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# City of Beaverton: Review of Boards, Commissions and Committees in Municipal Governments

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## Review of Boards, Commissions and Committees in Municipal Governments

Report  
Submitted to the City of Beaverton (August 15, 2015)

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# Executive Summary

The City of Beaverton currently has 18 boards, commissions and special committees that are made up of Beaverton residents appointed by the mayor, and coordinated by the City of Beaverton’s Neighborhood Program.

This study sought an informational overview from 19 cities that are comparable to the City of Beaverton in size, and in the suburban character. Information on the boards and commissions are collected using (1) open-ended email questionnaire, (2) telephone interview, and (3) website and document review.

The cities examined in this study are:

Oregon	Washington	California
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eugene</li> <li>• Salem</li> <li>• Gresham</li> <li>• Hillsboro</li> <li>• Bend</li> <li>• Medford</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tacoma</li> <li>• Vancouver</li> <li>• Bellevue</li> <li>• Everett</li> <li>• Kent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yakima</li> <li>• Renton</li> <li>• Federal Way</li> <li>• Bellingham</li> <li>• Roseville</li> <li>• Murrieta</li> <li>• Vallejo</li> <li>• San Mateo</li> </ul>

- Number of boards and commissions  
 Average number of boards and commissions
- Other cities: 13.89
  - Beaverton: 18

## Board Categories

Fourteen board categories of boards were identified. These categories were based on the issue that boards focused on. They are: arts and culture, buildings and design, city employees, city-owned facilities, economic development, housing and neighborhood development, inclusion and equity, natural resources, planning, review, social services, transportation, visioning and other. Of these fourteen categories, Beaverton did not have any boards pertaining to three categories.

The categories in which Beaverton does not have any boards are:

- City employees
- Natural Resources
- Economic Development

The cities in this study that have boards in these categories had one or more of the following specific board types:

- City employees
  - Civil Service Boards
  - Ethics Board
  - Police and Firemen Boards
  - Salary Review Boards
- Economic development

- Economic Development Boards
- Grant Allocation Boards
- Tourism Boards
- Natural Resources
  - Specific Natural Resource Management Boards
  - Sustainability Boards
  - Urban Forestry/Tree Boards

Beaverton had more boards in the inclusion and equity category than any other city included in this study. Of the 19 cities included in the study, the average number of inclusion and equity boards was approximately 1.6. Beaverton has five. Beaverton has one of the each of the following boards.

- Inclusion and Equity
  - Citizen Involvement Board
  - Diversity Board
  - Disability Services Board
  - Human Rights Board
  - Seniors Board
  - Youth Board

Beaverton was also the only city in this study to have a standing board committed to future planning and visioning.

### **Board composition**

Average number of voluntary members on the board

- Other cities: approximately 8
- Beaverton: approximately 10

### **Average gender composition**

- Other cities: Men 61.1% /Women 34.7%
- Beaverton: Men 50.6%/ Women 43.6%

### **Board member selection process**

- The board application processes of the City of Beaverton is similar to other cities: general, online application followed by a supplemental questionnaire and/or in-person interview.
- The criteria for selection varies based on what issue or topic that is the board's focus, but typically have residency requirement.
- Technical board members are required to have specific expertise relevant to the board's focus.
- Boards representing special communities (e.g. seniors, youth) require that members be a part of that community.
- Applicants who are not selected are typically informed in writing (via email or post).

- Applications are kept on file for one to two years. Some cities review these applications in the event of a vacancy; some cities require that everyone reapply.
- Mostly no targeted recruitment to increase diversity.
- Some cities publicize in non-English language newspapers, reach out to relevant neighborhood and community groups, and translate publicity materials into other languages.

### **Board meetings**

- Most boards in this study meet monthly.
- Whether the board updates the city council regularly varies considerably from board to board.
- Boards tend to have one to two paid administrators assigned as staff.

