies of scale.”

If there is a larger vision that can guide Portland through this transition, perhaps it is the image of the sustainable city—the city that thinks of itself whole, that moves with change, and plans for permanence. Above all, this implies an acceptance of responsibility and nurturing of solutions at the local level: conserving indigenous resources and managing them for sustained yield; fostering local production to meet more of local needs; designing political systems to support decision-making at the lowest possible level; and, everywhere, encouraging low-cost, community self-help strategies that empower people to help themselves. The vision is still a distant one. It may require nothing less than a reorientation of our values. But doing such things, a city will survive and endure.

Pieces of such a vision have already begun to appear in American communities: neighborhoods that have experi-

mented with integral food, energy and waste systems; cities that have built energy conservation into their street design, zoning and building codes; urban regions that are assessing the levels of growth and development that can be supported by their air- and watersheds; whole states that are being studied to determine their ability to become self-reliant in food production. Make no mistake about it, the transition has begun.

But, as yet, no major community has come forward with a new image of itself that integrates all these ideas and uses that image to build its future. Perhaps Greater Portland—with its sense of place, its search for quality, its openness to change—can be that city.