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IMAGINE A CITY CENTER SO VIBRANT, ENERGETIC, AND CLEAN. A PLACE WHERE RIDES ARE FREE, THE AIR IS FRESH, AND THOUGHTS ARE PROGRESSIVE. Welcome to Portland, Ore. A green cityscape, laid-back attitude, and funky neighborhoods give the City of Roses its undeniably bohemian flair. But this intimate city of half a million residents in the Pacific Northwest marches to its own sophisticated beat with a vision of a greener future, where pedestrians and bicyclists are king and cars are remnants of a fossil-fuel-burning era. Today, the city's hottest neighborhoods are united by an extensive light-rail system that costs nothing to ride downtown and offers visitors a carefree way to witness an urban rebirth in progress.

Situated on the valley floor below the Columbia River, Portland serves as a natural gateway to the Cascade Mountains and the Pacific Ocean—both an hour's drive away. The majestic Mount Hood, which rises 11,250ft. in the east, peers through the high-rise office buildings downtown and is visible from most parts of the city and its suburbs. The only ways to get into and out of the city

center from the suburbs in the east are 10 bridges across the busy Willamette River, which bisects the city.

Preserving the natural beauty and enhancing the livability of the city remain critical to urban planners in Portland, where the population density, at 4,200 people per square mile, is three times that of Kansas City. The 44-mile light-rail system known as the Metropolitan Area Express (MAX) virtually eliminates the need to drive into the walkable city center and eases freeway congestion. With 64 stations in its expanding network, the MAX shuttles commuters from far beyond the city limits and chauffeurs visitors from Portland International Airport to the doorsteps of downtown hotels and shopping areas—all in air-conditioned trains.

As Kansas City debates the feasibility of light rail and revitalizes its own downtown, a glance at the economic and environmental benefits of the MAX should convince naysayers of its necessity. The value of developments along the MAX lines is estimated at \$6 billion since plans were conceived in 1978. Commitments to the environment by TriMet, the regional authority overseeing the MAX and buses, have also paid off with the elimination of 187,000 car trips each day. Expansions planned for the coming years will drive even more people to urban Portland, ensuring continued economic viability in that area.

The Pioneer Courthouse Square, a sunken brick amphitheater that anchors the small but colorful downtown, has benefited from two adjacent MAX

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stations. With foot traffic of more than 9.5 million people a year, the square is aptly called the city's "living room," and it hosts more than 300 concerts and cultural events each year. The numbers are hardly surprising because it is within the 330-block Fareless Square where locals, visitors, and students ride the MAX, trolleys, streetcars, and buses for free. The Portland Saturday Market, a free ride away from the Skidmore Fountain station, sees an estimated 750,000 visitors each year and provides an outlet for independent artists to showcase their crafts.

If you would rather walk about a dozen half-sized city blocks to the market, don't forget to try Portland's water from any of the 52 Benson Bubblers. First installed in 1912 to quench loggers' thirst, the drinking fountains—some of which were installed as part of TriMet's public art projects along MAX lines—have become Portland landmarks. Kansas City has Portland beat hands down when it comes to the number of fountains. But being a green city, Portland placed all its fountains on seasonal timers and calibrated them to pump less than one-tenth of 1% of the city's daily water demand.

Follow the 65ft.-tall "Portland" sign two blocks south on Broadway, and you are now in the Cultural District, where you can overindulge in classical delights ranging from *Carmen* by Portland Opera (Sept. 21-29) to *The Nutcracker* (Dec. 8-24) presented by the Oregon Ballet Theatre. Tickets to the Grammy-nominated Oregon Symphony are in high demand, but do not despair. Music Director Carlos Kalmar, a familiar face at the Kansas City Symphony, kicks off the 2007-2008 season with a free concert on Aug. 30 at Gov. Tom McCall Waterfront Park.