### **New boards**

- No clear identifiable pattern in the new boards that were formed.

### **Promising practices**

- Keep the number of boards and commissions small enough to make it manageable.
- Actively engage citizens.
- Promote diverse representation in the board members.
- Recognize and reward board members
- Have clear application and appointment policy

# 1. Introduction and Project Background

The City of Beaverton currently has 18 boards, commissions and special committees that are made up of Beaverton residents appointed by the mayor, and coordinated by the City of Beaverton's Neighborhood Program. The City's boards and commissions structure has not been changed in approximately 20 years and the Neighborhood Program sought an informational overview of what similar cities (in terms of size, proximity to large cities, etc.) had done in recent years.

The City of Beaverton therefore commissioned a study, to be carried out by the Center for Public Service (CPS) research team, which includes the review of selected number of cities in Oregon, Washington, and California that are similar to Beaverton. The intent of this study is to inform the City about trends and recent changes that are being adopted by boards and commissions in other cities, and make recommendations based on these findings. Additionally, the City of Beaverton asked that the study include Seattle, WA to reference what bigger, better-resourced cities are doing. The intent of this study was to inform the City about trends and recent changes that were being adopted by boards and commissions in other cities, and make conclusions based on these findings.

Past scholarly research about the function and organization of local boards and commissions suggests that these organizations are important for three key reasons: (1) they represent the public interest, (2) they influence policy making, and (3) they impact those who volunteer to serve.

In terms of representation, research has found that boards and commissions are effective at representing the public and public interest in a different way than elected officials or career administrators (Mitchell 1997). For example, previously disenfranchised groups can, potentially, have a larger impact on policy through boards and commissions than through electoral politics (Doherty 2011). The barriers to participation in boards and commissions are lower than for electoral politics, and therefore more inclusive of the community. Further, boards tend to seek out, and engage with, the input of the community at-large in a way that elected officials do not.

In terms of policy making, the diversity of voices included by the boards and commission can influence the policy that is made. Scholars and practitioners recognize the benefit to having citizenry involved in the policy making process (Doherty 2011). The plurality of voices provides important, relevant advice to city decision makers (Baker 1994).

Finally, a robust boards and commissions structure benefits board members and the community at-large. Board members gain a feeling of civic-contribution and a way to confront collective action problems (Baker 1994). And the community as a whole views the government and government-decisions as more legitimate when citizens have been involved in the decision-making process.

With the above functions and contributions of boards and commission in mind, this study reviewed how some of the municipalities structure and organize their boards and commissions.



## 2. Data Description

### 2.1 Information Collected

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The representative of the City of Beaverton and the CPS research team collectively decided on the key information to be collected in this study. The CPS research team developed six questions for each city in the study, and eight questions for each board in the study. The questions are listed below.

➤ **Questions for the City**

- - How many voluntary boards does the city have?
- - Have any new boards been formed in the last five years?
- - What, if anything, does the city do to increase the diversity of board members?
- - What processes are in place to handle applicants that do not gain a seat on the board?
- - Is the CITY contemplating changes to the boards or commissions, or the structure of the boards or commissions?
- - What can other cities learn from CITY's boards and commissions?

➤ **Questions for the Board or Commission**

- - How many volunteer members are there?
- - How many men and women are on each board?
- - How frequently does the board meet?
- - What is the stated purpose or mission of the board?
- - Does the board regularly update the city council?
- - What resources, in terms of staffing, does the city commit to the board?
- - What is the selection process for the board?
- - What are the criteria for selection?

### 2.2 City Selection

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The goal of the study was to review 20 cities that are similar to the City of Beaverton. The following three criteria were used in determining the cities to be included in this study: (1) cities that have similar populations size to Beaverton

(90,000 to about 160,000), (2) cities that are considered as tier-one suburbs, and (3) cities that share regional similarities with Beaverton.

