This survey of over 400 people in the St. Johns/Lombard region points out the wide discrepancy between what Portland’s city planners claim people want and what Portland residents actually want.

Survey subjects included bike lanes, bubble curbs, boulevard conversion, zoning and narrow lots.
Background

The Proposed St. Johns/Lombard Plan was released in early August 2003 by the Portland Planning Bureau. The Plan proposes adding bike lanes to parts of Lombard, extending many curbs out to the edge of the traffic lane and restricting sections of the left turn lane by the addition of center islands. An earlier version eliminated the left turn lane entirely for sections of the study area.

Numerous informal contacts indicated widespread dislike of some of the Plan’s elements. Local resident, Sharon Nasset decided to create an independent survey.

Purpose

The Nasset survey was formulated to include important elements of the proposed Plan, elements that might be considered for addition to the Plan in the future and other items of general interest to the region.

Method

The questionnaires were widely distributed to residents without selection by age, ethnicity, social strata or willingness to come to city sponsored meetings. Questionnaires were passed out at a variety of locations including local businesses, working class restaurants, bars and taverns and even from a vacant lot on Lombard street. The initial survey period was from August 27 to September 8, 2003. Survey activity was resumed in November 2003 and continued for periods through February 2004.

Results

Approximately 445 individuals responded, most including their name and address. Responses to key questions suggest that some Portland practices deviate significantly from resident’s wishes:

- Respondents were 96% against removing the left turn lane.
- Respondents were 94% against bubble curbs on Lombard.
- Respondents were 92% against “skinny lots.”
- Respondents were 89% against bike lanes on Lombard.
- Respondents were 81% for local control of zoning.

Although only North Portland was targeted in the survey, we believe that similar results would be obtained city wide.
Why The Difference?

There appears to be a wide divergence between the proposed Plan, created as the result of the public’s participation and actual public opinions expressed in the Nasset survey.

Possible explanations include:

- Unlike the city’s method, city employees and employees of companies with an interest in city planning such as consulting, contracting and construction companies had no opportunity to over participate in the Nasset survey.
- Unlike the city’s method, the results of the Nasset survey were not filtered through a multi-step process.
- Unlike the city’s method, the Nasset survey results are based only on actual votes.
- Unlike the city’s method, Nasset asked questions based on proposed construction features, not a desired or imagined goal. For example, in the city process, planners might ask questions such as “Would you like Lombard to be easier for pedestrians to cross.” A yes answer would then be interpreted as the desire for extended curbs or center islands. The participants were given no opportunity to weigh the tradeoffs inherent in such interpretations.
- Both groups of participants were self selected, but had different make-ups.
- Certain subsets of the population, who have unusually large amounts of spare time, may have been over-represented in the city process which stretched over several meetings and several neighborhood walks.

Narrowness of the city’s outreach The head planner stated that all residents and businesses in the Plan area were notified and that the Plan area is a total of 450 acres (about 0.72 square mile.) But since the total area of the Peninsula is on the order of 4 square miles, the intended notification area was only about 18% of the Peninsula. Moreover, much of this area is business not residential so perhaps only 6% of the population was notified. Several business owners who were within the notification area testified, at the September 2003 Planning Commission Hearing, that they were not aware of the Plan as recently as three weeks earlier (IE: August 2003). Public outreach began in March 2001.

Some neighborhood associations adjacent to the Plan area, but not within it, reported that they were not aware of the Plan.
Detailed Results

The exact questions are reproduced below in bold, followed by the summary information on the same line. Each question had four choices, which are tabulated under the question.

| Question                                                                 | Yes | No  | Ratio | Percent |\n|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-------|---------|\n| Do you want bike lanes on Lombard?                                      | 50  | 392 | 8:1   | 89%     | NO      |\n| Absolutely Yes: 18 Yes: 32 No: 74 Absolutely No: 318                     |     |     |       |         |         |\n| Do you want extended (“bumpout”) curbs on Lombard?                       | 27  | 418 | 15:1  | 94%     | NO      |\n| Absolutely Yes: 11 Yes: 16 No: 87 Absolutely No: 331                      |     |     |       |         |         |\n| Do you think the center lane on Lombard should be removed?               | 15  | 413 | 27:1  | 96%     | NO      |\n| Absolutely Yes: 8 Yes: 7 No: 122 Absolutely No: 291                      |     |     |       |         |         |\n| Do you think residents, not the city, should set zoning?                | 286 | 68  | 4:1   | 81%     | YES     |\n| Absolutely Yes: 132 Yes: 154 No: 45 Absolutely No: 23                     |     |     |       |         |         |\n| Do you think the current zoning is OK?                                   | 221 | 116 | 1.9:1 | 66%     | YES     |\n| Absolutely Yes: 48 Yes: 173 No: 85 Absolutely No: 31                     |     |     |       |         |         |\n| Is granting zoning variances better then wholesale changes by the city?  | 270 | 73  | 3.7:1 | 79%     | YES     |\n| Absolutely Yes: 81 Yes: 189 No: 46 Absolutely No: 27                     |     |     |       |         |         |\n| Do you want more skinny lots?                                            | 32  | 388 | 12:1  | 92%     | NO      |\n| Absolutely Yes: 12 Yes: 20 No: 131 Absolutely No: 257                    |     |     |       |         |         |\n| Do you think a stop light at Richmond and Ivanhoe will back up traffic and cause more congestion and air pollution? | 263 | 136 | 1.7:1 | 66%     | YES     |\n| Absolutely Yes: 120 Yes: 143 No: 85 Absolutely No: 51                    |     |     |       |         |         |
The Survey Form

Front Of the Typical Survey Form

Rear of the Survey Form

St. John’s / Lombard Plan Survey

[Survey Form Details]

St. John’s-Lombard Survey Report (Feb 04)-01b.wpd

Look what’s coming to Lombard

Remove center lane, leaving one Lane in each direction
Bubble curbs (“curb extensions”)
Bus stops that make buses block the ONLY traffic lane
Bike lanes
Trees in the center of the street

Proposed locations of Curb Extensions (Bumpout Curbs) Along Lombard St.

IMPORTANT:
Give us your opinion on the other side of this page

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