

CJP Community Forum: Green Jobs & Wealth Building

Tuesday, November 18, 2025

Meeting Notes

Attendees - in person

- John Wasiutynski - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Tim Lynch - Project Staff Office of Sustainability
- Monique Smiley - Project Staff, Mult Co Office of Sustainability
- Leslie Kochan - Extinction Rebellion
- Miranda Jones - 350 PDX
- Mark Darizenzo - JWJ
- Tyler Fellini - JWJ
- Max Light-Pacheco - OEC
- Annabelle Rousseau - Verde
- Michelle Maher - Verde Builds
- Alex Javier - City of Portland Tree Apprenticeship
- Briar Way - PCC

Attendees - Online

- Jairaj Singh - Project staff, Mult Co Environmental Health
- Brendon Haggerty - Project staff, Mult Co Environmental Health
- Anna Kurnizki - Community Warehouse
- Danny Noonan - BREACH Collective
- Michaela McCormick - Extinction Rebellion
- Nsilo Berry - Mult Co REACH
- Lynn Handlin - Community Member
- Margaret Butler - Retired, formerly JWJ
- Jillian - project staff
- Caitlin Peerson - Earth Advantage
- Natalie Everson - 350 PDX
- Diane Meisenhelter - Extinction Rebellion
- Lexie Folkert - DSA Ecosocialist
- Pat Kaczmarek - Extinction Rebellion

Intros

John reviewed the first slides

Questions/Comments: None

Metrics

- Rate of ownership - also look at percentage of ones income contribute to rent
- Breakdown of folks, demographically, who are experiencing homelessness (note see housing)
- How are green jobs defined? Reuse sector for example is an important part of the circular economy, local jobs that can't be outsourced, should be included.
- One idea for definition is low carbon carbon jobs
- Could we look at the growth of green jobs as metric, once definition

- WSI - Has done a lot of data analysis, grants for green development, has a definition
- Caitlin Peerson from EA will send that link
- PCC working with Worksystems to align with their more expansive approach
- Aligned definition is also beneficial for industry partners
- It's important to think about standards as well when it comes to job creation (ie Preschool for All) – wage standards. Cannot include jobs that leave people in poverty, JWW has a working definition of “good jobs” that are inclusive
- JWW green job definition - care jobs, teaching, health care, are also low carbon jobs
- Another approach is to define what isn't a green job - example of sprawling housing development that is LEED certified, is that green?
- How to navigate contradiction - glass recycler is also major polluter, steel manufacturing for wind turbines
- Could also look at the biggest threats, example of McMinnville dam, unlined and potential contamination.
- Is there room for a supplemental document - that identifies barriers, try to address those that are most feasible or are most impactful - Are there existing studies that address
- Different culturally concepts about what is considered green job
(<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0301479720302498>), european context for example
- Housing stability may be a better indicator than home ownership, more resonate for many folks
- Also need some differentiation of green jobs, entry level vs journey/managerial,
- Metric - percentage unionized, and exploring the differences between union and non-union
- Measure the alignment between average wages and housing/cost of living
- Institutions are engaging newly in workforce conversations (PCC for example), partially in response to PCEF funding and interest of professional
- Metric around job creations/entrepreneurship? Folks coming out of the justice system may need to start a business because of barriers.

Strategies

- On the climate corps, those need to be real paths to professional development, more than just pulling blackberries, gap between seasonal and job exploration cycle to career. Challenge currently.
- Need to strengthen professional links to private and public sector to apprenticeship,
- Recognizing that many current apprenticeship programs, like Americorps, are poverty wages and may be significantly limited to folks.
- Really important to look at the existing job apprenticeship programs, build off those
- Unionization is key to pay and job quality.
- Labor standards boards can create minimum standards across an entire industry. Ref: CA labor standards for fast food, OR ag workers and in home care workers. Don't require a union but some of the same standards. Efforts have been typically state driven, unclear if it could be done at a county level.
- What is the opportunity to connect this conversation to independent/self employed, what are the resources that are or could be made available.