After the initial screening of the cities, the research team found out that there were not enough cities in the region that matched the current population of Beaverton (approximately 94,500). Therefore, in order to include enough numbers of municipalities to be examined in this study, the population requirements were relaxed and tier-one suburbs from Oregon, Washington, and California with the population between approximately 80,000 and 200,000 were selected.

The following are the cities selected for this study.

Oregon:

- Eugene
- Salem
- Gresham
- Hillsboro
- Bend
- Medford

Washington:

- Tacoma
- Vancouver
- Bellevue
- Everett
- Kent
- Yakima
- Renton
- Federal Way
- Bellingham
- (Spokane Valley)

California:

- Roseville
- Murrieta
- Vallejo
- San Mateo

Spokane Valley was excluded from the study after the initial inquiry. It has only three standing boards and the interview with the City Clerk indicated that its board structure was not sufficiently robust for this study. Consequently, the number of cities reviewed in this study resulted in 19. A total of 263 boards and commissions from these 19 cities were included in this study.

### 3. Data Collection

The data were collected from two sources: expert interviews and published materials. The information required for this study and the corresponding questions

were categorized into two groups: those that required expert insight, and those that could be answered by examining published materials. The following Table 1 lists questions used for expert interviews and questions used for published material review.

**Table 1: Data Collection Method by Question**

Expert Interviews	Published Material Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have any new boards been formed in the last five years?</li> <li>• What, if anything, does the city do to increase the diversity of board members?</li> <li>• What processes are in place to handle applicants that do not gain a seat on the board?</li> <li>• Is the CITY contemplating changes to the boards or commissions, or the structure of the boards or commissions?</li> <li>• What does CITY do particularly well? What can other cities learn from CITY?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many standing boards and commissions are there?</li> <li>• How many volunteer members are there?</li> <li>• How many men and women are on each board?</li> <li>• How frequently does the board meet?</li> <li>• What is the stated purpose or mission of the board?</li> <li>• Does the board regularly update the city council?</li> <li>• What resources, in terms of staffing, does the city commit to the board?</li> <li>• What is the selection process for the board?</li> <li>• What are the criteria for selection?</li> </ul>

### 3.1 Expert Interviews

The interviewees from each city were identified through the city’s boards and commission general website. These interviewees were mainly administrators in the office that coordinates boards and commissions in that city. Since each city has different coordinating mechanism, the title of the interviewees varied. For example, for the city of Gresham, OR, the City Manager was interviewed. For Federal Way, WA, the City Clerk was interviewed.

Initial contact with the interviewees was made through email. The email introduced CPS and gave a discreet description of the research project at hand. In the email, the interviewees were given the five interview questions. They were asked to respond to the questions through email, or to schedule a phone-interview at their

convenience. Also, the email asked that if they were not the appropriate contact for this inquiry, which they pass along the query to someone more appropriate.

In the phone interview, structured interview approach was used in order to keep the interview short and succinct for the convenience of the interviewee and to maintain their willingness to participate.

The city representatives who did not respond to the initial email inquiry, a reminder email was sent four days after the original inquiry. This follow-up helped boost the response.

Among those who were contacted, five city representatives chose to answer the questions in a phone interview. Twelve cities– as well as Seattle, WA – provided answers via email. Two cities did not respond to either the initial or follow up email. The cities that did not respond are: Tacoma, WA and Bellevue, WA. All other city representatives provided expert insight into the workings of their local board and commissions.

## 3.2 Published Materials

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Much of the data were collected by examining the publications on the board and commission websites of each city. The appropriate general website was identified through Google search. The general sites linked to each board and commission for the city.

The web search provided most of the information required for this study. Some cities and boards websites, however, did not contain information needed. When analyzing the data, the CPS research team only considered information that was found. For example, if the application process for a board was not publicly available, that specific information was excluded from the analysis.

In extracting information from the published material, following criteria were applied.

