



Air Quality

Every community member breathes clean and healthy air

Goal: Every community member breathes clean and healthy air.



Description

Clean air is a fundamental right regardless of one's neighborhood or socioeconomic status. We all have to breathe, but we seldom have a choice in the quality of the air we breathe. Where we live, where we work, and what other people do has a big impact on the quality of the air we are exposed to from day to day.

Air pollution has substantial health impacts that can lead to sickness and even early death. Multnomah County is the most urban county in Oregon and its residents are subject to high pollution exposure from fossil fuel combustion, industry, and even residential and commercial wood burning. These sources of pollution expose people to elevated levels of fine particulate matter (soot), nitrogen oxide, ozone, diesel particulate matter, and other air toxics. Smoke from wildfires, exacerbated by a heating climate, is also an emerging threat resulting in worsening air quality across the U.S. West after decades of improvements.⁹

Air quality is an environmental justice issue. Although air pollution affects everyone in Multnomah County, it puts communities of color at greater risk. Analysis has shown that Black and Latinx communities tend to live in areas with the highest concentrations of diesel particulate matter (a highly toxic soot from diesel engines) and residential wood smoke (which also produces soot and other pollutants).¹⁰ In addition, indoor air quality is also impacted from a wide variety of sources – including household cleaners, tobacco use, pets, pests, mold, gas stoves,⁹ wood stoves, and dust – and is often less healthy than outdoor air. Elevated levels of carbon monoxide or radon may also pose serious health risks for indoor air quality.



How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Number of days that the Air Quality Index is 50 or above, or “moderate (yellow)” level in Multnomah County.

Description: Air Quality Index (AQI): Think of the AQI as a yardstick that runs from 0 to 500. The higher the AQI value, the greater the level of air pollution and the greater the health concern. AQI is a composite measure of several air pollutants, including particulate matter, nitrogen oxide, and ozone. The desired outcome in Multnomah County is to have zero days over an AQI of 50, also known as “moderate (yellow)” level, the level at which air quality begins to become unhealthy for sensitive populations.

Current data: In recent years there have been more days with unhealthy to hazardous air quality and more consecutive days of poor air quality. In 2024 there were **55 days** when the AQI was 50 or above.

Data Source: [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#)

Indicator 2: Number of Emergency Departments (ED)/Urgent Care (UC) visits for breathing related illness per 100,000 people in Multnomah County, and associated demographic data about those seeking care.

Description: This indicator measures the number of visits to hospital emergency departments and urgent care clinics (ED/UC) made by people with non-infectious respiratory illnesses. The indicator excludes data for respiratory illness caused by communicable disease such as COVID-19 and the common cold.

Current data: After a notable decrease in 2020, asthma-like illness ED/UC visits have been returned to pre-2020 levels in Multnomah County. **In 2024 the rate was 1732 visits per 100,000** people. Asthma-like illness ED/UC visits are more likely to be female, older adults (ages 45 – 64), and Black than other ED/UC patients.

Data Source: [Regional Climate and Health Dashboard](#)

Strategy: Improve indoor air quality through public health education and by increasing access to air cleaners and other preventive measures.

Why does this matter?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans spend about 90% percent of our time indoors, and some pollutants can be 2 to 5 times higher than typical outdoor concentrations.⁹ Exposure to unhealthy indoor air quality is particularly harmful to those who may be more vulnerable – children, the elderly, and people with health conditions like asthma and heart disease. Indoor air quality is impacted by a wide variety of sources – including household cleaners, tobacco use, pets, pests, mold, gas stoves, wood stoves, and dust – and is often less healthy than outdoor air.⁹ Outdoor air can also worsen indoor air quality, particularly if outdoor air has high levels of pollution, like during a wildfire.

Knowing how to maintain healthy indoor air is important, particularly as wildfires and wildfire smoke become a more common occurrence. Indoor air cleaners, mechanical ventilation with proper filtration, and behaviour change can dramatically improve indoor air quality.

Putting this into practice

- Develop outreach materials to help households improve indoor air quality.
- Develop partnerships with providers, community organizations, child care facilities, and industries for distribution of air cleaning devices and education.
- Identify service gaps and necessary data to improve future air cleaner distribution and outreach.
- Research viability of safety labels for indoor combustion appliances.

Lead Department(s)

Health Department, Environmental Health Division; Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High



Strategy: Develop pollution control regulations for businesses that burn wood.

Why does this matter?

Using wood to cook is as old as humanity, but burning wood produces harmful pollution, including soot, nitrogen oxide, formaldehyde and greenhouse gases that impacts the surrounding community.⁹ Multnomah County has restrictions in place for residential wood combustion that prevents the use of wood burning on days when air quality is forecast to be unhealthy.⁹ Outdoor burning is also limited by the fire marshal if wildfire danger is high.

Some businesses use wood for heat, cooking, or ambiance. Businesses can operate five to seven days a week, a restaurant, for example, that uses wood for cooking creates significant localized air pollution. Wood burning can also be used as fuel for recreational heat or ambiance and wood fired sauna businesses. In some cases air filters can help capture and reduce that pollution, and in other cases wood burning should be avoided altogether, and especially on air stagnation days.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy

Investment Opportunity

Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research

Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Study the impact of commercial wood smoke, determine the impact of that pollution on public health, investigate potential technologies to address that pollution, and propose regulations that can be implemented at the state or local level.
- Research best practices for amending existing wood smoke ordinance.
- Conduct outreach and engagement with the restaurant industry.
- Develop pilot programs to fund pollution controls at existing restaurants.

Lead Department(s)

Health Department, Environmental Health Division; Office of Sustainability



Strategy: Support community-led air quality monitoring and invest in air quality outreach and education.



Why does this matter?

Community groups in Multnomah County, and nationally, have grown more interested in developing community based air quality monitoring networks. While the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality maintains a reliable network of air quality sensors, that network measures background, or ambient, levels of pollution and can't always detect more localized air quality problems. Technological advances have also increased the availability of accurate lower cost air quality sensors. In recent years, local groups like the Blueprint Foundation have developed youth education curricula that include building and deploying low cost air quality sensors. These types of efforts can help communities feel more connected to what is often an invisible problem and develop their own solutions. In addition, localized sensor networks can detect issues that may otherwise be overlooked.

Putting this into practice

- Develop partnerships with community-based organizations to pursue grant funding to deploy an air quality sensor network and conduct research on community impacts and solutions.
- Support efforts to develop community based outreach and education tools on air quality issues and opportunities to involve the community in data collection, including qualitative data, that can identify sources and solutions to localized air quality issues.

Lead Department(s)

Health Department, Environmental Health Division; Office of Sustainability



STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity**
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Develop policy for protecting vulnerable communities from nearby sources of pollution.

Why does this matter?

Many people in Multnomah County live in areas that are close to sources of air pollution. These can include transportation corridors, industrial sites, and freight hubs like warehouses. Proximity to persistent sources of air pollution can have a negative impact on health and lead to environmental justice disparities at the community level. While some policy tools exist for addressing these sources of pollution - like air quality permits for fixed sources of pollution, and pollution control standards for new mobile sources like trucks - these policies can fall short for nearby communities.

Advocacy coalitions have proposed strategies that would protect communities from new and existing pollution sources in their neighborhoods. For example, a proposal to add environmental justice criteria to land use decisions would provide the opportunity for more consideration of siting decisions for new pollution sources like warehouses or data centers. Another strategy is called 'indirect source rules' where freight hubs that have a lot of pollution from mobile source diesel engines are required to adopt strategies to minimize pollution. These, and other strategies, could add substantial public health protections for Multnomah County residents.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy

Investment Opportunity

Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research

Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low	Med	High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low	Med	High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low	High

Putting this into practice

- Investigate the use of indirect source rules and environmental justice land use screens in other jurisdictions and evaluate the applicability in Oregon/Multnomah County. Estimate the pollution reduction and environmental justice benefits from applying these tools locally.
- Develop more detailed knowledge of the air quality impacts of existing pollution sources that are not currently regulated by clean air rules.
- Continue community-centered coalition work to increase the awareness of air quality issues and build toward policy solutions.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature, Oregon Environmental Quality Commission, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality



Strategy: Develop nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions standards for gas appliances that are vented to the outdoors.



Why does this matter?

Natural gas - which is mostly methane, a strong greenhouse gas - produces a variety of pollutants when combusted.⁹ Combustion pollutants include nitrogen oxides (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO), carbon dioxide (CO2), methane (CH4), nitrous oxide (N2O), volatile organic compounds (VOCs), trace amounts of sulfur dioxide (SO2), and particulate matter (PM).⁹ According to 2020 National Emissions Inventory data for Multnomah County, natural gas contributes approximately 1,197 tons - 8.6% of total - of the anthropogenic NOx pollution in Multnomah County annually. Most of those emissions are attributed to residential and commercial space and water heating and industrial processes, with residential use making up nearly half of the total. Together, use of natural gas represents the third largest source of NOx in Multnomah County, with the majority coming from on-and off-road diesel equipment and passenger vehicles. Emissions from these other sources are being addressed through pollution control requirements for new vehicles, registration requirements for the tri-County region, and electrification.

In California the South Coast Air Quality Management District adopted Rule 1146.2 that requires new and existing residential and commercial buildings to transition to zero-emission water heaters. The rule applies to natural gas-fired pool heaters, larger water heaters, small commercial water heaters, boilers, and process heaters, requiring zero-emission NOx standards when the equipment is replaced. Also in California, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District adopted Rules 9-4 and 9-6 that restrict the sale of gas furnaces, water heaters, and boilers. Both air districts anticipate substantial pollution reductions.

Putting this into practice

- Study the applicability of similar rules to California in Oregon and Multnomah County.
- Promote non-emitting alternatives for space and water heating.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature, Oregon Environmental Quality Commission, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Supporting Department(s): Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY





Water

Every community member has access to clean water that supports their needs and all living systems

Goal: Every community member has access to clean water that supports their needs and all living systems.



Description

Equitable access to clean water is a pillar of climate justice. Clean water isn't just a basic human right — it's essential for healthy communities and thriving ecosystems. It fuels public health, fosters well-being and safeguards the natural world. Multnomah County is blessed with incredible water resources, including world class drinking water, aquatic ecosystems, and water-based recreational opportunities. This goal goes beyond drinking water and encompasses clean rivers, streams and lakes for swimming, fishing and the overall health of the ecosystem on which we depend.

Climate change, however, intensifies existing water challenges, like controlling stormwater pollution, aiding in the recovery of endangered fish, and restoring ecosystems. Rising temperatures in Oregon are causing a shift from snow to rain, leading to a diminished mountain snowpack and earlier spring melts. This transition results in higher winter flood risks and snow drought conditions that increase fire risk at higher elevations and decrease summer stream flows. These lower summer flows, combined with heat, raise water temperatures to levels that threaten aquatic species and increase the frequency of toxic algal blooms. Lower stream flows could also diminish the energy output of hydroelectric dams. Furthermore, intensified wildfire activity increasingly compromises water quality by increasing the possibility of post-fire sediment and ash washing into municipal watersheds and treatment systems.

Work is already underway to address some of these threats, but more needs to be done to preserve and enhance this most precious of life-giving resources.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Number of days in the year when bacteria or harmful algal bloom levels close the Lower Willamette River to Swimming.

Description: The City of Portland and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality measure E.coli and cyanobacteria (harmful algal blooms) respectively. These measures are necessary to protect public health and ensure humans and their dog companions don't get sick from swimming. These data are monitored continuously or seasonally depending on the location.

Current data: 0 days of HAB advisory on Lower Willamette River in 2025

Data Source: OHA, [Recreational CyanoHAB Advisory Archive](#)

Indicator 2: Columbia Slough Watershed Report Card.

Description: The Bureau of Environmental Services maintains watershed report cards for 6 urban watersheds in Portland. The report card summarizes a holistic suite of watershed health indicators. The report cards are updated every 4 years. The Columbia Slough Watershed is a highly urbanized waterway that has been the focus of advocacy and restoration work for many years. It also transects many of the most diverse neighborhoods in Multnomah County, and provides an accessible access point for urban natural lands.

Current data: Columbia Slew

- Water Quality Score: B-
- Habitat Score: D-
- Hydrology Score: B-
- Fish and Wildlife Score: D-

Data Source: City of Portland [Watershed Report Card](#)

Strategy: Promote pollution prevention programs that will reduce pollution in area waterways.

Why does this matter?

Overuse of pesticides and herbicides is common in urban and suburban areas. Chemical weed killers used to create a “perfect” lawn can cause harm to humans and wildlife, and to native fish species, if chemicals reach streams because of stormwater runoff. Some chemical insecticides harm pollinators. Other pollutants like motor oil, litter, and fertilizers also have negative impacts on aquatic ecosystems.

Public outreach efforts like “Follow the Water” and “The River Starts Here” help people understand that their choices impact water quality. Public policies like pesticide bans also play an important role in protecting people and wildlife. Municipal agencies should expand partnerships and funding for outreach and education, and explore regulations to prevent the sale or use of especially harmful chemicals.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy**
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Support “The River Starts Here” and “Follow the Water” campaigns.
- As resources allow, explore opportunities to limit the use of harmful pesticides and herbicides, particularly in the context of untrained applicators.

Lead Department(s)

Department of Community Services

Strategy: Address Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in the lower Willamette River.



Why does this matter?

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) tend to occur in warm water with low water circulation (runoff containing fertilizers also plays a role). Climate change is increasing water temperatures. With higher water temperatures, areas like Ross Island Lagoon in the lower Willamette River - created by mining activity - are becoming a frequent source of HABs during the summer months, at times closing the river to recreation.

Improved monitoring and public communication are helping to protect people and pets from harm, but solutions can be found for specific known problem areas like Ross Island Lagoon. Restoring flushing channels to allow the river to flow through the lagoon would address the major source of HABs in the lower Willamette River. In other problem areas, like Oaks Bottom Nature area, solutions may be less obvious, but could include controlling polluted runoff, and other treatments.

Implementing solutions, however, is complicated. Complications arise out of the mix of ownership, overlapping regulatory responsibilities, permitting, and funding. Coordination and engagement between community based groups, regulators and State and local government is needed to ensure equitable, science-based, solutions are implemented.

Putting this into practice

- Host annual Lower Willamette River HAB convening to bring together interested parties with a focus on science and solutions.
- Continue the collaboration with OSU to develop mixing channel design for Ross Island.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Prioritize and fund the removal of culverts that block fish passage.

Why does this matter?

Culverts are a legacy of road construction practices from the mid-20th century that did not consider infrastructure impacts on migratory fish like salmon. These fish may have difficulty jumping upstream into a culvert pipe, or have difficulty swimming through it, if the water is flowing too fast.