- Risk of concentration of workforce pathways/investments in a few companies/organizations, larger orgs have an economy of scale, which might make smaller orgs less competitive.
- Recognition that government contracting can serve as a barrier for new orgs, but requirements to require the use of small orgs as subs is also important.
- What are the ways to work towards a broader transformation to allow folks to contribute to their communities? How are we considering the broad opportunities that can come for new development patterns?
- As we take care of the environment it naturally leads us to new job opportunities
- Missing - something that “takes on” corporate partners, like a community benefits agreement. Applying it to new models, like the construction of the PDX baseball stadium,
- One vital role for the County (and all others) is to advocate for developing and paying for these strategies, they are all necessary. Need legislation to tax folks over \$150ka year and large corps, to fund the strategies in the plan, including workforce. Support online and in the room.
- Idea - penalize companies that leave the area/state, leaving folks unable to stand up on their own. Private equity can play a role in companies deciding to leave.
- Need a way to increase wages, including through minimum wage, need a way to be able minimize the impacts to smaller businesses. Revenue source to support business as well to survive, and basic income for those who can’t work.
- Sometimes throwing money at a problem can be a short term spur to transition, bridging the gap between non-profit to for-profit, sustainable funding/orgs.
- Are there ways to ensure trades transition, for example prohibiting gas in homes but requiring water capture so same number of trades jobs are required, and community better off
- Could a fund stream be created to help subsidize folks to do lower wage/apprenticeships as part of job transition pathways. More limited alternative to UBI.
- Strategy - career pathway, include career progression opportunities as well.
- How do you create pathways for smaller contractors, potentially through incentives for home retrofits for example, that are limited to smaller companies.
- Having the County invest in support for the job development spectrum (housing, job programs)
 - Priority on providing wraparound services to job development programs
 - A large need is transportation especially
 - The current staff that are hiring BIPOC/LGTBQ+ need cultural competency especially in the construction industry
 - Are folks who are going through these programs aware of the supports that might be available for participants, SNAP, LIBD, PCEF bike program. Also awareness of WSI and other apprenticeship programs. Connecting these pathways with the job coaches who support these individuals.
- Question of how potentially participants, high school and beyond, are connected with programs, always a need to expand and connect more people to these programs
- Recognizing that these conversations and ideas are pushing against capitalism, myth that higher income folks are leaving because of taxes, reality is low income folks are being priced out, how do folks push against the capitalist barriers/institutions that.
- We exist in a world of someone’s imagination, we are imagining another way. Whatever is achieved will advance a new vision.
- First strategy about fossil fuel transition is very broad, could this be improved on.

- Intent of the goal was to recognize the folks who might be at risk job wise from energy transitions, dislocation.
- Maybe it needs a **new strategy that specifically focuses on growing a green workforce, which is different from managing a transition for folks who already work in energy.**
- Youth conservation corps, connecting canopies existing, but the jobs need to be there to go into.
- There may also be a need to help translate seasonal workers for example to a resume of skills that are more broadly employable. But also growing the longer term position (seasonal to 1-3 years to career)
- Emphasize the value of jobs that can only be local
- Is there a disconnect from training programs and companies? Anecdotal need for folks in the heat pump/solar/maintenance arena AND training folks not seeing those career and training pathways.
- Need to look at the specific certifications required to do certain work, like HVAC cert, limitations on schools that provided that, cost/time to be able to complete that training. Like that contractors who are looking for help want those certifications beforehand. EA listed OSHA 10, OSHA 30, Building Science essential, working on a HP certification. PCC has an HVAC certification, working to build a heat pump program.
- Recommendation: clearing house for green jobs, resource for people to go to from both those interested in the career and folks who are looking to hire. Difficult time for trades, apprenticeship programs are full but many of the projects are pulling back. Thinking about how to support this work during industry and economic downturn/change. Jobs are transitional, risk of getting trained up and not having the jobs materialize. Getting half shifts, not able to sustain themselves financially. Shifting federal policies/incentives can shape this.
- A lot of folks coming into trades want a path to lead, many of these jobs are becoming highly technical, require significant academic skills. HVAC for example, higher performance system design for SFR, multifamily connected systems.
- Training opportunities are very limited, very hard to scale.
- Strategy - What can the public sphere do to create a workforce demand/opportunities. For example, public commitment to street trees will create a long term need for maintenance jobs. Thinking about other areas that advance a public good and that can provide entry points and careers.
- Include a requirement for utilities to meet certain hiring from programs as part of their obligation as a monopoly.
- Housing: Emphasize on social housing, that are also inclusive of resilience, resource availability, social services
- Water resource, managing for enviro and resilient water availability.
- Tim's idea: Continuum of workforce pathways, education about the current pipeline and programs and areas where the County is plugging into and where we can
- Important with the plan overall, how the County as an organization, OS aligned with the goals and priorities of HSD,