- A) Only volunteers were counted as board members. Many cities have** assigned a city council member to attend board meetings. In identifying the number of board members and the gender, city council members who serve on the board were not included.
- B) The study only considers standing boards.** Quite a few cities use ad-hoc committees or task forces to address temporary problems. These ad-hoc committees and task forces are disbanded after the issue has been addressed. Although they provide important opportunities for citizens to engage with the cities, because of its short-term context, they were not included in this study.
- C) The boards were categorized into issue groups.** After the data on standing boards were collected, the boards were then grouped by issue type by examining the title of the board and the published information on the boards' purpose. Creating these issue categories facilitated comparison across cities and boards.

## 3.3 A Note on Data Collection

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Immediately before submission of this report, discrepancies in the data collected were brought to the attention of the CPS research team. Specifically, temporary and ad-hoc boards and commissions had been identified and included as permanent, standing boards. These inclusions occurred because of incorrect or incomplete published information on city websites.

To correct this, the CPS research team reached out to every city included in the study again. The previously-identified experts were asked to confirm that all boards on their cities’ websites were standing and permanent. Of the 19 city experts, sixteen responded to this request by email. Two cities responded by telephone. One city (Salem, OR), did not respond to confirm the standing boards. However, in the case of Salem, materials from the previous interview detailed which boards were permanent and which were temporary.

The original dataset for this study included 314 boards and commissions. After contacting the city experts a second time, fifty-one of these boards were identified as temporary or ad-hoc in nature. The final number of boards analyzed in this study, therefore, was 263.

## 4. Results

Data was analyzed by first organizing them into five thematic categories. The categories are:

- (1) Name, number and types of boards,
- (2) Membership,
- (3) Membership Processes,
- (4) Board Operations,
- (5) Trends.

Table 2 below illustrates the categories and the related questions. The remainder of this section is organized based on these categories.

**Table 2: Categories and Related Research Questions**

Category	Related Research Questions
Name and Types of Boards	(1) How many boards and commissions does CITY have? (2) What boards does CITY have? (3) What is the stated purpose or mission of the board?
Membership	(1) How many volunteer members are there on each board? (2) How many men and women are on each board?
Membership Processes	(1) What is the selection process for the board? (2) What are the criteria for selection? (3) What processes are in place to handle applicants that are not

	selected? (4) What, if anything, does the city do to increase the diversity of board members?
Board Operations	(1) Does the board regularly update the city council? (2) What resources, in terms of staffing, does the city commit to the board? (3) How frequently does the board meet?
Trends	(1) Have any boards been formed in the last five years? (2) Is CITY contemplating any changes to the boards and commission structure? (3) What does CITY do well? What can other cities learn from CITY?

### 4.1 Name, number and type of boards

The name, number and type of boards present in every city were analyzed. The highest number of standing boards and commissions in a city was 25, in Medford, OR. The lowest number of standing boards and commissions in a city was five, in Murrieta, CA. The average number of standing boards in a city is 17.56. City of Beaverton currently has 18 standing boards.

**Table 3: Average Number of Boards**

	Number of boards
Average across cases	13.89
Beaverton	18

Fourteen categories of boards and commissions were identified as present in many of the cities studied. They were: **arts and culture, buildings and design, city employees, city-owned facilities, economic development, housing and neighborhood development, inclusion and equity, natural resources, planning, review, social services, transportation, visioning and other.** The fourteenth catchall category – Other – was created for all of the boards that did not fit into other categories.

**Most cities had at least one board dedicated to each of the issue categories.** There were some exceptions, however. For example, five of the 19 cities (including Beaverton) did not have any boards that fell in to the city employee category. Boards that were considered to be in the city employee category are: *civil service boards, ethics boards, police and fire boards, and salary review boards.* Similarly, eight of the 19 cities do not have any boards in the social services category. Boards

that fall into this category are: *social service boards, health boards, and public safety boards.*

**All 19 cities have at least one board that falls in the planning category,** and three cities had two boards dedicated to planning.