Culvert replacement projects are both costly and time-consuming and should be prioritized based on the greatest habitat restoration potential. Multnomah County has received funding to replace the final major fish barrier culvert on Beaver Creek. As that project is completed, the County should prioritize other culverts that create barriers for fish, especially when the culvert is in danger of failing. There are over 300 instream culverts on county roads, although not all of these culverts present challenges to fish.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy**
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Complete Troutdale Road culvert replacement project.
- Identify future priority projects and develop funding strategies.

Lead Department(s)

Department of Community Services

Strategy: Prepare residents for prolonged drinking water disruptions.



Why does this matter?

Water access will be disrupted for a prolonged period by the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, while other natural disasters like wildfires, droughts, and floods also pose a risk to drinking water. An emergency water supply is critical for personal preparation, the recommendation is that each household have a two week supply of stored water; 1 gallon of water per person per day for 14 days. Community points of emergency water access should also be encouraged and distributed throughout the county. While the County is not a water provider, it works with a number of water providers to help coordinate emergency access and readiness. By investing in educational resources, Multnomah County can help bridge the gap between individual readiness and community-level action during a drinking water disruption.

Putting this into practice

- Conduct asset mapping of existing emergency water resources, including high-capacity filtration systems and emergency water sources, to identify and bridge service gaps.
- Collaborate with the Regional Water Providers Consortium to align preparedness strategies and long-term resilience planning across jurisdictional lines.
- Develop and deploy culturally specific education campaigns on household water storage to communities who face barriers to traditional emergency communications.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Emergency Management

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity**
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Reduce impact of 6PPD-Quinone in area rivers.

Why does this matter?

6PPD is a chemical used in the production of car tires. As car tires wear out due to normal use, tire wear particles are created that can be transported into local waterways through stormwater runoff. When 6PPD comes into contact with ozone it forms 6PPD-Quinone, a compound that is toxic to coho salmon and cutthroat trout at extremely low concentrations. 6PPD has been conclusively linked to endangered coho salmon death. Finding non-toxic alternatives to 6PPD is vital to protecting coho runs, particularly in urban areas like Multnomah County. Multnomah County should continue to convene a 6PPD work group and look for advocacy opportunities at the state or federal level to promote the use of inert chemicals in tires.

At the same time, the County can reduce the impact of 6PPD by constructing stormwater treatment facilities on County owned roadways. Options can include permeable pavements, bioswales, and other best management practices that filter stormwater.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Participate in Oregon 6PPD-Q working group.
- As funding allows, add additional stormwater treatment to County roadways where stormwater drains to a salmon bearing waterway.
- As funding and capacity allows, promote practices that reduce tirewear like driving less, and checking tire air pressure.

Lead Department(s)

Department of Community Services; Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Work with community partners and water districts to develop water affordability indicator.

Why does this matter?

Water bills - including drinking water, sewer, and stormwater utility charges - can be a substantial burden to low income households. While these services are indispensable for public and household health, and necessary precursors for a thriving community, many households struggle to pay their water bills. Nationally, 20% of households have outstanding arrearages or were in debt to their water utility. This may be especially true locally as upward pressure on water bills continues to mount due to needed infrastructure investments. Currently, there is no established measure of so-called 'water burden' nationally, or in Oregon.

According to the EPA both qualitative definitions and quantitative measurements of water affordability can be useful in evaluating the water burden faced by different communities. The County can explore, with water utility partners, appropriate measures of water burden and track those measures over time with the aim of reducing impacts, especially on those households that struggle the most to keep up with water bills.

Putting this into practice

- Establish a working group to determine the best approach(s) for measuring water burden.
- Develop a reproducible methodology for tracking water burden over time, and ideally disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and other demographic factors.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity**
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Connect residents to safe, accessible swimming areas within local waterways, especially in places that are accessible by active or public transit, and partner to enhance those areas when possible.

Why does this matter?

The Willamette, Columbia, and Sandy rivers offer incredible recreational opportunities for area residents. The Willamette River is especially important for swimming because it's accessible by public transit. Access to swimming in the Willamette River has become easier with the addition of ladders to floating docks and beach cleanups. This work needs to continue, ensuring that beaches and other swimming areas are accessible to people of all abilities, and can be accessed via public transit. Urban swimming is a climate adaptation strategy, particularly for people who can't drive to places outside the urban core, allowing people to cool off on the hottest days.

Safety, however, is a key. Providing seasonal lifeguards at popular riverside swimming areas, and promoting awareness of water safety practices, like using personal flotation devices, will help to promote the safe use of water recreation resources.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Designate official swimming areas along Willamette and Columbia rivers and ensure those locations have personal flotation devices available for use, and can be accessed by users of all ability levels..
- Promote seasonal awareness of water safety, and ensure some designated swimming areas have lifeguards.

Lead Department(s)

City of Portland Parks and Recreation; Oregon Metro

Strategy: Work toward drinking water, storm water, and sewer utility affordability measures, including ensuring that eligible customers are aware of programs that can reduce their bills and bill assistance programs.

Why does this matter?

Water can be among the most expensive utilities that people have to pay for. Water utility bills include drinking water, sewer, and stormwater utility charges. Water agencies, potentially with the help of partner community-based organizations, should educate customers on the water system, how to read bills, and ways to conserve water and save money.

Every city in Multnomah County offers water utility discount programs. Making sure residents know about the programs and can access them when needed will require navigation assistance and coordination. Service providers, community-based organizations, schools and health clinics should all be equipped to help residents access these programs. Multnomah County, through its utility assistance program, already coordinates emergency bill assistance programs for Portland Water and could become a central clearing house for information on similar programs.

Residents may be unaware of other programs that can help reduce bills and protect the environment, like bill discounts for downspout disconnection and tree planting. Access to clean water is a human right, a public good, and vital to public health, cost should never be a barrier.

Putting this into practice

- Work with the Regional Water Providers Consortium to coordinate information on utility bill discount programs, emergency bill assistance, and other incentives; and create a central clearinghouse of information on these programs in each jurisdiction; ensure language access.
- Work with regional water providers consortium to ensure that social service providers can easily access bill discount and assistance information to help their clients access these programs.

Lead Department(s)

Water districts in Multnomah County

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low	Med	High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low	Med	High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low	Med	High

Strategy: Increase swimming and water safety education for youth, prioritizing those with the least access to basic swimming skills and opportunities to practice.

Why does this matter?

Drowning is preventable; however, it is one of three leading causes of unintentional injury and death among persons aged ≤ 29 years. Access to swim lessons and neighborhood pools is key to developing water safety skills. Black children aged 10-14 years drown in swimming pools at rates over seven times higher than white children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. North and Northeast Portland, home to many Black residents, lack access to swimming facilities and swim lessons. Investing in facilities and lessons is critical, especially as extreme heat makes swimming an important adaptive strategy for staying cool.

Going forward, summers in Multnomah County will be hotter than in past decades with more days over 90 degrees Fahrenheit on average. Swimming, and access to safe places to swim, will become an increasingly important adaptive strategy for staying cool and coping with heat. Without deliberate effort, national patterns in disproportionate death and injury from drowning are likely to persist in Multnomah County.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Increase the availability of youth swimming lessons generally and promote culturally specific swimming lesson outreach and programming to populations at highest risk.
- Analyze proximity to public pools and availability of swim lessons in Multnomah County to determine areas with low access.

Lead Department(s)

City of Portland Parks and Recreation

Strategy: Clean and restore the lower Willamette River and surrounding land.

Why does this matter?

The lower reach of the Willamette River — the area that runs through Portland north of the Fremont Bridge — is contaminated by the legacy of industrial uses along the river. A planned cleanup of contaminated sediments has been in process for over 20 years and the area is listed by the US Environmental Protection Agency as a Superfund site. Organizations like the Portland Harbor Community Coalition have been pushing for an equitable and thorough cleanup of the river while minimizing harm to frontline communities near the cleanup.

The full scope of impacts from cleanup extend beyond the river itself. Air quality, public health, and safety for local communities as well as people living along transportation corridors and near the disposal site intended for the waste are also important considerations. Cost is also a major factor, with most cleanup costs stemming from transport of sediment to far off disposal sites, especially because cleanup is funded in part by local water utility ratepayers and taxes. Advocacy organizations like Verde and Neighbors for Clean Air are advancing alternatives that could significantly reduce costs and as much environmental and safety burden as possible.

Putting this into practice

- Support community led efforts for a fair and just cleanup of the lower Willamette River.

Lead Department(s)

Environmental Protection Agency

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Ensure that there are publicly available restrooms and plan for prolonged disruptions in sanitary sewer access.



Why does this matter?

Access to basic sanitation is a core public health need. It's also a need in terms of human dignity and care. Public restrooms offer a low-barrier place for people to use the bathroom and wash their hands. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends carefully washing your hands with soap and water after going to the bathroom and changing diapers to prevent the spread of infectious diseases like shigella. The bacteria causes inflammatory diarrhea. Without proper sanitation, this basic public health recommendation can't be followed.

Many urban areas lack adequate public access to toilets. In Portland, for example, there are about 17 public restrooms per 100,000 people, and access to public restrooms may be further limited by factors like maintenance issues. Adding and maintaining more public restrooms would contribute to public health and sanitation, but is also a large capital and operating expense.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



If sewer service is disrupted for any reason, including a Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake, emergency management measures for human waste need to be in place to prevent the spread of disease. The Oregon Resilience Plan estimates that basic wastewater health and safety will take weeks to restore, making preparation at the household and community level an important strategy for limiting the spread of illness.

Putting this into practice

- Map the availability of public restrooms, especially 24 hour restrooms and explore partnership opportunities to increase the availability of publicly accessible restrooms, like the Portland Loo, in the community.
- Partner with culturally specific organizations to promote emergency preparedness strategies for human waste disposal, and pilot self contained dispersed technologies like composting toilets at community resilience hubs.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Emergency Management (preparation)
Multnomah County Cities (infrastructure)



Food

Every community member has access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally specific food and food practices

Goal: Every community has access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally specific food and food practices.



Description

The food we eat is inextricably linked with our culture, community, health, and climate. As temperatures warm, changes in climate patterns affect agricultural yields and supply chains, as well as the nutritional quality, prices, and stability of our food supply. Cultural traditions for Native American communities are also being disrupted due to the availability of traditional foods like salmon, game, and plants important for medicine and food.

Food systems are not only being impacted by climate change, but can also contribute to the emissions causing climate change. Globally, food systems account for about one-third of total anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions are generated by the use of fossil fuels and fertilizers on the farm; livestock production; by land-use change; and from the processing, distribution, and storage of food. Conversely, farming techniques that focus on soil health, can actually store atmospheric carbon. Food waste is also a substantial source of emissions both because of the embodied emissions, and from the production of methane during landfill decomposition. Because so many people in our community experience hunger, food waste has an added sense of urgency.

An estimated 11.5% of all individuals and 16% of children in Multnomah County are experiencing food insecurity. Connecting households in need to both food assistance and food systems that support their cultural identity and practices can help to alleviate the short term and underlying causes of food insecurity. Innovative programs that range from gardening education to culturally specific farm based entrepreneurship have proliferated in Multnomah County. Building from and supporting innovative efforts, and ongoing service delivery models, can minimize the impacts of food insecurity and help to build a more resilient food system.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Percentage of county residents and children who are food insecure.

Description: Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods due to a lack of financial resources. These data come from Oregon Hunger Task Force, County Fact Sheets, with 2023 being the most current fact sheet.

Current data: 11.5% of adults and 16% of children in Multnomah County are food insecure.

Data Source:

Indicator 2: Percentage of Multnomah County farmers (producers) who are Black, Indigenous, Latine, or other people of color.

Description: The USDA conducts a census of farmers every 5 years, which includes the number of farmers, or what they label, “producers.” A producer is a person who is involved in making decisions for the farm operation.

Current data: 8% of farmers in Multnomah County are people of color with particularly small representation of Black and Native American farmers.

Data Source:

Strategy: Increase availability of land and farm incubators/collective farms and expand programs like Community Reaps Our Produce and Shares (CROPS).

Why does this matter?

Multnomah County has rich and productive agricultural lands and innovative farm incubator programs like the CROPS Farm and [Headwaters Farm](#). The East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District also has programs - like the Forever Farm Program - to preserve working farm lands. Urban farming programs like Zenger Farm and the Oregon Food Bank have shown that urban farming businesses and programs are viable through partnerships with public institutions, for example the [prescription community supported agriculture \(CSA\) food box program](#). But land in Multnomah County is still expensive, as is access to capital equipment like tractors. Market development and access to institutional contracts can also be difficult. The high cost of entering the farming industry is a barrier for beginning farmers, particularly low to moderate income individuals.

The County and other partners can help encourage new businesses, especially for historically marginalized populations like Black and Native American farmers, by buying more land and providing necessary infrastructure to operate as incubator sites for farming. Partnerships with the two Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Oregon Metro, city parks departments, Extension Service and local non-profits should be core to this effort.

Putting this into practice

- Explore partnership, including grants and other funding opportunities, to increase incubator farm access, especially for priority populations.
- Develop a strategy for expanding existing incubator farm properties or acquiring new sites.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability, Health Department, Public Health Division

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Expand equitable participation and access to community gardens and farms.



Why does this matter?

People from all walks of life want to connect with food and agriculture, whether growing food at a community garden plot, an educational opportunity at a local farm, or by starting a business that grows or utilizes local produce. Ensuring that people have the opportunity to access these resources helps develop a stronger, more resilient community.

Farms and gardens can serve as important centers for cultivating community, skills, and produce. Access to community gardening programs has been shown to reduce food insecurity, increase healthy eating, and strengthen family relationships. Community gardens exist throughout the county on publicly-owned property, at places of worship and in schoolyards. Community oriented farms are less prevalent, but serve as important hubs for entrepreneurship, job skills development, training, and community connection points to local food systems.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Develop programs to increase community garden access, especially in affordable housing communities, and other high needs communities.
- Increase access to gardening and farming education and programming by funding the Oregon State University Extension Service.

Lead Department(s)

City of Portland Parks and Recreation; City of Gresham Parks; Oregon Metro

Strategy: Reduce the use of pesticides and other harmful chemicals in yards, gardens, farms, parks, and other areas where people may be exposed.

Why does this matter?

Chemical pesticides can have harmful impacts on people and ecosystems. While these tools may be needed in certain contexts, overuse, inadequate applicator training, and insufficient individual and community protections can be particularly harmful to human health. These chemicals can travel through multiple pathways, including inhalation, ingestion, and skin exposure to cause harm, and bioaccumulate in people and ecosystems. According to Oregon OSHA agricultural workers, groundskeepers, pet groomers, fumigators, and many other occupations are at risk for exposure to pesticides.