Notes from zoom chat/chat comments:

Caitlin Peerson:

This definition was developed by Worksystems, the workforce development board for this region.

"Defining Clean Energy: The Clean Energy Sector is about the transition away from fossil fuels as our primary source of energy, and the embrace of clean, renewable, and sustainable sources of energy like wind, solar, and hydropower.

Clean Energy-related occupations are those that are critical to the clean energy transition (more on these below), such as building- and construction-related careers, forestry and regenerative agriculture, transportation and public transit careers, and careers related to the manufacture of products and components that support the transition."

Anna Kurnizki:

Great points being made! This Worksystems definition seems relatively expansive but doesn't clearly include the reuse/repair/share sector.. and in comparison to the highest priority of climate, we could compare driving an electric vehicle for Trimet versus working at Community Cycling Center promoting affordable, equitable, and green transportation. So less of "clean energy transition" and more jobs that promote local community resilience, racial and social equity, and greenhouse gas mitigation. There are lots of jobs that could qualify- maybe having a prioritization tool/agreement rather than a strict definition.

Lexie:

I wonder if green jobs should start with one definition but be something that's constantly evolving and maybe a type of committee has to approve or agree about adding specific jobs or sectors? Like things like reuse and upcycling.

Anna Kurnizki (in response to Lexie):

Reuse/repair/share has always been an afterthought in the climate reduction/sustainability sector despite being the foundation of the waste hierarchy and a top strategy for climate change mitigation. I'd advocate for this sector to be included in the definition so it doesn't continue to be overlooked. Especially when those jobs are benefiting both our climate and our community members most impacted by systemic inequities.

Danny Noonan:

15.9% in Oregon https://www.bls.gov/regions/west/news-release/unionmembership_oregon.htm

Lexie:

Are we also thinking about younger people like high school students getting job training and exposure? Not just PCC students or young adults like Americorps workers.

Anna Kurnizki:

Yes Michaela! (in support of Michaela's comment on finding a revenue source for all these programs).

Diane Meisenhelter:

Curious since we will be talking transportation soon why earth advantage does gas cards instead of public transit cards? Are there barriers within transit? (in response to Caitlin Peerson comment)

Lexie:

As someone that uses Trimet I have to imagine it would take hours of transit when your job site is constantly changing.

Lynn Handlin:

Yes, we need much better transit (in response to Lexie's comment).

Lexie:

If I think about construction workers, or any workers with tools...how much could you fit on an e-bike?

Diane Meisenhelter:

A lot on e-trike with baskets. That's what my stepson uses.

Caitlin Peerson:

The challenge in residential construction is that a worker may go to multiple job sites all across the city in one day, as Lexie mentioned.

E-bikes could carry a small toolkit, but not ducts, saws, or larger equipment that construction workers may need to transport around.

PBOT's Transportation Wallet Access for All program provides flexibility for folks depending on how they want to get around: <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/wallet/access-all>. This is a limited program due to funding. Wondering if this could be used as a model (or just increase funding for it) as an incentive for companies/orgs that are contributing meaningfully to green jobs.

Anna Kurnizki:

Yes- knowing the internal lingo/jargon is super important to breaking into the industry!
And promoting that type of "care" work, not just expecting volunteerism - actually paying for those jobs!