**Beaverton has boards that fall into the following ten categories:** arts and culture, building design, city-owned facilities, housing and neighborhood development, inclusion and equity, planning, review, social services, transportation, and visioning. Beaverton also has one board that falls into the 'other' category: the *sister cities advisory board.*

There are three categories of boards that Beaverton does not currently have. They are: city employee, economic development, and natural resource. City employee boards include: civil service boards, ethics boards, policy and fire boards, and salary review boards. Economic development boards include: *economic development boards, grant allocation boards, and tourism boards.* Natural resource boards include: *specific natural resource management boards, sustainability boards, and urban forestry/tree boards.*

In one category, Beaverton has more boards than any other city. That category is inclusion and equity. Beaverton has every type of board included in this study: citizen involvement, diversity, disability services, human rights, seniors, and youth. **No city in this study has as many inclusion and equity boards as Beaverton does.**

Additionally, **Beaverton is the only city in this study that has a standing visioning board,** though at least one city has a temporary board that deals with envisioning the future (Hillsboro, OR).

Full details about board categories and types are provided in the attached table (Appendix).

## 4.2 Membership

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The number of voluntary members and gender composition per board were examined. The average number of board members is 7.83. Boards tend to be populated with more men than women. Across all boards and cities, there are approximately 4.6 men on every board (61.1%) and 2.76 women on every board (34.7%). The discrepancy between men and women board members across all other cities in this study is 1.66. The percent difference between men and women board members is approximately 26.4%.

In Beaverton, there are, on average, just over ten members on each board (10.17), with approximately two more board members per board than the other cities included in this study. On average there are 5.12 men (50.64%) and 4.41 women (43.6%) on each board in Beaverton. The average number of men and women are both higher in Beaverton. The discrepancy between men and women board members in Beaverton is 0.71. The percent difference between men and women board members is approximately 7.04%.

Overall, Beaverton seems to have more equal gender participation in the boards.

The results are summarized in Table 4, below.

**Table 4: Membership**

	Number of Board Members	Percent Men	Percent Women
Average across cases	7.83 (4.6 men/2.76 women)	61.1%	34.7%
Beaverton	10.11(5.12 men 4.41 women)	50.64%	43.6%

**(Note: Any discrepancy in average and percent calculations is due to vacancies.)**

### 4.3 Membership Processes

Four aspects of membership processes were considered in this study. They are: (1) selection process, (2) criteria for selection, (3) process for handling those not selected, (4) process for increasing diversity.

*(1) Selection Process*

The application and selection process for the cities examined had commonalities. For example, **every city had a written application that was available on the city’s website**. The majority of cities accepted application submissions online.

Most cities had one general written application for all boards, which was followed by interviews or a supplemental written application.

The process for selecting applicants varied by board-type and city. **The most common appointment process was nomination by the Mayor, and confirmation by the City Council**. A limited number of cities ran their boards and commissions under the City Clerk or City Manager’s office. When this was the case, the City Clerk or the City Manager appointed board members.

In some cases, board members were appointed or elected by interested community members. For example, the *seniors board* in Renton, WA selected its board members through elections at the local senior center. Bellingham, WA has a *parks and recreation board* (that manages the local arboretum), the members of which are appointed by local stakeholder groups.

*(2) Criteria for Selection*

Many cities had no published criteria for board member selection. Of those that did have published criteria, most of them included **residency requirements**.

Boards that represented professional bodies, or required particular expertise, tended to have additional criteria for selection. For example, Bellingham, WA’s *public works advisory board* required a representative from each of the following professions: civil engineering, structural engineering, architecture, land surveying, general contracting, and home building. Similarly, the *urban forestry board* of Gresham, OR required that members have “expertise associated with trees such as



forestry, landscaping, arborists.” All *police review boards* reviewed in this study required including former members of the police department.