Ecosystem health can also be harmed by use of these chemicals, for example use of pesticides has been linked to declines in non-target organisms, including insect populations. The use of systemic pesticides that permeate plants and may linger in plant tissue used in pollinators attracting nursery crops can be particularly harmful to pollinating insects. Application of pesticides should be limited, and avoided if possible.

Putting this into practice

- Provide education on integrated pest management (IPM) and other strategies that minimize the use of pesticides, for example, Level Up Your Lawn, and integrate IPM into county landscape maintenance.
- Support master gardener programs that provide education and support that helps farmers and gardeners minimize chemical inputs.
- Explore regulatory approaches for limiting the use of pesticides and herbicides by untrained applicators, and limiting the availability of highly hazardous pesticides.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability (IPM integration into County operations)

Supporting Department(s): Oregon Legislature, Oregon Environmental Quality Commission, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality; Oregon Department of Agriculture

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Advocate for Indigenous control over federal, state, and local lands in Multnomah County, especially in usual and accustomed areas for food gathering and cultivation.



Why does this matter?

Indigenous communities have cultivated the land, stewarded fish and other wildlife, and gathered food, medicine and fiber, from these lands since time immemorial. Tribal governments and individuals are engaged in the continuous act of keeping vital traditional foodways - like cultivating wapato or gathering lamprey - vibrant to this day. Moreover, some Tribal Nations have established treaty rites with the Federal Government for ongoing access to usual and accustomed places for activities that include harvesting fish and other foods.

Advocating for the return of ancestral lands to Indigenous communities, especially in areas traditionally used for food gathering such as Sauvie Island, is a vital component of climate justice. Traditional ecological knowledge in land management and conservation practices is also emerging as a vitally important suite of management practices in the face of a changing climate.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate** Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional **New**

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Develop co-management agreements for state lands in ecologically important areas like state parks and wildlife areas on Sauvie Island.
- Consult with tribes to cultivate important indigenous plants in parks and natural areas controlled by local governments.
- Support Native American led efforts that encourage food sovereignty.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature, Oregon State Parks, US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management

Strategy: Strengthen local food systems by investing in diverse distribution models and community-based infrastructure to ensure equitable access to nutritious food.

Why does this matter?

There is no single action that will address hunger and lack of access to healthy, culturally relevant foods. A sustained, coordinated approach across government and community partners is required to address these issues over time. The Oregon Food Bank, local food pantries, school districts, non-profit partners, local businesses, local hospital nutrition and food insecurity programming and different levels of county government can all play a part in ensuring that food insecurity is not an issue in our community. Innovative programs like Seattle's [Fresh Bucks](#) program provide extra spending power to households in need to buy fresh and healthy food. Fresh Bucks can be spent at farmers markets and participating grocery stores, which in turn helps sustain these businesses.

The State of Minnesota recently made universal free breakfast and lunch available for all Minnesota school age children. Research has shown that these programs increase children's ability to learn and reduce childhood food insecurity. Here in Multnomah County, prescription Community Supported Agriculture and other produce prescription programming has increased participating households' access to nutritious, culturally relevant produce, protein and whole grains. While research shows these programs to be effective, and can support the local economy, ongoing funding remains a barrier. Overcoming funding challenges will require broad based community consensus and braided funding strategies including grants, health insurance funding and exploring other sources of sustainable funding at the county and state levels.

Putting this into practice

- Explore funding models that support food systems and low-income access to nutritious food, examples include the City of Seattle Fresh Bucks program.
- Maintain and expand produce prescription programs such as Community Supported Agriculture, voucher redemption through Farmers Markets and grocery card options prescribing healthy food options.
- Identify barriers and solutions to increase the number of farmers and support opportunities for food insecure families to take part in produce prescription programs.
- Expand and sustain food pantries: Prioritize high quality food in high need communities, and leverage trusted institutions including SUN School programs. Work with existing institutions to ensure that healthy and culturally relevant food options are part of available pantry choices. Encourage direct purchasing from local farms.
- Develop a strategy to support universal access to school meals for all Oregon school age children. Ensure strategy includes healthy and culturally relevant food options and encourages direct purchasing from local farms.
- Work on a community level with farms, farmers and local institutions (food pantries, schools, etc.) to build supply chain or other relationships and infrastructure to enable ease of direct purchasing from local farms.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability; Health Department, Public Health (research); Oregon State Legislature

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY





Housing

Every community member has safe, healthy and affordable housing

Goal: Every community member has safe, healthy and affordable housing.



Description

Every member of our community deserves access to long-term, stable housing that they can afford, feels healthy, and is connected to the community. Our homes are our first line of defence against climate induced weather extremes and other hazards. Residential buildings also account for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions in Multnomah County (2023). The way we design, build, and maintain our housing is a critical lever for reducing emissions and building climate resilience.

Housing access, however, has a long and painful history of exclusion in Multnomah County. In early 20th-century exclusionary policies designed to maintain racial segregation and protect white property values were established. Through the use of exclusionary zoning and federally backed redlining, the City of Portland, for example, systematically denied Black residents and other people of color access to home loans and investment. These practices effectively funneled these communities into specific, under-resourced areas while simultaneously preventing them from building generational wealth through homeownership.

Mid-century urban renewal projects further devastated these established communities, particularly in the Albina district, Portland's historic Black core. Large-scale infrastructure developments, including the construction of the I-5 freeway, the Veterans Memorial Coliseum, and the expansion of Legacy Emanuel Hospital, resulted in the forced displacement of thousands of residents and the destruction of hundreds of local businesses. In more recent decades, the legacy of these planning decisions has manifested as gentrification and environmental injustice. Market-rate redevelopment in historically Black neighborhoods has driven up property values, combined with a distorted property tax system, further displacing long-term residents who can no longer afford to live in the communities their families helped build.

Some displaced families relocated to areas of Multnomah County, East Portland and West Gresham, where housing was more affordable, but services like transit, parks, grocery stores, trees, and pedestrian infrastructure were deficient. Affordable multifamily hous-

ing has only been permitted on the most heavily trafficked corridors, exposing residents to noise pollution, vehicle emissions, and traffic safety issues. These patterns persist to this day. At the same time, many people in Multnomah County cannot afford housing, with a homelessness crisis that has been difficult to address.

Multnomah County and its many partners seek to increase affordable housing options and address homelessness. Housing exists at the critical nexus of community justice, climate resilience, and economic stability. While other planning efforts guide this work more directly than the Climate Justice Plan, it is the hope that emphasizing the intersectional nature of the challenges brings additional energy and focus to the issue.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: New Private Housing Structures Authorized by Building Permits for Multnomah County, OR

Description: This series represents the total number of building permits for all structure types. Structure types include 1-unit, 2-unit, 3-unit, 4-unit, and 5-unit or more.

Current data: 2,040 in 2024, downward trend since 2017

Data Source: [Federal Reserve Bank of Saint Lewis](#)

Indicator 2: Reduction in unsheltered homelessness for priority populations consistent with the Homelessness Response Action Plan Key Performance Indicators.

Description: The Homelessness Response Action Plan (HRAP) has key performance indicators that help to inform the implementation of the plan. Certain populations are overrepresented in the unsheltered homeless population and the plan seeks to reduce this overrepresentation. HRAP uses January, 2024 as a baseline period, and considers this metric met if priority populations are sheltered at rates that exceed the baseline.

Current data: In the most recent period, 4 out of every 6, or 67 percent of the priority populations were sheltered at or above the baseline rate.

Data Source: [Homeless Response Action Plan Dashboard](#)

Strategy: Implement the Homelessness Response Action Plan.

Why does this matter?

Homelessness exposes people to increased climate risks, including a higher exposure to extreme weather, vector born diseases that are made more common by a warming climate, and day to day environmental hazards. In Multnomah County Black, Indiginous, Latine, and other people of color are disproportionately represented in the unhoused population. Addressing homelessness is an urgent climate justice concern.

The joint Multnomah County and City of Portland Homelessness Response Action Plan, offers a comprehensive plan for preventing and addressing homelessness. This includes strategies that target root causes like the availability of affordable housing and wrap around services. The plan has built in reporting features and is a 2-year roadmap focused on preventing inflow into homelessness, expediting housing placement out of shelter and housing placement, expanding behavioral health services for people who are homeless or experiencing housing instability, and improving intergovernmental coordination.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy**
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Housing or sheltering people experiencing homelessness.
- Adding behavioral health beds and funding a drop-off sobering center.
- Increasing the number of adults leaving shelter for permanent housing.
- Reducing homelessness among people of color, people who are LGBTQIA2S+ and other populations of focus.
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing through regulatory changes, building conversions and new construction funding sources, among other strategies.

Lead Department(s)

City of Portland

Supporting Department(s): Multnomah County, Homeless Services Department; Homelessness Response System

Strategy: Increase housing supply, and promote walkable, mixed use communities.

Why does this matter?

Land use reform is an important climate and public health policy. Dense, walkable neighborhoods allow people to meet more of their daily needs without driving. Reduced vehicle miles traveled, in addition to energy efficiency gains of multifamily housing, lead to reduced emissions. An analysis from the Rocky Mountain Institute found that zoning reform could deliver over a quarter metric ton of CO₂e per person per year, a substantial reduction. Studies also show that when individuals can use their bodies in the course of daily activities they live longer, healthier lives. Denser urban neighborhoods with a mix of housing types, uses, and transit access promote daily activity like walking and riding bikes.

It is also important to recognize the history of land use and government sponsored segregation policies. By designating vast swaths of the County for single-family homes, the code established a high financial barrier to entry. This effectively excluded lower-income residents, a demographic disproportionately composed of people of color, and the wealth building opportunities of homeownership. At the time, planners and real estate interests explicitly linked multi-family housing to “lower-class” and non-white populations, using zoning to keep these groups out of preferred residential districts.

Today, land use reform, zoning updates, and other policies are opportunities to begin to right historical wrongs while building a healthier and more prosperous community. Land use is a key tool for increasing housing production and lowering housing costs, while simultaneously building communities that are more accessible to transit, walking, and biking. Building code updates that allow for better urban form and more affordable construction are also important. While Multnomah County does not have control over urban land use decisions, or building codes, it can influence these predominantly city-level decisions through research, coordination, coalition building, and advocacy.

Putting this into practice

- Support zoning reform initiatives like the “Inner East Side for All” that increases permissible density in urban areas that already have abundant services like shopping districts, parks, transit, libraries, etc.
- Support building code reforms that allow for attached housing types, like Point Access Block, sometimes called sunlight suites or single stair multifamily housing.
- Support harmonizing the Oregon elevator code with the internal elevator code, EN 81, which would allow for more elevator types in more buildings.
- Support social housing development and experimentation.
- Support building code updates that increase energy efficiency, indoor air quality, cooling, other climate resilient building practices, and innovative non-toxic low carbon building materials.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon State Legislature; Oregon Building Codes Division; Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development, Climate-Friendly and Equitable Communities; city land use departments

Supporting Department(s): Office of Sustainability; Health Department, Environmental Health (research)

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Promote home preservation for cost burdened homeowners.

Why does this matter?

Preserving the homes we already have is an essential, yet often overlooked, component of community stability and climate justice. For many, the cost of emergency repairs or energy-efficient upgrades is a barrier to safety. When homes fall into disrepair, they become more vulnerable to heatwaves, water infiltration and mold, and storm damage, putting families at risk of being involuntarily displaced. No cost home repair programs have been successfully used to prevent involuntary displacement in gentrifying neighborhoods. Critical home repair is ideally coupled with home energy efficiency and resilience measures like insulation and heat pumps for heating and cooling homes. By supporting home preservation, we protect intergenerational wealth and ensure that the most vulnerable neighbors have a resilient, long-term foundation that can better withstand the effects of climate change.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Pursue funding, including grant funds, to expand the reach of the County's low-income weatherization program and increase funding for critical home repair.
- Partner with allied organizations to identify legislative and regulatory changes that would help support critical home repair.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature; Oregon Housing and Community Services; Oregon Health Authority

Supporting Department(s): Office of Sustainability; Department of County Human Services, Weatherization Services; Health Department, Environmental Health

Strategy: Support circular economy models that integrate social needs with resource reuse.

Why does this matter?

While support exists for housing placements, rental assistance, and related services, home furnishings are an often overlooked necessity. Access to home furnishings can be a critical component of the transition into housing for unhoused individuals that helps to strengthen and stabilize an individual or family. At the same time, consumer goods represent a large portion of global emissions, making efforts to reuse durable goods is an important strategy to reduce emissions.

Rather than each household purchasing new furniture and household goods with significant carbon footprints while using their limited resources—this model enables resource sharing that serves both environmental and social justice goals. Families experiencing housing instability often also experience furniture poverty, or the inability to access, afford, or maintain essential household furniture and goods for a functional, safe, and healthy home. Multnomah County is lucky to have a robust reuse economy with several non-profits that provide services for low-income households. For example, Community Warehouse diverts over 1,500 tons of furniture from local waste streams through their “furniture bank” model that allows households to receive all the furnishings and household goods they need. Models like these support are vital for supporting households and reducing emissions.

Putting this into practice

- Review current practices about how households are provided needed furnishings and other resources when making housing transitions. Pursue additional opportunities to support re-use organizations in the region.
- Provide rent assistance “wraparound” support for basic resources. By leveraging the **reuse economy** (e.g., Community Warehouse), provide cost-effective, low carbon, essential household goods, including, furnishings, kitchen supplies, fans, and even AC units.

Lead Department(s)

Multnomah County Homeless Services Department, Multnomah County Department of County Human Services

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Support the health, well-being and stability of households that rent.

Why does this matter?

Housing that is substandard due to quality issues like cracked walls or rodents, or lacking essential components like heating or cooling, exposes households to greater environmental and climate risks. In the Portland metropolitan area, about 25 percent of renters do not have air conditioning, and that number jumps to 34 percent for low-income households. Extremely low income households are far more likely to occupy rental housing with one or more of these substantial deficiencies., Climate impacts are therefore anticipated to fall more severely on low-income rental households.

Supporting the health and stability of renting households combines financial aid, legal protections, and physical housing quality. Substandard housing is more than a maintenance issue; it is a primary driver of chronic illness, displacement, and financial crisis. By enforcing health and climate standards alongside stronger renter protections, we can reduce energy burden and environmental hazards that disproportionately impact cost-burdened families. Ultimately, these efforts provide the stable foundation necessary for households to transition from immediate crisis to long-term self-sufficiency.