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PORTLAND: a showcase for urban renaissance

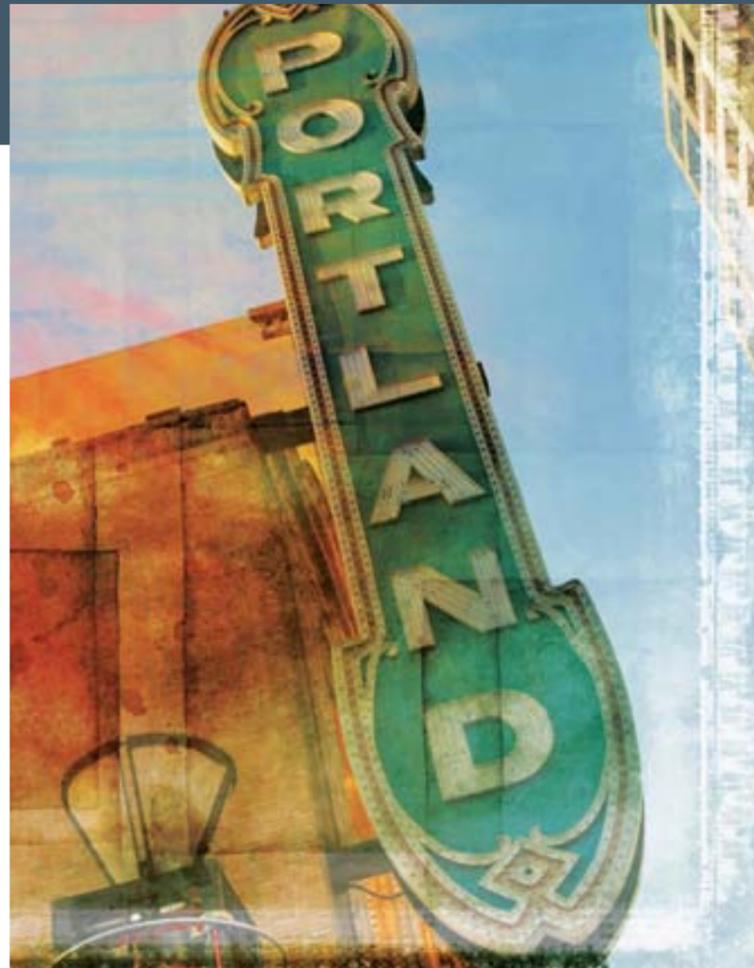
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PORTLAND PROVES HOW AN URBAN RENAISSANCE CAN HAPPEN WITH CAREFUL PLANNING AND BY TAPPING INTO EXISTING COMMUNITIES OF ARTISTS, CREATIVE THINKERS, AND VISIONARIES.

Once a four-lane highway, the 30-acre Waterfront Park is a popular summer destination for Portlanders and visitors. In addition to the free concert, it hosts the Safeway Waterfront Blues Festival, the Bite of Oregon Festival, the Portland Rose Festival, and the Oregon Brewers Festival every summer. The MAX and Portland Streetcars, which run on a continuous loop, often add capacity during special events to accommodate increased ridership. The streetcar loop has recently been extended to South Waterfront, where it connects to the Portland Aerial Tram for a thrilling ride up to the Oregon Health & Science University. Observation decks at the school offer a stunning view of the Willamette River and Mount Hood in the distance.

Just north of the downtown core lies the Pearl District, a shining example of an urban rebirth. In just more than a decade, this neighborhood of turn-of-the-century brick buildings, rail yards, and cobblestoned streets transformed into one of the hottest areas to dine, shop, and live. While it may be prohibitively expensive to lease a space in one of the glass-encased high-rises or renovated lofts, eating and shopping here won't break the bank.

Years of promotional events have piped a steady flow of pedestrians, diners, and shoppers into a district that was once a small sanctuary for artists in industrial lofts. Galleries are still free and open longer during the First Thursday Gallery Walk, while the ever-popular Portland Farmers Market had to add its fourth location last year. The idea of promoting sustainability by consuming locally produced food has also been a hit with local chefs, who demonstrate their skills for free. Produce is not the only food you can get here. A few national chains have moved into the area, but dining remains an art form at Pearl restaurants, which dish up everything from Nuevo Latino to Northwest fusion. Even better, the streetcars put most restaurants, cafés, galleries, and breweries within walking distance.