Boards that focus on community issues tended to require that members be affiliated with the given community of interest. For example, *youth-interest boards* required that members were local youth; *senior-interest boards* required that members were local seniors. *Diversity boards* typically stated that the members of the board should reflect the city’s cultural and racial diversity. *Arts commissions* tend to require that members are part of the city’s arts community.

### *(3) Process for handling those not selected*

There was an observable pattern in the processes that cities used to manage those who are not selected to serve on boards. **Nearly all cities sent an email or letter informing applicants of their rejection.** In the rejection letter, some cities encouraged applicants to apply for other boards, or gauged interest for future participation. Only one city (Renton, WA) noted that there were generally not more applicants than spots available.

**The majority of cities reported that they kept rejected applications on file for one to two years.** When there is an unexpected opening outside of the general recruitment cycle, the city would first review the on-file applications to fill the spot.

There was a variation among cities in how old applications were handled in a new recruitment cycle. Some cities (e.g. Eugene, OR) reported that everyone – including those who have applied in previous years – must apply for a seat in every recruitment cycle. Other cities (e.g. Roseville, CA) stated that when any vacancy arises, previous applicants were contacted to assess their interest in the position.

### *(4) Process for increasing diversity*

All cities emphasized the importance of having a diverse set of commissioners. The way they attempted to increase diversity, however, differed. The majority of cities reported no targeted recruiting strategy. Instead, they stated that all people – regardless of cultural and racial identities – were encouraged to apply. Some cities (e.g. San Mateo, CA) reported that their city’s diverse population corresponded to a diverse membership in the boards.

There were a limited number of targeted recruitment strategies that cities used to diversify the board members. Gresham, OR, for example, has translated citizen engagement documents into languages other than English (not-specified). One city reported advertising board openings in the local Spanish language newspaper.

Generally, cities advertised positions using variety of outlets (e.g. multiple newspapers, local chamber of commerce, neighborhood associations, Twitter) in the hopes of attracting a more diverse group.

**Cities with diversity-focused boards noted that recruitment for this board needed special effort.** Everett, WA, for example, highlighted that it engages in targeted outreach to the African American, Latino, Islamic communities, as well as the LGBTQ communities and those with disabilities. The interviewee from Everett

noted that ensuring diverse representation of communities in the *diversity board* was particularly important for increasing legitimacy of the board activities.

## 4.4 Board Operations

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Three elements of board operations were examined in this study. They were: (1) regular updates to the city council, (2) staffing resources, and (3) the meeting frequency.

In general, there were considerable variances by board type in the board operations.

### *(1) Regular updates to the city council*

How often a board updated the council varied considerably between board types. *Planning commissions* most frequently gave regular updates to the city council. That is, over 90% of the planning commissions included in this study reported that they regularly updated the city council on their work.

Conversely, some types of boards consistently did not update the city council regularly. The following board types did not frequently update the council: *budget review boards, police and fire boards, seniors boards, and sister cities boards*.

Beaverton differs from the patterns observed in other cities with regards to the city council updates in a couple of ways. In Beaverton, *budget review* and *seniors* boards give regular updates the city council, though this is not common in the other 19 cities surveyed. On the other hand, Beaverton's *redevelopment/urban renewal* board does not give regular updates to the city council, although many other cities' similar board in this study did.

### *(2) Staffing resources*

Across the 14 board categories in this study, staffing patterns did not vary much. Most boards were staffed on average with 1-2.5 people. The one exception was in the *sustainability commissions*, which typically had a much higher number of staff assigned.

Staffing in Beaverton does not differ drastically from the other cities in the study. **Beaverton on average has slightly lower number of staff assigned to most boards.** Note, however, that the number of staff allocated for *planning* and *sister city* boards in Beaverton were not published.

### *(3) Meeting Frequency*

How often the boards meet was examined. **The majority of boards met monthly.** Only three types of boards —*budget review boards, planning commissions, and sister city boards*—differed from this pattern markedly.