Putting this into practice

- Support the City of Portland [Climate and Health Standards for Existing Buildings](#).
- Consider establishing maximum indoor temperature standards by convening stakeholders to understand current regulations and develop recommendations, including enforcement mechanisms, as well as alternatives like cooling space requirements in multi-unit buildings.
- Increase funding for multi-family affordable housing preservation.
- Convene broad partnership to consider alternative approaches to renter protections that help promote household health and stability.
- Explore pathways to improve rental housing standards and mandatory inspection programs to ensure all rental units are safe, healthy, and resilient to climate impacts.
- Provide property owners with resources, such as technical assistance or retrofit grants, to help them meet new standards without passing significant costs onto tenants.
- Provide Flexible Client Assistance for relief from the trauma associated with the scarcity of resources.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon State Legislature; Oregon Health Authority; Oregon Housing and Community Services; Cities

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Promote homeownership for first-time homebuyers and communities historically excluded by discriminatory housing practices.

Why does this matter?

Homeownership is a primary driver for building intergenerational wealth, long-term stability. Homeowners often have greater control over their living environment, allowing for critical climate adaptations such as weatherization, solar installation, and air filtration that protect against extreme heat and smoke. For generations, these benefits were denied to Black families, and other people of color.

Promoting homeownership for first time homebuyers, particularly if they come from a family with no experience of homeownership, or intentionally excluded from homeownership, requires multiprong approach that includes “wraparound” support, including homebuyer education, financial counseling, and foreclosure prevention. Promoting homeownership successfully depends on building trust and increasing awareness of available opportunities, and ensuring communities are equipped to retain their homes long-term. The County can bridge the racial wealth gap and provide the security necessary to withstand future economic and environmental shocks.

Putting this into practice

- Proactively connect residents within the County’s existing social service programs to homeownership resources.
- Partner with community-led organizations to leverage trust-based, peer-to-peer outreach, where residents who have successfully navigated homeownership pathways can share their success stories and guide their neighbors through the process.
- Provide down payment assistance to close the affordability gap for historically excluded buyers, and expand support for Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) to help residents save for homes that accommodate multigenerational living.
- Prioritize housing assistance for residents with historical ties to areas like North and Northeast Portland area to combat displacement.

Lead Department(s)

City of Portland Housing Bureau, City of Gresham, Multnomah County Department of County Human Services

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New**

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY





Wealth & Jobs

Every community member has access to wealth-building opportunities and green jobs.

Goal: Every community member has access to wealth-building opportunities and green jobs.

Description

Climate change disproportionately impacts those who are already cost-burdened and have little to no financial security. According to the Climate Jobs Institute, the average Oregonian stands to lose roughly \$12,000 in personal income annually due to climate changes already set in motion by past greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, building out renewable energy, modernizing the grid, investments in new energy technologies like green-hydrogen and geothermal networks, and building energy efficiency offer tremendous economic opportunities for Oregonians.

The economic benefits of this transition include new opportunities in the trades, and entrepreneurial opportunities. But, a history of racial discrimination needs to be overcome to ensure broad based economic gains. Wealth-building, such as homeownership and small business equity, are the foundation of economic security. They act as a vital buffer against environmental and financial emergencies. However, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) continue to face deep seated systemic barriers to these opportunities, leaving them more exposed to climate emergencies. The Association of Oregon's Black Prosperity Dashboard shows Black Oregonians own homes at lower rates and have less household income than their white counterparts.

A future of shared prosperity can be built through the needed investments in the low carbon economy. Multnomah County is poised to benefit from a future where abundant, clean and affordable energy is the norm. This is a future where green jobs are common in the workforce, industry and government cooperate to incentivise clean energy technologies, and local entrepreneurs create new industry leading solutions that grow the green economy. This is also a future where barriers to green jobs, union jobs, and entrepreneurship are no longer hampered by discriminatory practices that have historically excluded Black, Indigenous, other people of color, and women, from accessing pathways to economic stability and wealth creation.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Percentage of participants who enroll in green job training programs, and their completion rate, that connect with the County through receiving employment and/or workforce services.

Description: Reduction in barriers to accessing green jobs and training programs Percentage of participants receiving County-funded wrap-around services) and their successful completion of the training-to-placement pipeline.

Current data: The County can track the “wrap-around success” by correlating the receipt of support (community providers) with these high completion rates to prove that financial barriers are the primary obstacle to career entry.

Indicator 2: Percentage of BIPOC women participants at the journey-level working on County funded projects

Description: The County can require this data as part of its reporting from training partners (like Worksystems or PCC) and from contractors working on County-funded climate projects.

Current data: County (DCM) workforce training and diversity program ; Worksystems Regional Dashboard, 2025:

- Partners' pre-apprenticeship programs achieved an 88% completion rate.
- 63% of these participants identify as BIPOC, and 33% identify as female.
- Over 25% of graduates have already transitioned into Registered Apprenticeships or similar construction careers.

Indicator 3: Total dollar amount of climate-related contracts awarded to certified businesses.

Description: The County's Purchasing and Diversity in Contract offices have the software to track these percentages; the Sustainability Office would simply need to apply a “Climate Justice” filter to this existing data.

Current data: As of July 2025, under the Clean Air Construction Program: 29% of registered companies (64 out of 220) are COVID-certified (Minority, Women, or Emerging Small Businesses).

Indicator 4: Average annual increase in home equity for BIPOC homeowners in affordable homeownership programs and/or community land trusts

Description: Affordable homeownership programs (e.g., Proud Ground, Habitat for Humanity Portland Region, Portland Housing Bureau,) record the purchase price and the resale price and appraised value. By tracking the appreciation of home equity over time, the County can evaluate how climate-aligned housing investments serve as a functional buffer against economic instability and a direct engine for closing the racial wealth gap.

Current data: As of December 2025, 73% of their Proud Ground homeowners are BIPOC; Homeowners in Proud Ground's Community Land Trust (CLT) accrue approximately \$109,000 in equity over a 10-year period.

- Annual Growth Rate: \$10,900 per year in net wealth gain. “Shared Equity” formula: the homeowner keeps 100% of their mortgage principal payments plus 25% of the home's appraised value increase.
- In 2025, the average sales price for an affordable CLT home was \$252,362, significantly lower than the Multnomah County median sale price of \$475,000 (as of March 2026).

Strategy: Build career pathways into clean energy and green manufacturing by removing structural barriers for communities historically excluded from the trades.

Why does this matter?

Building career pathways into clean energy jobs is critical because it addresses the twin crises of climate change and economic inequality. Oregon faces a massive labor demand — requiring approximately 36 GW of new clean energy and the creation of over 200,000 jobs by 2030 — which cannot be met without expanding the workforce. By intentionally removing structural barriers for communities of color, women, and low-income workers, the state can tap into an underutilized talent pool while ensuring that the transition to a green economy doesn't leave behind the very people most impacted by climate disruptions.

Through the strategic alignment of county services, regional partnerships, and contracting requirements, we can ensure that every dollar spent on decarbonization acts as a deliberate pipeline for local wealth creation, prioritizing the very workers and community members who have historically borne the brunt of the climate crisis.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Align Oregon's climate infrastructure buildout with Multnomah County's anti-poverty strategy.
- Prioritize decarbonization and the build out of renewable energy at County-owned facilities while implementing the County's industry leading workforce standards.
- Integrating job-readiness training and apprenticeship recruitment directly from county services, ensuring that economic mobility is a central feature of our climate response.
- Ensure contracting requirements favor firms that provide living wages, benefits, and apprenticeship opportunities, preventing a "race to the bottom" in the green sector.

Lead Department(s)

Department of County Assets; Department of County Human Services; Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Streamline regulatory hurdles that add time and expense to the installation of renewable energy and distributed energy resources like solar PV and battery energy storage systems.

Why does this matter?

In order to unleash the economic promise of clean energy in Oregon, outdated rules need to be modernized and new administrative capacity has to be built. According to reporting from Oregon Public Broadcasting and Propublica, Oregon trails nearly all other states in adding new sources of renewable energy. Iowa, a state with roughly the same population and usable volume of wind as Oregon, has built enough wind farms to generate three times as much wind power. The slow pace of electricity transmission build out in Oregon is one significant reason for the slow pace of renewable energy development.

Land use laws can also prevent Oregon farmers from harvesting the sun's energy with solar agrivoltaic installations. Slow administrative procedures make permitting residential solar and battery energy systems inefficient and more expensive, adding an average of \$7,000 in regulatory costs to the average rooftop solar system. These rules and procedures must be improved to allow a flourishing of clean energy projects that support clean energy jobs and economic growth, and provide more opportunities for households and organizations to invest in the clean energy future.

Putting this into practice

- Support legislative efforts to create a public transmission authority to finance and build needed electric power transmission infrastructure.
- Support legislative and administrative changes that make it faster, cheaper, and easier to install residential solar and battery energy storage systems.
- Support plug-in solar legislation.
- Streamline the County's land use regulations to make residential solar energy and battery energy storage systems easier to permit in unincorporated Multnomah County.
- Advocate for local adoption by cities of streamlined procedures for permitting residential solar and battery energy storage projects.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability; Department of Community Services

Supporting Department(s): Oregon State

Legislature; Oregon Department of Energy; Oregon Building Codes Division; Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

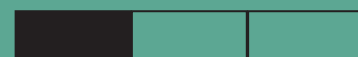
- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Develop a Youth Climate Corps that provides young people (ages 16–24) with paid work experience, job readiness skills, green job exposure, and direct pathways into highly skilled green jobs.

Why does this matter?

Youth are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, facing both immediate environmental health risks like air pollution and long-term “eco-anxiety” regarding their future. However, current youth employment models often suffer from three major gaps: poverty wages that exclude low-income participants, “dead-end” seasonal tasks (e.g., blackberry removal without career growth), and a lack of professional networking.

By institutionalizing a Youth Climate Corps, the County and partners can transform climate anxiety into agency. This approach ensures that young people aren’t just cheap labor for the public sector; they are an essential talent pipeline for the low-carbon economy, while providing important services that can benefit the community. Providing a “good job” definition, including living wages and union pathways, offers on the job training and professional development opportunities, and prevents the replication of systemic poverty

within green workforce programs. Multnomah County and other partners can work to modify and supplement existing youth employment programs to create a youth climate corps that works to address climate resilience, mitigation and care needs in the community.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Research similar programs nationally to determine best practices.
- Convene local experts to map out needed community projects, job exposure pathways, training opportunities, and connections to trades, businesses, community based organizations, and schools to create a supportive ecosystem for a program and connection points to future employment opportunities.
- Explore opportunities to leverage the SummerWorks program, Portland Clean Energy Fund, philanthropy, and other sources of funding to establish a program.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Provide comprehensive wraparound services, including childcare, mental health support, transportation, and specialized equipment in workforce development programs.



Why does this matter?

Workforce programs are essential for career readiness and climate-sector entry, but technical training alone cannot overcome systemic economic barriers. For many residents, the primary obstacle to a family-wage career isn't a lack of skill, but a lack of stability.

By embedding supportive services directly into the training pipeline, we move from a transactional model to a relational one. Integrated case management and mental health services address the historical and systemic stressors that BIPOC, justice-involved, and low-income individuals face. Furthermore, aligning these supports with County health and housing services ensures that those furthest from opportunity are the first in line for family-wage careers. Providing "flexible capital" for tools, work clothes, and culturally specific childcare isn't just a social service—it is a retention strategy that protects the County's investment in its workforce.

Putting this into practice

- Support Preschool For All and expand childcare with flexible hours, especially for the trades which have early start times for work.
- Establish low-barrier funds for clients to cover immediate costs like specialized tools, union dues, or transportation emergencies that often lead to program attrition.
- Embed apprenticeship and workforce programs directly into County health and housing offices, meeting residents where they are with clear pathways to economic mobility.
- Establish mentorship programs where journey-level workers of color provide emotional navigation and "soft-skill" coaching to new apprentices.

Lead Department(s)

Department of County Human Services

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy

Investment Opportunity

Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research

Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Strategy: Establish a guaranteed income framework designed to provide assistance to households disproportionately impacted by economic barriers and climate-driven costs.

Why does this matter?

Guaranteed basic income, a “transition benefit” acts as a vital economic bridge for people who are struggling, and can be a vital tool as people try to enter or reenter the workforce. Many studies have shown these programs highly effective, giving households the flexibility to respond to their needs in real time, with an eye toward unique circumstances and enough stability to open the possibility of long-term planning.

By providing unrestricted monthly stipends during professional training for people who have barriers to employment, such a program would ensure that participants can be stable while acquiring specialized skills required for high-wage, low-carbon careers. This targeted support specifically addresses income challenges often faced during 8–12 week pre-apprenticeships or first-year training periods, shifting the focus from survival-mode decision-making to long-term wealth accumulation and professional mobility.

Focusing on these critical life-transitions, such as career pivots or early childhood development, significantly multiplies the return on investment for every public dollar spent. Direct evidence from local pilots, like the Multnomah Mother’s Trust, proves that this “unrestricted flexibility” leads to near-zero debt loads and a 50% reduction in eviction risk. By creating this essential household buffer, the County empowers historically excluded communities to absorb rising climate-driven costs in energy, food, and health, transforming a potential “handout” narrative into a strategic engine for community resilience and intergenerational climate justice.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

Research and advocate for funding pathways that would establish guaranteed income for people transitioning into the green workforce, programs can include:

- Pre-Apprenticeship Guaranteed Income to support workers during 8–12 weeks of unpaid or low-paid training. This covers costs, such as childcare, transit, and tools, ensuring that financial barriers do not lead to program attrition.
- Create a “Job Transition Fund” to provide monthly stipends that subsidize lower starting wages during the first year of an apprenticeship. By acting as a time-bound alternative to guaranteed basic income, this fund allows workers to maintain housing stability while they “earn and learn” their way toward journey-level wages in the green sector.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon State Legislature



Health

Every community member has access to the resources and underlying conditions that promote health and well-being

Goal: Every community member has access to the resources and underlying conditions that promote health and well-being.



Description

Climate change poses a significant threat in Multnomah County, jeopardizing access to the building blocks of good health: clean air, water, stable housing, and healthy food. It acts as a “risk multiplier,” worsening existing public health issues and intensifying health inequities, with communities of color and low-income populations in the Portland region already experiencing health inequities.

Our commitment is to counteract this by ensuring universal access to the fundamental resources necessary for health and well-being, irrespective of a person’s background or location. This includes providing clean water, nutritious food, safe and healthy housing, accessible green spaces, quality healthcare, including mental health support, and utilizing technology to bridge gaps and address diverse climate-related health challenges.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Heat-related emergency department (ED)/urgent care (UC) visits, hospitalizations, and deaths.