While the light-rail system ensures a flow of customers, state-mandated urban growth boundaries severely restrict new construction projects. Creative minds in the restaurant industry looked to existing structures. In Northwest Portland, a century-old hemp-rope factory was refashioned as a craft brewery, which helped turn Portland into "Beervana" and "Brewtopia" with 32 breweries within city limits. A turn-of-the-century drugstore in the Eliot neighborhood now offers such urban pleasures as mushroom-stuffed quail and maple-syrup-rinsed Grey Goose with Spanish almond. Not surprisingly, both locations are on the light-rail route.

Portland proves how an urban renaissance can happen with careful planning and by tapping into existing communities of artists, creative thinkers, and visionaries. That also meant going along with the unspoken Keep Portland Weird! campaign—which, some say, promotes local products, while others see it as an opportunity to keep holding the Santa Rampage or to encourage "sexy women over 40" to ride bicycles. All of that leaves very little environmental footprint, if any, in the eyes of Portlanders—and, in fact, encourages sustainable fun. And no one's complaining about free rides and free water downtown. 



above: One of the many modern loft spaces available in Portland's Pearl District, a shining example of an urban rebirth. In just more than a decade, this neighborhood of turn-of-the-century brick buildings, rail yards, and cobblestoned streets transformed into one of the hottest areas to dine, shop, and live. **left:** Follow the 65ft.-tall "Portland" sign two blocks south on Broadway to reach Portland's cultural district. **far left:** Being a green city, Portland placed all of its fountains on seasonal timers and calibrated them to pump less than one-tenth of 1% of the city's daily water demand.

VISITING PORTLAND

LOCAL DINING

When dining, Portlanders promote sustainability by using locally produced ingredients. Recognizing that effort and praising the city's internationally acclaimed culinary art, the Food Network named Portland the best eating destination in the country this year. For a local dining experience, start in the Pearl for lunch, hit the Northwest for dinner, then cross the Willamette (by MAX, of course) to Eliot and Mississippi neighborhoods for drinks and desserts.

GETTING AROUND

TriMet's Blue, Yellow, and Red MAX lines (www.trimet.org) shuttle visitors to and from the Portland International Airport (PDX) and around downtown, stopping at transit hubs for passengers transferring to buses. The trains run on schedules posted at each station and can be downloaded onto your PDA. Portland Streetcars (www.portlandstreetcar.org) run on a continuous loop from NW 23rd Avenue to the South Waterfront District, where you can take the Portland Aerial Tram (www.portlandtram.org). The streetcars run every 13 minutes during weekdays, and their exact arrival times, calculated from satellite positioning data, can be downloaded wirelessly from the Portland Streetcar website. For trips outside the city, consider FlexCar (www.flexcar.com), a low-emission vehicle you can rent by the hour.

NOT ON THE LIGHT RAIL

Buses run here, but not the MAX, in the eclectic Hawthorne neighborhood (thinkhawthorne.com) that extends east from the Willamette River to Mount Tabor, an extinct volcano. An acupuncturist peacefully coexists next to a CPA and an ophthalmologist in this self-styled bohemian enclave. This 50-block stretch of quirky shops and eateries is also the home of Bagdad Theater & Pub, which refashioned an extravagant 1927 Universal Pictures cinema into a draft pub and a theater with cushy seats (mcmenamins.com).

OFF THE GRID

Unlike Seattle, where its underground tunnels attract tourists, Portland has covered up its notorious Shanghai Tunnels and has no plans to make them accessible. Unsuspecting bar patrons were drugged and bound in the tunnels until they were sold as slaves aboard ships bound for the Far East. The network extends south from Old Town/China Town, just west of the Willamette, to downtown. Above ground, the intricate Portland Classical Chinese Garden (www.portlandchinesegarden.org) replicates 25 centuries of traditions of Suzhou in eastern China. This garden also reused an existing space: a company parking lot.



BEING GREEN

Portland was billed as the most sustainable city by the SustainLane (www.sustainlane.com) in 2006, the latest year for which data was available. Portland was praised for its public transit system, including the Fareless Square, air and water quality, a citywide commitment to reduce emissions, and mixed-use development of the Pearl District. By comparison, Kansas City came in 18th when ranked against 50 large U.S. cities and was commended for its efforts to build gardens, improve public transit, and take sustainability into consideration.