**There was no identifiable pattern in how often *budget review boards* meet.** The only observation that seemed consistent across the cities is that the *budget review boards* were only active for a short period of time every year or every two years. The length of the budget deliberation period varied dramatically from city to

city, but in all cities the board met frequently during that time. In Medford, OR, for example, the City Budget Committee meets five times every other year.

**Planning commissions tend to meet more often than any other board.**

Eighty percent of the *planning commissions* with published meeting dates met twice per month.

**Sister city boards met less frequently than all other board-types in this study.** Sixty percent of the *sister city board* reviewed in this study met only as needed.

In terms of meeting frequency, Beaverton matches with the patterns identified with other cities with three exceptions. The first is the *planning commission*. Eighty percent of those surveyed met twice per month; the *planning commission* in Beaverton meets monthly. The second is the *sister cities board*. The general pattern found was that these boards met only as needed; in Beaverton they meet monthly. Finally, the general pattern for *youth committees* is to meet monthly, whereas the *youth committee* in Beaverton meets twice per month-

## 4.5 Changes and New Trends

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There are three indicators of changes and new trends. They are: (1) formation of new boards (2) upcoming changes in the boards and commission structure, and (3) promising practices.

### (1) Formation of new boards

**Five of the 19 cities included in the study reported having new boards formed in the last five years.** Bend, OR formed one new board addressing *economic development*. Kent, WA formed two new boards. They are boards for: *parks and recreation*, and *elected official salary review*. Renton, WA formed two new boards for *downtown development*, and *library*. Federal Way, WA formed one new board for *grant allocation*. And San Mateo, CA formed one new board on *sustainability*.

There was no clear pattern in the types of new boards formed.

### (2) Upcoming changes to the boards and commission structure

The majority of cities that responded to the structured interview questions did not have any upcoming changes to report. Five cities that reported upcoming changes were: Salem, OR, Gresham OR, Hillsboro OR, Medford OR, and Roseville, CA. Gresham OR described a new applicant-tracking system that they were planning to adopt. The interviewee from Hillsboro stated that the city was in the midst of planning a large-scale volunteer appreciation event, which they hoped to organize every year. The interviewee from Medford OR reported that the city had used one general application for all boards for years, but they were adopting a different approach, creating application questions tailored for each board. Finally, Roseville CA was planning on forming an *arts and entertainment commission* in the coming years.

Table 5: Upcoming Changes

City	Changes
Salem, OR	Considering shrinking the boards and commissions programs
Gresham OR	New applicant tracking system
Hillsboro OR	Board member appreciation event
Medford OR	Changing from a general application to various applications tailored for each board
Roseville CA	Adopting an arts and entertainment commission

(3) Promising practices

In the structured interviews, interviewees were asked to identify what they thought their city was doing particularly well, and what other cities can learn as promising practices. Table 6 below summarizes the salient points.

Table 6: Promising practices: What can other cities learn?

City	Salient points of advise
Eugene OR	Develop small number of boards and commissions, tightly organized and easier to maintain
Salem, OR	Create a formalized guide to streamline board agendas
Gresham OR	Engage diverse citizenry
Hillsboro OR	Publish newsletter to brief board members on what other boards and commissions are doing; Promote face-to-face interaction with city council members
Bend OR	Create consensus within the community through standing and ad-hoc organizations
Medford OR	Have the city council actively involved in the board member selection process
Everett WA	A liaison from each board contacts all applicants to that board at every recruiting cycle, – tells them about time commitment, scheduling, what the meetings are like, and encourages applicants to attend meetings before accepting position on board. This reduces the number of dropouts.
Kent WA	Have a broad base of boards and increases the number of voices that are heard in the policy-making process