Description: Oregon’s public health and climate accountability metrics are designed to track progress toward a 2030 goal of building a modern, equitable, and resilient public health system. Established by the Public Health Advisory Board (PHAB) and managed by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), these metrics focus on reducing the health impacts of extreme heat and wildfire smoke. Public health accountability metrics are one way that Oregon’s public health system demonstrates and ensures it is improving health, eliminating inequities and effectively using public dollars through a modern public health system. Tracking health outcomes based on extreme temperatures, air quality, and infectious diseases are ways we can measure impact.

Current data: Heat-related illness ED/UC visits since 2021 have been much higher than in 2020 and earlier. Hospitalizations for heat-related illness were highest in summer 2021 (62 visits) and have been above 16 visits in Multnomah County since then. Most heat-related deaths happened during the 2021 heat dome, summers since the heat dome have had more deaths than expected and have not returned to pre-heat dome levels.

Data Source: Regional Climate and Health Dashboard: Extreme Heat

Indicator 2: Psychological/mental health emotions around climate change through regional surveys.

Current data: When thinking about climate change, about 75% of respondents in the regional climate mental health survey conducted in 2025 endorsed feeling sadness, anxiety/fear, and helplessness at least moderately, making these the most common emotional responses. In contrast, optimism was endorsed the least, with only 28% reporting it to a similar degree. Over half of respondents also felt grief and anger, while fewer than half reported feelings of guilt or shame.

Data Source: Regional Climate and Health Dashboard: Mental Health Survey Findings

Indicator 3: Reported case incidence for climate-sensitive infectious diseases (communicable, vector-borne, and fungal infections).

Current data: Most disease cases tracked in this Regional Climate and Health Data Story plummeted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 shutdown. Cases then rebounded in 2021 and continued to climb through 2023. From 2023 to 2024, the total number of cases generally decreased, but this varied by condition. While the two most common diseases, *Campylobacteriosis* (Campy) and *Salmonellosis*, declined, less common diseases like *Tuberculosis* (TB), *Coccidioidomycosis* (Valley fever), and *Lyme disease* increased slightly.

Data Source: Regional Climate and Health Dashboard: Infectious Disease

Strategy: Implement the Climate and Health Resilience Plan.

Why does this matter?

The Climate and Health Resilience Plan fulfills an Oregon Health Authority requirement to develop a climate adaptation plan. The purpose of this plan is to guide the work of the Multnomah County Public Health Division and Health Department towards a just, resilient, and healthy future for Multnomah County.

This plan outlines three action areas to guide climate and health work: building frontline neighborhood heat resilience; making our housing more resilient; and promoting mental wellness.

Putting this into practice

- Build partnerships with agencies and organizations in Heat Resilience Focus Areas.
- Co-develop and pilot heat resilience solutions with partner organizations.
- Measure and monitor changes to heat resilience.
- Conduct a countywide Health and Housing Vulnerability Assessment to identify areas of elevated climate risk and housing precarity.
- Develop a suite of housing policies supported by evidence on climate impacts on public health.
- Engage with partner agencies to assess the risk of conflagrations and develop risk mitigation strategies.
- Develop measures of mental health impacts of climate change and continue to resource and deploy a climate-mental health survey.
- Collaborate with community organizations to establish and maintain long-term trauma recovery networks.

Lead Department(s)

Multnomah County Health Department

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Partner with health care providers to identify diagnosis, treatment and prevention options for emerging climate related health threats.

Why does this matter?

Climate change presents health threats that are new to the area. Healthcare providers must move from reactive treatment to climate-informed clinical care to prevent avoidable deaths. For example, vector borne diseases like malaria are predicted to be more prevalent and health care providers may not be familiar with diagnosis and treatment. Existing health conditions, like asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), are exacerbated by climate threats like heat and smoke. Medications can be impacted by high temperatures limiting their efficacy. These conditions require new or revised guidance by medical providers. Tracking these trends and communicating to health care providers will be necessary as climate impacts become more clear and worsen over time.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Track emerging climate related health risks, e.g. vector born disease, impacts on medication.
- Support healthcare professionals serving patients with the knowledge and skills to integrate climate change considerations into their practice, leverage relevant technologies and promote equitable access to climate-resilient healthcare.

Lead Department(s)

Multnomah County Health Department

Strategy: Initiate a climate and health literacy education campaign to access resources and preventative care.

Why does this matter?

Climate change acts as a “threat multiplier,” worsening existing health inequities and straining resources. For communities already facing higher rates of chronic disease or housing instability, a heatwave or wildfire smoke event is a life-threatening crisis. By providing information, access to resources, and promoting preventative care, this campaign can reduce health disparities, improve health outcomes, and enable communities to adapt to climate and environmental challenges.

Putting this into practice

- Empower individuals and communities to make informed decisions about their health and well-being in the face of climate change by improving climate health literacy and facilitating access to resources and preventative care.
- Comprehensive Climate Health Literacy Campaign:
 - Explain the health impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, air pollution, waterborne diseases and mental health effects.
 - Simplify scientific information and terminology related to climate and health.
 - Raise awareness about preventative measures, preparedness strategies and available resources. Promote community resilience and adaptation to climate change.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature; Oregon Health Authority; Coordinated Care Organizations

Supporting Department(s): Multnomah County Health Department

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Support and participate in climate and health resilience across health care systems, coordinated care organizations, emergency management, and local public health authorities.

Why does this matter?

When health systems, emergency responders, and public health authorities operate in silos, it creates gaps in care and life-threatening delays during climate emergencies. A high level of coordination across health care systems, emergency management, and the County’s Public Health Division can enhance impact, reduce unnecessary redundancies, and streamline the implementation of best practices.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity**
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene** Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional **New**

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Strengthen regional healthcare coalitions, establish information sharing protocols (possibly real-time), and develop coordinated emergency plans.
- Create an integrated inventory system to track supplies, personnel, and equipment across all interested parties.
- Engage non-traditional partners (schools, libraries, CBOs) and potentially conduct joint training and exercises.
- Prepare and retrofit hospitals to upgrade for climate emergencies, including air filters, batteries, and other technologies and resources.

Lead Department(s)

Multnomah County, Coordinated Care Organizations



Parks & Green Infrastructure

Every community member is surrounded by and connected to nature, parks, and green infrastructure.

Goal: Every community member is surrounded by and connected to nature, parks, and green infrastructure.

Description

Connecting everyone to nature isn't just about recreation; it's about building healthy, resilient communities that thrive in a changing climate. Trees and green spaces are powerful tools for climate action. Trees and open spaces act as nature's filtration system, cleaning our air and water. They combat the urban heat island effect, keeping our neighborhoods cooler. And, this vital community infrastructure leads to a more vibrant and healthy community, promoting physical activity, community safety, and business district vitality.

Access to these resources, however, is not evenly distributed in Multnomah County. Environmental injustice is clearly visible in our landscape. According to the 2023 Multnomah County Environmental Justice Snapshot, average tree canopy cover is significantly greater in areas home to primarily white, non-Hispanic people compared to areas primarily home to communities of Black, Indigenous and other people of color. Since trees are linked to health outcomes like birth weight, and beneficial environmental benefits like cooler temperatures during a heat wave, the lack of tree cover in certain parts of Multnomah County is a glaring example of an existing environmental injustice.

Beyond trees, access to parks and green space is vital to communal and individual well-being. While access to parks and natural areas is relatively well distributed in Multnomah County, access can be hampered if people don't feel safe traveling to a park because of dangerous streets or public safety concerns. Parks may also lack amenities that people want to use, like splash pads, seating, shade and playgrounds. School yards and playgrounds often lack shade, which makes accessing these resources on a hot day unpleasant and potentially dangerous.

A community where everyone feels welcome and safe in their neighborhood park is a healthy community. Moreover, trees, parks and natural areas are also vital for birds, insects and other wildlife that call the urban areas of the County home. The health of the ecosystem is also tied to human health. Communities are eager to prioritize greening in areas with low access to these amenities. Community based organizations are taking action, for example removing parking lots to plant gardens at schools and churches. Community members across the County are eager to contribute to this important work.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Multnomah County urban area tree canopy cover and demographic disparities.

Description: Tree canopy is the layer of leaves, branches, and stems of trees that covers the ground when viewed from above. These data are collected for the region by Oregon Metro using remote sensing technologies. The 2023 Environmental Justice Snapshot In Multnomah County, average tree canopy cover is significantly greater in areas home to primarily white population compared to areas with the highest percentage of BIPOC residents. Tree canopy cover in the areas home to the largest share of BIPOC is also significantly lower than the county average. Tree canopy data for the region is collected every five years.

Current data: Multnomah County Average 25.4%, Areas with higher proportions of BIPOC residents have canopy levels roughly **4.4% lower** than the county average.

Data Source: Oregon Metro, RMLIS, Multnomah County Environmental Justice Snapshot

Strategy: Prioritize street improvements adjacent to parks to increase safe access for pedestrians and cyclists.



Why does this matter?

Access to parks in terms of geographic distance is relatively well distributed in Multnomah County, but less is known about how easily community members can access parks that may be blocked by busy roads and other barriers in the urban environment. If you don't feel safe letting your child walk alone to the park because you are worried about them crossing a busy road, then even if a park is close by, it's not accessible.

This issue may be more acute in East Portland, West Gresham and East County cities, where the street network is less complete. Neighborhoods with a higher proportion of BIPOC community members bear a disproportionate burden of unwalkable streets. The East County Transportation Safety Plan, for example, aims to address safety barriers by improving dangerous street crossings but funding street improvements is a persistent challenge.

Putting this into practice

- Invest in safer routes to parks by implementing the East Multnomah County Transportation Safety Action Plan (TSAP). Planned upgrades include better lighting, high-visibility crosswalks, raised crosswalks, protected bike lanes, and ADA-compliant sidewalk repairs.
- Inventory streets near parks in priority neighborhoods to assess access barriers and potential road crossing safety improvements.
- Conduct research on the qualitative experience of people who live near or use parks and their perceptions of safety.

Lead Department(s)

Department of County Services, Transportation; Health Department, Environmental Health; Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Prioritize the implementation of park elements in the Vance Vision Plan.

Why does this matter?

The Vance Vision Plan addresses a critical need for the Rockwood neighborhood, which is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse areas in the region. Developed through deep collaboration with local residents, the plan centers the voices of BIPOC, immigrant and refugee communities, and youth to ensure the park serves as an engine for environmental justice and community growth. By reclaiming this 90-acre site, partly a former quarry and brownfield owned by Multnomah County, the plan mitigates formerly extractive industries and provides a safe and expansive recreational space above and beyond any asset in the area. Coupled with affordable housing and economic development opportunities the plan offers a transformative vision for the community, by the community.

Because the neighboring demographic profile features a high concentration of large families and youth—with nearly 23% of the population under 18—the park’s recreational elements are a necessity for community well-being. The community-led design prioritizes cultural, accessible and family-friendly gathering spaces and multimodal transportation network improvements that integrate transit access for a population that can highly benefit

from more safe options to get around. Ultimately, implementing these park elements transforms an industrially scarred area into a regional asset that supports both the physical health and the economic resilience of East County’s youngest and most diverse residents. Vance is the missing puzzle piece in the greater Gresham trail network and a generational opportunity to invest in a community that has seen decades of underinvestment.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy

Investment Opportunity

Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research

Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Work with community partners to identify and pursue funding to complete the design of the park.
- Assemble funding, including grant funds, necessary to implement the park designs.
- Establish partnerships with the City of Gresham for the long-term maintenance and management of the park.

Lead Department(s)

Department of County Services



Strategy: Prioritize investment and maintenance of parks in communities with the least access to quality green space.



Why does this matter?

Parks offer environmental health benefits for those living nearby through improved air quality, reduced noise, stormwater management, moderating temperatures, and reducing urban heat island (UHI) effects. Proximity to urban parks also provides opportunities for physical activity with research suggesting that people living within walking distance of parks are three times more likely to meet recommended amounts of daily physical activity. While access to parks measured by distance to a park is well distributed in Multnomah County, less is known about the quality of park amenities and perceptions of public safety. Multnomah County tree canopy data may indicate disparities in investment and park quality or depict recent investments in parks in these areas which have yet to experience tree growth and corresponding increases in canopy cover.

Amenities like good walking paths that are well-lit at night, playgrounds, exercise equipment, playing fields, shade and other amenities that people want for their parks are important. These amenities can mean the difference between a well-used park and a space that is avoided because it does not feel safe. Prioritizing investment means moving beyond basic lawn maintenance to create parks that serve as high-quality “climate refuges.”

Putting this into practice

- Add park amenities to undeveloped parks, including play structures, shade and covered areas, lighting, benches, splashpads, etc, and address maintenance issues.
- Identify parks in high needs neighborhoods and assess current levels of investment to determine priority projects that need investment.
- Research and develop metrics to measure park quality and biodiversity score that would provide information on the nature-based benefits of parks.

Lead Department(s)

City of Portland, Parks and Recreation; City of Gresham, Parks and Natural Areas

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Prioritize tree planting in low canopy neighborhoods.

Why does this matter?

Tree canopy is a life-saving public health utility, yet it remains one of the most visible indicators of systemic inequity in Multnomah County. Currently, canopy coverage is significantly lower in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of Black, Indigenous, and people of color, as well as among cost-burdened households. This is particularly true east of 82nd Avenue. This “canopy gap” leaves some residents disproportionately exposed to extreme heat and poor air quality. Planting and establishing trees can be a powerful intervention for cooling the surrounding area, among many other benefits. By treating tree canopies as a core component of public infrastructure, communities can ensure that every resident, regardless of zip code, has access to the “cooling corridors” and ecosystem services essential for survival in a changing climate.

Planting trees is not enough, however. Asphalt and concrete removal may be necessary to create space for planting trees and making other landscape improvements. In addition trees need to be watered and structurally pruned for the first few years after planting. The cost of tree care, which is typically the responsibility of the adjacent property owner even when the tree is in the public right of way, can be a major barrier for some households. In addition, tree code requirements for tree planting with new development, protecting existing canopy trees, and code enforcement are also important elements of a successful urban forestry program.

Putting this into practice

- Fund tree planting in low tree canopy neighborhoods and develop strategies for maintaining trees in the public right of way in high priority areas.
- Look for partnership opportunities where the County can help to catalyze focused tree planting efforts in high need neighborhoods, like the Green Gresham, Healthy Gresham project.
- Implement Action 1 - Heat Resilience Focus Areas - from the 2025 Multnomah County Climate and Health Resilience Plan.
- Work with the Multnomah County Department of Community Services to develop street tree planting and maintenance strategy for County owned right of way.
- Continue to monitor disparities in tree canopy distribution.

