About Portland

Portland is the largest city in Maine with a city population of 66,000 in a metro area of 250,000. The peninsula was first permanently settled in 1633 to serve primarily as a fishing and trading village. In 1786 it was given its current name Portland. In 1853, upon completion of the Grand Trunk Railway to Montréal, Portland became the primary ice-free winter seaport for Canadian exports, which would not last long. Portland has become Maine’s economic capital because the city has Maine’s largest port, largest population, and is close to Boston (115 miles to the south.)

The city is on a peninsula in Casco Bay on the Gulf of Maine and the Atlantic Ocean. Portland has a humid continental climate, with somewhat long, cold snowy winters and warm summers. According to the 2010 American Census Bureau Estimates, the city’s population was 85.0% White (83.6% non-Hispanic White alone,) 7.1% Black or African American, 0.9% American Indian and Alaska Native, 3.5% Asian, 1.6% from some other race, and 2.7% from two or more races. 3.0% of the total population was Hispanic or Latino of any race.

About the India Street Neighborhood

The India Street neighborhood was where the first British settlers built a community in 1633. Since the 18th Century it has served as a warehouse, commercial, and industrial district and a gateway community for immigrants. It was the ice-free port terminus for Canada’s Grand Trunk Railroad. In the 1960s the neighborhood was cut off from downtown Portland by the reconstruction of Franklin Street into a wide arterial of suburban design, connecting the highway with the Maine State ferry terminal at the foot of the street. Many of India Street’s historic structures were demolished during the period of central city decline, although important historic structures like the Abyssinian Church, fire station, North School, and Grand Trunk Railroad offices remain. In the last 20 years, the waterfront and business district of downtown Portland (across Franklin Street) has undergone a vigorous revival. A new cruise ship terminal has been built at the edge of the India Street neighborhood. New housing, hotels, and commercial buildings have been built and are being proposed. Portland wants to include sustainability elements into India Street as it redevelops. The India Street Neighborhood is one of ten centers of opportunity examined by Sustain Southern Maine with the support of a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and the US Department of Transportation.
Project Scope

The City of Portland, Maine, has asked the Urban Sustainability Accelerator to help the city with planning and implementation for redevelopment of the historic India Street neighborhood, which adjoins Portland’s thriving downtown. Portland is interested in integrating new urban redevelopment with historic preservation, managing storm water through green infrastructure, maintaining and increasing transportation choice, addressing equity issues, and addressing the challenge of sea level rise. The potential role of commuter transportation to serve employees and residents will also be considered.

Challenges to Overcome

The India Street neighborhood is immediately adjacent to downtown, with many redevelopment sites, and includes a traditional mix of multifamily housing and commercial/institutional uses. In order for the City to grow in a sustainable way, some denser development will likely have to occur in this area. This growth, however, must be balanced with respect for the existing built environment and current residents and businesses. There also continues to be a need to preserve affordable housing for residents near downtown Portland that will have to be factored into any redevelopment plans.

For example, while the Munjoy South affordable housing development is just outside the study area, it is an important asset to Portland and subject to expiring affordability restrictions. In addition, since India Street is a naturally pedestrian and bicycle friendly area with some transit opportunities, balancing parking with other transportation needs is a challenge. Finally, as the neighborhood grows and changes, an additional challenge is how best to incorporate green development strategies into the neighborhood.

Project Goals

- Identify and convene leadership and stakeholders to engage and carry out this effort and create champions out of stakeholders and a governance mechanism to achieve the outcomes
- Identify and inventory the assets of India Street as a foundation for the future
- Develop strategies for removing barriers and initiate programs to achieve the goals of the plan
- Create an implementation plan of short-, medium-, and long-range initiatives to achieve the desired outcomes
- Mobilize resources to implement program elements
Project Elements: India Street Neighborhood

Redevelopment
The City wants to accommodate a share of the Portland region’s growth by growing up instead of out. It wants to find ways for redevelopment to occur that is complementary to the historic fabric of the area. Reuse of existing historic buildings is also an important sustainability strategy. Franklin Street needs to be redesigned to increase transportation choices and make pedestrian connections from the neighborhood to downtown.

Green Design & Infrastructure
Portland is renovating its stormwater system so that rainstorms do not cause the sanitary sewer system to overflow and pollute Casco Bay. It is interested in integrating green stormwater facilities into the redevelopment of the neighborhood to reduce stormwater overflows, perhaps in conjunction with the redesign of Franklin Street. It may explore opportunities for creating a special district where heat, water, and energy use can be used more efficiently.

Transportation Choices
The neighborhood can be improved with investments in bicycle routes, improved pedestrian connections associated with the redesign of Franklin Street, and integration of transit facilities for a proposed new downtown circulator connecting the ferry terminal, jetport, Metro Pulse transit hub, and downtown commercial area.

Equity
As land values rise and the neighborhood becomes a more desirable place to live, the City wants to consider strategies for making sure that people and families of modest means can find places to live in the neighborhood. Another concern is the expiration of affordability requirements for an important Section 236 housing project on Munjoy Hill.
India Street Neighborhood Team

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Jeff has been involved with land use planning on the local and regional level for 20 years.

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Alex has directed the Portland Planning Office for over 30 years, during which time Portland has become nationally recognized for its architectural heritage, quality of life, and dynamic urban character.

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Doug has a background in open space, conservation, and environmental planning.

Caitlin Cameron, Urban Designer, City of Portland
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Her areas of interest and expertise include architecture and urban design, food systems planning, sustainability, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Rebeccah Schaffner, Director of Land Use Planning, Greater Portland Council of Governments
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Rebeccah has fifteen years of leadership and facilitation experience including experiential and traditional education, non-profit, strategic, and public planning.

William Needleman, AICP, Senior Planner, City of Portland
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For the last 13 years, Bill has been a senior planner with the City of Portland, Maine. While with the City, he has worked with numerous land use, waterfront, and transportation planning initiatives ranging from small development permits to neighborhood-scaled master plans.

Troy Moon, Sustainability Coordinator, City of Portland
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Troy has worked on environmental issues for the City of Portland since 1997.

Bruce Hyman, Bicycle & Pedestrian Program Coordinator, City of Portland
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Bruce is a Transportation Planner with over 20 years of experience in smart growth transportation and land use planning in Northern New England.

Jeremiah Bartlett, Transportation Engineer, City of Portland
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Jeremiah has been a transportation engineer and planner for almost 15 years, first with Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, of Watertown, MA, then Gorrill-Palmer in Gray, ME, and now as the Transportation Systems Engineer for the City of Portland.

Kevin Donoghue, District 1 Councilor, Portland City Council
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On the City Council, Kevin’s policy work has focused on transportation systems, affordable housing, and neighborhood planning.

Alan G. Kuniholm, AIA, LEED AP, Vice President, Portland Society for Architecture.
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One of the first architects in Maine to receive his LEED accreditation and a current board member of the Maine chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council, Alan is known as an advocate for sustainable design and for his extraordinary design and drawing skills.