City	Salient points of advise
Renton WA	Emphasize inclusion and diversity goals for 2016-2021 period
Federal Way WA	Have cultural diversity in the board members and ensures that the board consider various viewpoints, which contributes in boards making thoughtful and responsive governance decisions.
Bellingham WA	Dedicate the time to cultivate regular citizen engagement opportunities
Roseville CA	Value board members through paid training opportunities and recognition events
Murrieta CA	Have a formalized policy for application and appointment processes ensures consistency and fairness

## 5. Addendum – Observations about Seattle, WA Boards and Commissions

In addition to the 19 cities surveyed, the City of Beaverton was interested in learning about what larger, better-resourced cities in the Pacific Northwest do. Portland, OR and Seattle, WA were contacted. Seattle responded. The boards and commission structure was drastically larger than that of Beaverton. Seattle had approximately 70 distinct, standing boards.

Of the 70 standing boards, the mayor and city council appointed volunteer city residents to 50. Some boards required professional experts as members (e.g. the Construction Codes Advisory Board), whereas others required special community involvement or interest (e.g. Seattle Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Commission).

The structure for each board was self-determined, and so the application processes vary. Many used an online application form as a first step. Others posted an open request for resumes and cover letters.

The Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative headed up the diversity efforts for Seattle’s boards and commissions. The Initiative’s long-term, overarching goal was to challenge institutional racism. Generally, the boards and commissions encouraged diversity amongst applicants.

Two new boards had been formed in the last five years in Seattle. They were: the *community police commission*, and the *Seattle community-based park board*. The *community police commission* was formed as a response to the shooting death by Seattle police of member of the First Nations. The *Seattle community-based park board* was formed to advise city leadership on park projects.

The expert from Seattle stated that, in terms of promising practices, other cities should take note of the city’s *race and social justice initiative*. The *initiative* was unique among cities when it was started 10 years ago. It inspired other cities –

including Portland, OR – to form similar organizations with the explicit goal of targeting issues of race in local government.

## 6. Conclusion

Beaverton's current board and commission structure is larger than the average found across 19 comparable cities in Oregon, Washington and California examined in this study.

### Board composition

The average number of voluntary members on a board among the cities in this study is approximately 8. The City of Beaverton's average board size is higher, at approximately 10.

The City of Beaverton's boards and commissions have better gender balance than the other cities in this study. In other cities the average percentage of men in the board is 61.1% and women is 34.7%, while in the City of Beaverton the average percentage of men in the board is 50.6% and women is 43.6%.

### Board member selection process

The board application processes of the City of Beaverton is similar to other cities in this study. Most cities have a general, online application followed by a supplemental questionnaire and/or in-person interview. Applicants are typically nominated by the mayor and confirmed by the city council.

The criteria for selection varies based on board type. The common criterion is residency. More technical boards such as those that review building code appeals require board members to have specific expertise relevant to the issue that the board focuses on. Boards representing special communities (e.g. seniors, youth) require that members be a part of that community.

Applicants who are not selected are typically informed in writing (via email or post). Cities generally keep their applications on file for one to two years. Some cities review these applications in the event of a vacancy; some cities require that everyone reapply.

The majority of cities in this study do not employ targeted recruitment to increase diversity. Some cities publicize vacant seats in non-English language newspapers, reach out to relevant neighborhood and community groups, and translate publicity materials into other languages.

### Board meetings

Most boards in this study meet monthly. Whether the board updates the city council regularly varies considerably from board to board. Some boards, such as planning, update the council more regularly, whereas others rarely do. Boards tend to have one to two paid administrators assigned as staff.

### New boards

There was no identifiable pattern in the new boards were formed.

Most cities noted that there are no specific changes planned to the boards structure. Of the five that reported upcoming changes, two are updating the application process.

### **Promising practices**

The cities provided following suggestions for successful boards and commission operations.

- Keep the number of boards and commissions small enough to make it manageable.
- Actively engage citizens.
- Promote diverse representation in the board members.
- Recognize and reward board members
- Have clear application and appointment policy