Lead Department(s)

City of Portland, Parks and Recreation; Municipal Transportation Departments (e.g., Gresham Public Works)

Supporting Department(s): Office of Sustainability; Health Department, Environmental Health

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Develop innovative approaches to providing shade and outdoor refuge from heat.

Why does this matter?

As summer temperatures continue to rise, shade has shifted from a public amenity to a critical health necessity. Many historically disinvested communities face a significant lack of shade with bus stops, parks, and sidewalks that become dangerous or inaccessible during extreme heat. Prioritizing strategic tree planting around vital assets, such as playgrounds and TriMet bus shelters, can help to mitigate extreme heat and improve climate resilience.

Some communities have also looked to sun shades, solar panel canopies, and reflective coatings to reduce urban heat islands. These strategies may become increasingly urgent as high heat days threaten the safety of everyday activities. Wildlife is also suffering, with declines in insect and bird populations leading indicators of the biosphere under severe stress from climate change. Deliberate interventions in the built environment can help protect people and the natural world we depend on.

Putting this into practice

- Host design competitions with students, academics, landscape architects, and community to identify innovative interventions that can create cooler streets, neighborhood amenities, and wildlife refuges.
- Identify grant funding to implement pilot projects and assess the projects for success.
- Develop best practices for creating shade in school yards, bus stops, and playgrounds, and other important community gathering locations.
- Develop strategies to create wildlife oases in parks to help insects and birds withstand extreme heat.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New**

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY

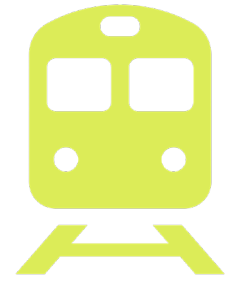




Transportation

Every community member has access to affordable, reliable and safe transit, biking and pedestrian infrastructure.

Goal: Every community member has access to affordable, reliable and safe transit, biking and pedestrian infrastructure.



Description

Access to safe, affordable, and reliable transit is a matter of fundamental equity, and central to reducing emissions since transportation accounts for roughly 40% of community-wide emissions. Frontline communities—those disproportionately impacted by both climate change and economic instability—often reside along high traffic and high-crash corridors. These households also spend more of their income on transportation, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, lower income families spend on average 30 percent of after-tax income on transportation costs.

For these residents, walking, biking, or taking the bus can be a primary means of transportation, and the low carbon emissions option, yet the current infrastructure often penalizes this sustainable choice with higher safety risks. By addressing safety gaps, we can help to ensure that the transition to a low-carbon transportation system increases physical safety for those who are most dependent on these modes, and in the process better protect all road users.

To accomplish this goal, the burden of safety has to shift beyond the individual to the design of the environment itself. Moving away from a car-centric model is essential for meeting climate goals, but this shift is only possible if safe infrastructure exists that makes people feel comfortable using alternatives. By implementing protected bike lanes, well-lit pedestrian crossings, and efficient transit layouts, a resilient urban fabric is created. This approach acknowledges that a simple human mistake should not result in a fatal tragedy.

Ultimately, investing in these multi-modal systems is a dual investment in public health and climate resilience. Reliable pedestrian and transit networks are essential for reducing harmful emissions and improving air quality. Safe active transportation encourages movement that reduces chronic health disparities while simultaneously lowering the community's overall environmental impact. As regions grow, it is clear that we cannot simply build more lanes for cars; instead, we must prioritize a balanced system where every resident, regardless of their age or income, can get to where they need to go safely and sustainably.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Traffic-related fatalities and serious-injuries

Description: All traffic-related fatalities are preventable. In the Portland Metro region, “traffic-related crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injury and death for people aged 5-24 and second leading cause for those aged 25-84.” The Vision Zero approach adopted by Multnomah County and other local government partners aims to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries on roadways. Aligned with this goal is the Safe Systems approach to how roadways are designed and maintained, which prioritizes speed reduction, conflict management across modes, and protection of those most vulnerable in crashes; people walking and biking are the most susceptible to significant injury or death. In addition, people of color, low-income households, and houseless community members are disproportionately harmed. Multnomah County’s Vision Zero goal is zero fatalities or serious injuries on roadways by 2035.

Current data: 170 traffic-related deaths between 2020 and 2021 in Multnomah County

Indicator 2: Transportation system completeness

Description: System completeness measures how well the region’s transportation systems are designed and built to support different ways of getting around. Metro, the regional government body for the Portland Metropolitan Area, plays a key role in planning, coordinating and tracking transportation investments over time. This work is done in close partnership with regional local governments, including Multnomah County, on for both development and implementation of plans and projects. Metro collects data related to transportation system completeness as part of its regular updates to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) on a five year cycle. The 2023 RTP established regional goals for completeness: pedestrian, bicycle and trail networks to be 100% complete by 2035; transit and motor vehicle systems to be 100% complete by 2045. Completeness is defined as 100% of the planned networks adopted in the RTP are completed.

Current data: As of the 2023 RTP:

- Motor vehicle network is 98% complete
- Transit network is 70% complete
- Pedestrian network is 57% complete
- Bicycle network is 54% complete
- Trail networks is 44% complete

Strategy: Work with all county jurisdictions to implement a safe-systems approach to the transportation system

Why does this matter?

Adopting a “Safe Systems” approach shifts the focus of transportation related investments from managing traffic to protecting human life. By prioritizing the East County Transportation Safety Plan and fast-tracking improvements on High Injury Corridors, the County is working to address the systemic inequities where traffic violence disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable road users. Further prioritizing this strategy moves beyond reactionary measures, instead treating traffic crashes as preventable health burdens that require transparent, data-driven reporting. As the local public health authority, Multnomah County can play a primary role in advancing this approach to transportation investments and management.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

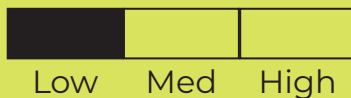
STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Multnomah County will work with jurisdictional partners and community advocates to consider how and where a “Safe Systems” approach can be integrated into transportation planning and investments.
- The Health Department will regularly report on the health burden of traffic crash injuries.

Lead Department(s)

Department of Community Services, Health Department, Environmental Health

Strategy: Implement the Urban East County Transportation Safety Plan.

Why does this matter?

Many of the major roadways in the urban areas of East Multnomah County are designated as high injury corridors, meaning that they have some of the highest rates of crashes that result in deaths or serious injury. These roadways were often designed to prioritize the movement of vehicles, which are more prone to traffic moving at unsafe speeds and are largely incompatible with other modes of transportation and community cohesion. In partnership with the cities of Fairview, Gresham and Troutdale, the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners adopted the Urban East Multnomah County Transportation Safety Action Plan (TSAP) in 2026 to guide priorities and investments towards a Vision Zero Goal (zero fatalities) across these jurisdictions. The community-centered TSAP is shaped by widespread community safety concerns, including the risk of active transportation options, and strong desire for safety related investments in urban East County. When implemented, the TSAP will result in systemwide safety improvements, as well as investments in priority safety corridors. While focused on safety, the TSAP will result in significant improvements into active transportation options for the entire community.

Putting this into practice

- Multnomah County and the TSAP jurisdictional and community partners will advocate for state, regional and local funding to fully implement the Plan.
- To ensure community transparency and accountability to the TSAP, the local government partners will regularly report on its implementation and key indicators on transportation safety in the Plan area.

Lead Department(s)

Department of Community Services

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Accelerate investments in ADA compliant sidewalks and other publicly accessible pedestrian infrastructure.

Why does this matter?

The 1990 Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and related laws prohibit discrimination against individuals with different physical and mental abilities in order to ensure equal opportunities for all members of our community. ADA is expansive, but is often first understood in the context of our built environment and the recognition that all community members must be able to physically move around and access the places and resources they need to thrive. This benefits not only individuals with physical differences, but society at large including families with strollers and workers making deliveries. New construction of roads, buildings and other infrastructure are required to be universally accessible. However, there remains a significant backlog of existing infrastructure that is not ADA compliant.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity**
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene **Implement**

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing **Additional** New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Multnomah County will continue to pursue additional funding to support the implementation of the 2023 ADA Transition Plan for County maintained roads.
- Multnomah County will continue to require new developments to implement ADA compliant improvements along adjacent roadways.
- Work in coalition with community advocates and other partners to secure stable funding for ADA improvements throughout Multnomah County.

Lead Department(s)

Department of Community Services

Strategy: Secure sustainable transit funding and work towards a universally accessible, high quality and resilient transit system.

Why does this matter?

Public transit is not only a critical strategy to address the climate impacts from the transportation sector, it is also central to realizing a vision of more compact and connected communities. Public transit is also an essential service, ensuring that our most vulnerable neighbors have the freedom to move, thrive, and participate fully in the life of our region. This includes during extreme weather and other emergencies, when transit can provide a life-line to critical resources. Without the foundation of a high functioning public transit system, the region's economic health and the well being of the community will be severely impacted.

After housing, transportation is often a household's second highest expense. Moving towards a universally accessible system begins with prioritizing fare-free access for youth and low-income residents. This is a commitment to economic justice, ensuring every community member can reliably reach schools, healthcare, and employment reliably and without financial strain. However, funding for expanding or even maintaining public transit services is a perennial challenge, including with Trimet, the Portland metro region public transit provider. New, collaborative approaches to investing in these services as well as innovative service delivery approaches are needed. Efforts like Trimet's Forward Together approach to targeted investments and Portland Bureau of Transportation Transit Wallet for transportation assistance to low-income residents offer templates to build from.

Adding to the funding strains Trimet faces, climate change is already having negative impacts on public transit infrastructure. Currently, Trimet's MAX light rail speed and reliability can be compromised during high heat. During a declared emergency, TriMet offers free rides to people accessing cooling or warming shelters. This vital service could be further expanded to allow free service to any destination on days the community is experiencing heat waves, severe storms, flooding or air quality advisories.

Putting this into practice

- Support efforts at the Oregon Legislature to permanently increase transit funding and ensure stable service and infrastructure investments over the long run.
- Support efforts that reduce the cost of transit for low-income riders like Transit Wallet, and look for opportunities to expand beyond the City of Portland.
- Support the Multnomah Youth Commission's (MYC) work to actively advocate for a "Regional Universal YouthPass" that would provide free, year-round transit for all youth 18 and under in the region, regardless of school or financial status.
- Support a policy of fareless rides on all public transit systems within Multnomah County during declared extreme weather events, such as heat waves, severe storms, flooding or air quality advisories.

Lead Department(s)

Trimet, Oregon State Legislature, Oregon Metro

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional **New**

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Deliver Safe Routes to School Programs in all school districts within Multnomah County.

Why does this matter?

Safe Routes to School Programs combine infrastructure improvements and education to support safe alternatives to passenger vehicles for students and families to reach schools. For many families, commuting to school by passenger vehicles is seen as the only safe option, resulting in congestion and additional safety risks for families who cannot or choose not to use other means.

Safe Routes to Schools programs aim to shift the responsibility of student safety from individual families to a collective community standard, ensuring that every child—regardless of their zip code—can walk or bike to school without risk. In addition to reducing congestion and traffic accidents, these programs help integrate physical activity into the daily lives of students, reduce environmental impacts around campuses, and foster a sense of belonging within the neighborhood. Ultimately, prioritizing these infrastructure and educational improvements is an investment in equitable access to education, ensuring that a student’s journey to the classroom is as secure and supportive as the learning environment itself. School districts and local governments, including Multnomah County,

support a number of school based Safe Routes to School programs throughout Multnomah County. However funding is limited and often grant based, which is a barrier to universal access to these programs.

Putting this into practice

- Support a coalition of governmental, non-governmental and community partners to engage in regional and state-wide transportation funding decision making to secure stable funding for Safe Routes to School programs across Multnomah County.
- Advocate for reforms to Oregon’s transportation revenue system, which currently limit the ability to invest in alternative transportation programs like Safe Routes to School.

Lead Department(s)

Department of Community Services

Supporting Department(s): Oregon Legislature, Oregon Department of Transportation, Metro

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

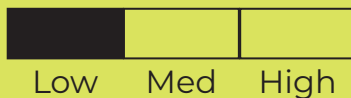
STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate** Research
- Convene **Implement**

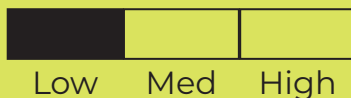
COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing **Additional** New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY





Extreme Weather

Every community member is resilient to extreme weather events and other climate threats

Goal: Every community member is resilient to extreme weather events and other climate threats.



Description

In a world of escalating climate induced extreme weather, every individual needs to be prepared and capable of withstanding and recovering from the impacts of extreme weather events and other climate-related challenges. This involves a combination of preparedness measures, strong infrastructure, effective emergency response systems, and a community-wide commitment to adaptation and sustainability.

The 2020 wildfires and the 2021 Heat Dome that the Pacific Northwest experienced brought into sharp focus the grim realities of what global climate change is bringing to our region. While anyone can be impacted by climate disasters, people are not equally exposed to climate hazards, and those who contribute least to climate change are more often in harm's way. Climate disasters exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, which necessitates preparedness policies and practices that account for social, economic and health disparities.

Multnomah County utilizes strategic emergency management planning to directly address a growing spectrum of environmental hazards. This focus is primarily aimed at building community resilience to preventing harm to the community in events such as extreme heat, winter weather, long-term power loss, wildfire and wildfire smoke, and severe flooding. These risks, amplified by changing climate patterns, necessitate a more comprehensive and proactive approach to preparedness and response, including additional planning for alerts/warning and evacuations, and new considerations such as serving communities who relocate here due to climate impacts.

Ensuring every individual is prepared for climate challenges will save lives and strengthen our community in the face of increasing extreme weather events. By investing in pre

paredness, infrastructure and response systems, and fostering a culture of resilience, a safer, more sustainable future for all residents is possible. Confronting inequities in systems and investing in community capacity and leadership ensures the entire community can be climate resilient.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Number of deaths from hypothermia and hyperthermia.

Description: Multnomah County actively tracks deaths related to extreme weather events, including extreme heat and cold, primarily through the Multnomah County Medical Examiner's Office, the Health Department, and Regional Climate Health Dashboards. Tracking and reporting the total number of excess deaths, the difference between the total number of observed deaths and the expected number of deaths, and instances of severe illness and injuries that are directly attributable to extreme weather events is a critical metric for evaluating the human toll of climate change and the effectiveness of interventions.

Current data: 72 heat-related deaths were confirmed in Multnomah County, primarily caused by the June 2021 heat dome event, which saw record-breaking temperatures of up to 116F. Heat related mortality has decreased since 2021, but remains a persistent issue. Data shows that the majority of heat deaths that occurred in 2021 happened with those living alone, in multifamily housing, often on higher floors, in units that lacked central air conditioning. From 2022 - 2024, Multnomah County experienced an average of approximately 5 deaths per year due to heat.

There were five deaths due to hypothermia in the 2024-2025 winter season, marking a decrease from previous winter. People experiencing homelessness continue to face the highest risk for cold-related illness.

Strategy: Support green building practices that create more climate resilient homes.

Why does this matter?

Supporting green building practices in Multnomah County is crucial for enhancing community resilience against extreme weather, reducing emissions, and lowering energy costs. These practices, which prioritize durable, energy efficient designs, protect residents from rising wildfire risks, poor air quality, and heatwaves. Fire-wise Advocating for local preference allows communities to implement higher standards and ensure that homes remain at safe temperatures and have clean air for longer during power outages or extreme weather events.

Putting this into practice

- Advocate at the state level to support advanced building codes, including codes that support or allow for local preference for implementation of building standards for housing that are more resilient to extreme weather.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability; Health Department

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Participate in a working group to understand urban conflagration risk and raise awareness on prevention.

Why does this matter?

The devastating Los Angeles Fires in 2025, the Almeda Fire in southern Oregon in 2020, and previous urban wildfire conflagration in Oregon and elsewhere show that urban communities are vulnerable to rapid fire spread due to extreme weather brought on by climate change. Dry summer weather and east winds can combine to create ideal conditions for rapid structure to structure fire spread. The initial danger can be particularly acute in heavily wooded neighborhoods with steep slopes and narrow roads. But these risks also extend to adjacent urban areas where people are less likely to be aware of the danger they are exposed to. Once a wildfire is transmitted into a dense, urban neighborhood, it no longer needs vegetation to spread; wind driven embers spread fire from one structure to the next potentially resulting in exponential growth. Both rural and urban areas can face additional risk from limited evacuation routes.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Increase awareness for people who live in areas of elevated risk and map out vulnerable populations in those areas.
- Partner with smaller cities and fire districts to increase awareness of wildfire risks.
- Work with partners to bring together experts from fire, emergency management, planning, and other relevant agencies to identify areas of highest concern and priority mitigation strategies.
- Research effective mitigation strategies from other communities.
- Consider other dimensions of risk, such as impacts on insurance including availability and premiums.

Lead Department(s)

Emergency Management; Health Department; Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Expand culturally specific outreach before and during extreme weather to ensure everyone in the community knows how to stay safe.

Why does this matter?

Multnomah County and partners have response plans in place for periods of extreme weather. Response can include opening warming/cooling shelters, free transit to cooling/warming shelters, enhanced outreach, and more. Ensuring that the entire community is aware of resources, can take steps to protect themselves, and knows how to get help is vital for keeping people safe. The County utilizes communications platforms like “Care for When It’s Cold” and “Help for When it’s Hot” during extreme weather events to connect people to critical resources and information, but more work is needed to ensure that this information is reaching all communities across the county.

Putting this into practice

- Create resource pages for wildfire and wildfire smoke.
- Assess the impact and effectiveness of communication efforts and adapt them to ensure they are effective in supporting culturally specific communities that may experience language or other barriers and other high risk populations.
- Continue to invest in relationships with and the capacity of culturally specific communities and other high risk populations to ensure maximum penetration of information during emergency activations.
- Partner with environmental justice organizations to support community data collection around community experiences and strategies around extreme weather and incorporate into planning and programs.
- Develop comprehensive data collection and sharing systems to track climate-related impacts on houseless individuals and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

Lead Department(s)

Health Department; Emergency Management; Communications

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Strategy: Improve community access to emergency preparedness networks.

Why does this matter?

True resilience is rooted in social cohesion, where community connection serves as a vital lifeline during a crisis. By expanding access to Neighborhood Emergency Teams (NETs) and culturally specific education — leveraging trusted community health worker models, for example — we can help to ensure life-saving resources reach every resident in their own context. Investing in community-based organizations to lead these efforts transforms neighbors into support systems, integrating disaster preparedness into the daily rhythm of community care so that no one navigates an emergency alone.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity**
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Improve social cohesion by expanding access for residents to connect with other community members around emergency preparedness, including Neighborhood Emergency Teams (NETs), resilience workshops and culturally specific offerings.
- Expand the number and reach of culturally specific resilience education opportunities and training, including leveraging a community health worker model and other popular education approaches.
- Support community-based organizations to lead and conduct their own programs. Incorporate these resources into social service and health education pathways.
- Develop cross sector training and learning opportunities that promote collaboration between homelessness service providers, climate scientists and emergency management personnel.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Emergency Management; Health Department; Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Develop a strategy to establish resilience hubs in every neighborhood in Multnomah County.

Why does this matter?

A network of resilience hubs transforms trusted local anchors—like community centers and houses of worship—into “islands of safety” that provide life-saving power for medical devices and cooling during extreme weather. This strategy matters because it shifts power to local grass-roots leadership and mutual aid networks, ensuring emergency responses are culturally relevant and accessible to those most impacted by climate change. Unlike traditional shelters that sit idle, these hubs act as “steady-state” community assets that provide year-round programming, like food access, programming, or other services, strengthening the social bonds and energy independence necessary for survival long before a crisis occurs.

Putting this into practice

- In coalition with a broad range of community-based organizations and other government agencies, conduct a comprehensive assessment of community needs, the ongoing resources needed to sustain resilience hubs, and potentially suitable locations in each neighborhood, prioritizing frontline and at-risk communities.
- Work in coalition to advocate for sustained resources to develop and sustain a resilience hub network.
- Look for resources that would support solar panels and battery storage at resilience hubs in all neighborhoods.
- Work with community groups to help define what a resilience hub is.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

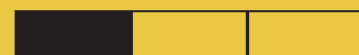
- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Increase access to efficient cooling and air cleaners in homes.

Why does this matter?

Increasing access to efficient cooling and air cleaners is a critical public health intervention. Many households across the county do not have the resources or the physical ability to purchase and install cooling or air filtration devices. Multnomah County and other local governments have implemented limited programs to connect low income households to these resources, but more investment is needed to sustain and expand their reach. This includes exploring innovative funding through Medicaid waivers, ensuring that life-saving climate technology reaches the most vulnerable residents across all of Multnomah County. This strategy shifts our approach from reactive emergency response to proactive protection, ensuring that every home—regardless of zip code or income—can serve as a safe refuge during extreme heat and smoke events.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity**
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Support legislative efforts that allocate funding for air cleaners and energy efficient cooling, like the Oregon Community Heat Pump Deployment Program.
- Increase funding and eligibility for programming to provide more residents with access to air conditioners, heat pumps and air purifiers, especially for those outside the City of Portland boundaries in Multnomah County.
- Explore expanded eligibility criteria for cooling through Medicaid's Health Related Social Needs benefits.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability; Health Department



Clean Energy

Every community member has access to affordable clean energy

Goal: Every community member has access to affordable clean energy.



Description

Ensuring that every community member has access to affordable clean energy is a cornerstone of climate justice. Energy is essential for survival and for a thriving life. However, historical and systemic injustices have limited equal access to energy, including to the benefits of clean energy and new technologies.

Our energy systems are changing rapidly due in part to policies that address climate change and to the availability and declining costs of new technologies like solar power and battery energy storage. However, without an explicit commitment to justice, a clean energy future could replicate past harms and leave many behind. A clean energy future in which people cannot afford their energy bills is neither just nor how our community defines success.

The clean energy transition can be a powerful tool for community empowerment, unlocking new job markets and fostering economic prosperity and wealth building. The many organizations, policymakers, and stakeholders engaged in this transition must ensure that these benefits also accrue to frontline communities, and not only to actors that have traditionally benefited from the energy sector. The clean energy transition is critical to achieving Multnomah County's greenhouse gas reduction goals. If implemented thoughtfully, a clean and just energy transition will also lead to better health outcomes from reduced air and water pollution, as well as additional community resilience.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Percentage of energy-burdened households

Description: Households that spend six percent or more of their total income on home energy costs are considered energy burdened. Those households are often making difficult choices about which expenses to

pay, like whether to keep the lights and heat on or pay for food or medical costs.

Current data: 27 percent of households in Multnomah County were considered energy burdened in 2023.

Indicator 2: Sources of greenhouse gas emissions in Multnomah County

Description: Greenhouse gas emissions in Multnomah County are generated predominantly from the combustion of fossil fuels for transportation, heating, and electricity generation. As we transition our energy systems to clean sources of energy, our greenhouse gas emissions will also decrease dramatically. Multnomah County's goal is to transition to 100 percent clean and renewable sources of energy by 2050, with zero carbon emissions from its energy supply. Electrifying energy systems is the key to enabling this transition. As the community progresses towards these goals, a growing percentage of the energy mix will be attributed to electricity and to a lesser extent bio-based fuels.

Current data:

2023 Carbon Emissions by Source	
Source	Percentage
Electricity	26%
Gasoline	24%
Natural Gas	21%
Diesel	16%
Process & Fugitive Emissions	4%
Distillate Fuel Oil No. 2	4%
Other Sources	2%
Propane	2%
Solid Waste	2%

Goal: Every community member has access to affordable clean energy.



Indicator 3: Sources of electricity serving Multnomah County

Description: Electrifying transportation, space heating, and other end-uses is a key pillar of any decarbonization strategy. Electrification is inherently efficient when compared to burning fossil fuels. For example, an automobile loses over half of the energy from gasoline to waste heat, while an electric vehicle uses nearly all of the energy stored in its batteries for moving the vehicle. However, the source of that electricity is equally important. Today, an electricity system powered with clean technologies like solar, wind, and storage can be more cost-effective than one powered by coal and natural gas. The Oregon Legislature and local governments including Multnomah County have adopted important policies to transition the state’s utilities to all renewable sources, but much work remains.

Current data:

Multnomah County Grid Electricity Generation Mix (2023)	
Source	Percentage
Natural Gas	38%
Unspecified	15%
Coal	14%
Hyrdo	12%
Wind	11%
Solar	5%
Bonneville Power Admin.	4%
Biogas	<1%
Biomass	<1%
Geothermal	<1%
Fuel Oil	<1%
Hydrogen Fuel Cell	<1%
Other Anthropogenic	<1%

Indicator 4: Renewable energy generation in Multnomah County

Description: Nearly all of the electricity consumed in Multnomah County comes from outside of its borders. Indeed, much of our electricity comes from across the Pacific Northwest and beyond. There is value in having sources of electricity supply across a diversity of technologies and locations. For example, wind often is strongest when the sun isn’t shining and wind production in regions like Montana tend to match well with local energy use patterns. Electricity supply and demand can differ across geographies at different times, and a connected system means that resources can be optimized, creating system efficiencies and cost savings. However, localized energy sources can also have significant economic and resilience value, and support self determination. Multnomah County and its communities have made a shared commitment to securing at least 2% of electricity used in Multnomah County from local, community-based resources.

Current data: As of 2023, 1.1 percent of the electricity used in the City of Portland is generated from renewable sources within the City’s borders.

Strategy: Decarbonize Multnomah County Operations and strengthen the resilience of County infrastructure.

Why does this matter?

The Multnomah County government has long been considered a leader in sustainable operations. From installing one of the first green roofs in the region to the recent completion of a new net-zero building (Library Operations Center), examples of Multnomah County’s leadership abound. Multnomah County must be an example of the decarbonized future for the whole community.

This strategy will prioritize the replacement of equipment at or near the end of its useful life with low- or zero-carbon alternatives in order to minimize any disruption of critical community services as well as budget impacts. Further savings will come from avoided utility costs thanks to energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. Additionally, as part of its decarbonization efforts the County will also look for additional opportunities to “harden” its infrastructure against climate extremes in order to help ensure operational continuity.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy**
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement**

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing**
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Maximize solar generation opportunities at County Facilities and leverage County facilities and property for the development of community-benefitting clean energy projects, like community solar.
- Implement a fleet decarbonization plan with the goal of fully decarbonizing the fleet by 2050.
- Implement a capital improvement plan to electrify County facilities, prioritizing end of life system upgrades.
- Work to connect County buildings to thermal energy networks when those become available.
- Develop low carbon building materials standards.
- Evaluate critical County infrastructure for durability and operability under climate extremes.

Lead Department(s)

Department of County Assets, Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Work to limit rate increases and support rate setting processes that better consider affordability and other residential customers' interests.

Why does this matter?

Energy affordability is critical to ensuring a just energy transition. Energy utility rates have steadily and significantly increased over the past five years (~50% from 2021 to 2025), and are likely to continue to increase. New programs have been established by the Oregon Legislature and the Oregon Public Utility Commission to provide additional support to low income ratepayers who are experiencing energy burden and to address the risk of additional increases related to utilities serving customers like large data centers. More work is needed to fully address energy burden in the state, as well as to ensure that all communities are able to benefit from new and existing technologies that offer energy savings opportunities.

Putting this into practice

- Engage at the Legislature and Public Utility Commission on policies and proceedings with the potential to mitigate rate increases for residential customers and to ensure that utilities are incentivized to limit their costs and not shift risks to residential customers while meeting state policy and prioritizing community benefits.
- Support efforts that better utilize existing grid assets and other strategies that are least cost and better utilize distributed energy resources.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Strategy: Work to strengthen policies and programs that reduce disconnections and energy burden for low-income people of Multnomah County, and expand accessibility to these programs by reducing barriers and expanding robust outreach to eligible communities.

Why does this matter?

Oregon has had programs that offer some support to low-income customers for decades, although they have never been sufficiently funded to ensure energy security for Oregonians with low-incomes. These program offerings have expanded and evolved over time, helping countless families. Persistent grassroots advocacy has delivered crucial policies like HB 2475 (2021), the Energy Affordability Act, giving the Oregon Public Utility Commission the authority to consider energy burdens on low-income customers and other economic, social equity or environmental justice factors that affect affordability. Last year, HB 3792 (2025) doubled funding for bill assistance grants for Pacific Power and PGE customers, setting a framework for funding for these grants to keep pace with bill increases. These and other policies have resulted in new approaches to address energy burden in the state, including programs that allow households to receive a discount in their utility bill based on their

income, forgiveness and programs for utility debt relief, and stronger disconnection protections. Additional work is needed to ensure that community members with low incomes can access these programs and avoid the harms that stem from disconnections.

Putting this into practice

- Continue to advocate for policies and programs that prevent disconnections for low-income customers, including robust discount and bill assistance grants that keep pace with rising energy rates, as well as evolving disconnection protections and utility debt relief tools that target those most vulnerable.
- Continue to advocate for reduced barriers to accessing and remaining enrolled in energy programs.
- Continue to advocate for improvements in utility outreach about energy assistance programs and protections, and support through programs at Multnomah County that work with potentially eligible households.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability, Department of County Human Services, Youth and Family Services

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy

Investment Opportunity

Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research

Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

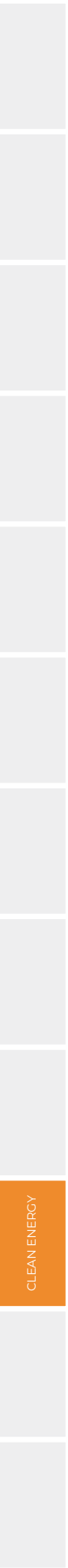
Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High



Strategy: Support efforts to accelerate strategic electrification in buildings.

Why does this matter?

The 2025 Oregon Energy Strategy emphasizes that accelerating strategic electrification in buildings is a fundamental “least-cost pathway” to meeting the state’s energy and climate goals. For electrification to be considered strategic, it must advance one of the following areas without adversely affecting the others: (1) benefits consumers over the long run; (2) enables better grid management; and (3) reduces negative environmental impacts.

By transitioning from fossil fuel combustion to high-efficiency electric systems, like heat pumps, Oregon can significantly reduce its overall energy demand—modeled to drop by 22% by 2050—while simultaneously lowering greenhouse gas emissions. This shift is critical for affordability, as it helps families and businesses avoid the rising costs and risks associated with fossil fuels and leverages technologies that are more efficient to operate over the long term.

Beyond cost containment and climate benefits, electrification can be a cornerstone for grid reliability and public health. Electrified buildings equipped with smart technology can act as flexible resources, shifting energy use to times when renewable sources like wind and solar are most abundant or reducing use during times when there is a lot of demand for electricity. This flexibility can reduce the need for costly new generation and transmission projects. Furthermore, removing onsite combustion improves indoor air quality and public health. By focusing on an equitable transition, this strategy ensures that the resulting economic growth—estimated to support up to 16,000 new jobs—benefits all Oregonians while creating a more resilient and dependable energy future.

Putting this into practice

- Advocate for changes to federal and state programs, as well as Energy Trust of Oregon offerings, to explicitly support the electrification of end uses, including fuel switching from methane (natural gas) to electric sources of heating and cooking.
- Advocate for changes in community action partner (weatherization) programs so that strategic electrification is a funded measure.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Strategy: Engage in policy conversations related to achieving clean energy goals while maintaining reliability and affordability.

Why does this matter?

Two major Oregon policies, HB 2021 (2021), which addresses greenhouse gas emissions from the electricity supply, and the Climate Protection Program (2021, 2024), which addresses greenhouse gas from the liquid and gaseous fuel supplies, are designed to meet two-thirds of the state's long term greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal. These policies, as well as several other key legislative, regulatory, and executive actions form the foundation of Oregon's effort to eliminate its greenhouse gas emissions. Key to all of these policies is the transition from fossil-based to clean sources of energy, but there are a number of interrelated issues that must also be considered to ensure that energy reliability and affordability are maintained. In particular, after decades of limited growth in demand for electricity, the Pacific Northwest is facing significant new growth in electricity demand primarily due to large data centers and end-use electrification. The new demand needs to be met at the same time as Oregon and several surrounding states look to replace existing fossil fuel generation with clean alternatives. A number of new opportunities provide pathways to addressing potential electricity supply challenges, including additional transmission capacity that supports sharing resources across regions and battery energy storage that can both store excess renewable energy generation and shift demand to when resources are available.

The clean energy transition is necessary but highly complex. Without a full consideration of the issues and space for everyone to be heard, there is a risk that the region will miss out on innovative approaches that maximize the opportunities the energy transition presents. Importantly, a careful approach is key to minimize the risk of leaving those with the fewest means worse off. Local government voices are key in those conversations and processes, given their close interaction with constituencies, and their roles as large utility customers and entities with a perspective that is often highly valued in utility and regulatory spaces. Additionally, the Office of Sustainability has played an important role in supporting environmental justice coalitions engaged in clean energy transition conversations by amplifying their important perspectives and supporting the organization of effective advocacy spaces. Finally, decision makers, advocates and implementation partners need complete, transparent and accurate information to navigate different scenarios and opportunities. Fortunately, efforts like the Oregon Energy Strategy, numerous legislative and regulatory pathways, and outside research have set a foundation for a thoughtful approach to a clean energy future.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Advocate for the full implementation of major climate policies in Oregon, including HB 2021 (2021), the Climate Protection Program, and others at the Oregon Legislature, the Oregon Public Utility Commission, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, and other relevant regulatory and decisionmaking bodies.
- Advocate for transparency and accuracy in the energy planning environment, including additional research into electricity demand and community beneficial resource pathways, and for a full consideration of the environmental benefits and risks of alternative fuel sources like hydrogen, bio-methane, and liquid bio-fuels.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Support efforts by environmental justice communities to influence decision-makers on energy rates and other energy-related policy issues.

Why does this matter?

The voices of environmental justice community members have historically been left out of decision making spaces that impact the cost of their energy and their access to energy investments and their related benefits (e.g. the economic and environmental benefits of rooftop solar). While organizations like the Citizens Utility Board of Oregon (CUB) have raised concerns on behalf of residential and low-income rate-payers, it is only in the past ten years that additional justice and community oriented voices have been able to engage more deeply in energy related policy at the Legislature and the Oregon Public Commission. This increased engagement has required a tremendous commitment from these organizations as they have grown their capacity and expertise while demanding changes to make regulatory processes more accessible. They also successfully advocated for funding to support their efforts to bring their crucial perspective to energy decision-making spaces. More recently, environmental justice organizations and communities have also worked to bring the perspectives of environmental justice community members directly to decision makers. Consequently, new approaches to decision-making in energy spaces are underway, such as training for community members and translation services at regulatory proceedings. But these efforts will require a sustainable investment in community expertise and capacity to engage. The Office of Sustainability has played a key supporting role in these efforts, providing expertise and capacity to coalition efforts.

Putting this into practice

- Continue to work with community partners to expand the capacity of community-based organizations and grassroots advocates to advocate for their priorities at the state level. These efforts include the Energy Justice Cohort that Multnomah County has co-facilitated for three years in collaboration with several energy and environmental justice partner organizations.
- Continue to partner with community based organizations to secure grant funding for ongoing projects like the Energy Justice Cohort.
- Continue providing support in coalition spaces that allow energy justice advocates to leverage each other's expertise and advance policy wins on energy burden and community clean energy programs, as well as other energy justice priorities.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: In partnership with environmental justice communities, develop a shared definition and vision of energy justice and identify quantitative and qualitative data to measure progress over time.

Why does this matter?

Energy justice is a critical component of climate justice, but a lack of shared understanding of what this means in practice and how it can be measured over time can be a barrier to its full consideration in the complex energy planning space. Investments in distributed and community based renewable energy can provide significant opportunities for community benefit, but there is often a disconnect between community priorities and traditional energy planning processes. The impact of programs and policies that seek to address energy burden may be limited without centering community experience in their development.

A strong foundation for this effort is in place. Multnomah County's 100x50 Resolution (2017-046) includes an initial goal of meeting at least 2% of the community's total energy needs with community-based renewable energy infrastructure. Community-benefitting clean energy infrastructure is also an important feature of HB 2021 (2021), Clean Energy for All, and its subsequent implementation. HB 2475 (2021), Energy Affordability Act, presents new opportunities to deepen understanding of energy burden, including through new data collection and reporting. Each of these efforts would benefit from a strengthened understanding of energy justice and from additional real world community experience and expertise collected through new community-led qualitative data collection approaches.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Convene environmental justice stakeholders to develop and articulate a shared vision of energy justice, including specific outcomes related to community based renewable energy, energy resilience, and energy burden.
- Support community-led efforts to gather community experience and insights related to energy justice, and prioritize those in the County's energy related programs and advocacy.
- Refine the energy related indicators in the Climate Justice Plan to include county level data on energy justice, including utility disconnections, bill discount program participation, and community-based energy assets.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Support transportation electrification in the community, especially for households most burdened by transportation costs and who have limited access to electric vehicles or charging equipment.

Why does this matter?

The Oregon Energy Strategy highlights vehicle electrification as a cornerstone of its “least-cost pathway,” noting that transitioning to electric vehicles (EVs) provides substantial financial relief for Oregonians over the long term. Modeling within the strategy found that electrification offers one of the best opportunities to reduce energy use and save household money during the energy transition. According to the document’s “Energy Wallet” analysis, while the upfront cost of an EV may be higher, most households will experience significant net savings due to lower fueling and maintenance expenses. Furthermore, because electric motors are far more energy-efficient than gasoline engines, electrifying on-road transportation is projected to reduce the state’s total economy-wide energy demand by 27%.

Beyond direct financial savings, this strategy identifies critical systemic and public health benefits. When combined with efforts to reduce total vehicle miles traveled, electrification will provide the greatest local air quality improvements, drastically reducing harmful pollutants like nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. To support this transition, local initiatives—such as those in Multnomah County—are expanding the network of publicly accessible chargers at community-serving locations like libraries. This infrastructure is vital for ensuring equity, particularly for residents of apartment buildings who cannot charge at home. Additionally, a growing fleet of EVs can act as a flexible grid resource, shifting demand away from peak hours through managed charging. This flexibility can reduce the need for costly new power plants and transmission infrastructure, ultimately benefiting all utility ratepayers while improving air quality and health outcomes across the state.

Putting this into practice

- Expand the number of electric vehicle charges available at public locations owned by the County.
- Advocate for the continuation of programs like the Oregon Charge Ahead Rebate and other incentives that support low income household access to EV’s.
- Advocate for utility programs that cost-effectively leverage the grid flexibility value of electric vehicles.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Expand access to and the scope of low- and moderate-income residential energy efficiency programs to promote health, stability and resilience.

Why does this matter?

The County has had a long standing low-income home weatherization program that helps to stabilize households by lowering energy bills and addressing household hazards. The County's weatherization program focuses on the lowest income households and serves people living in apartment buildings and single family homes. These households are not well served by market solutions, and may struggle with access to financing for projects or may have only limited options as renters. In addition, deferred maintenance and home repairs often have to be completed first in order to make energy related investments in a household.

Recent efforts like the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) offer new opportunities to serve communities in need, and it is critical that different providers work together to align services around the best outcomes for community members. This includes pursuing additional funding to serve more households outside of the City of Portland who cannot be

served by PCEF, and new partnerships that bring together health, social service and other community providers around shared goals. Given the number of challenges community members face and the limited resources to serve them, residential programs should simultaneously address energy burden, aging in place, safety, resilience, and comfort.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Pursue new sources of funding, including grants, that support expanding the number of low-to-moderate income people who can access weatherization and home electrification and energy resilience opportunities.
- Align with, and leverage, efforts and funding that supports healthy housing, aging in place, and other housing stabilization approaches.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability, Department of County Human Services

Strategy: Support policies and programs that reduce barriers to community members accessing distributed energy resources and other technologies that can bring value to both the customer and the electricity system and support a just energy transition.

Why does this matter?

Distributed energy resources have a direct impact on household energy use, offering energy solutions that empower individuals to address their energy footprint and manage costs. These solutions include rooftop and community solar, battery energy storage, smart thermostats and demand response, and energy efficiency measures, including heat pumps. These solutions can also support communities by creating value for households in the form of reduced energy bills, improved health and comfort, and energy resilience in case of power disruptions. These solutions can also benefit all customers by increasing the utilization of the existing grid, and can typically be implemented much more quickly than larger scale approaches. This approach supports the transition of the larger grid by providing small-scale solutions that translate to larger positive impacts on grid capacity.

Putting this into practice

- Collaborate with energy justice partners to advocate for prioritizing community-based and distributed energy resources to meet existing and future energy needs in utility planning and regulatory spaces and in potential future legislation.
- Advocate for approaches that ensure access to distributed resources for low- and moderate-income households.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature, Oregon Public Utility Commission

STRATEGY CATEGORY

County Strategy
 Investment Opportunity
 Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

Advocate Research
 Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Strategy: Support policies to ensure utilities use ratepayer funds in the public interest.

Why does this matter?

Utility companies have a legitimate need to communicate with regulators and the public. However, because the utilities serving Multnomah County residents and businesses are regulated monopolies, there is a risk that ratepayer funds may be used for lobbying activities that can be, or can be perceived to be, outside the interest of their customers. Previous legislative reform efforts have sought to bring more transparency and rigor to how utilities spend ratepayer dollars on these activities, but have not been successful. These efforts would not prohibit companies from using their own resources for legislative lobbying or membership in trade organizations.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Support efforts to advocate at the Oregon Legislature, Public Utility Commission and other venues to clarify which lobbying activities may be in the public interest, and to prohibit utilities from using ratepayer funds for activities that fall outside of that scope.
- Work with energy justice advocates and regulators to help ensure that ratepayer-funded, energy-related information from utilities provides fair consideration of an issue.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature, Oregon Public Utility Commission

Strategy: Support the development of thermal energy networks to provide energy efficient heating and cooling to buildings.



Why does this matter?

During community engagement related to the draft Climate Justice Plan, thermal energy networks were an area of shared enthusiasm between advocates, utilities, industry, and others. This new technology takes advantage of stable underground temperatures to deliver highly energy efficient building heating and cooling. The technology is not in wide use, but has been implemented elsewhere in the United States, and these systems hold promise in the Pacific Northwest. Public buildings, in particular, could be important institutional anchor tenants that may help make these projects more feasible.

Putting this into practice

- Work with energy justice advocates, industry, and utility partners to complete a feasibility analysis of potential thermal energy networks to identify project economics, energy reliability, feasible project locations and other considerations.
- Work with partners to consider a demonstration project to show a proof of concept and to identify grant money to help pay for initial planning and capital investment costs.
- Explore connecting Multnomah County owned sites to thermal energy networks as they are developed.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature; Oregon Department of Energy; Cities

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY





Fossil Fuels

Every community member is safe from the risks posed by fossil fuels and energy infrastructure.

Goal: Every community member is safe from the risks posed by fossil fuels and energy infrastructure.



Description

Fossil fuels endanger the planet and disproportionately harm frontline communities by fueling climate change and accelerating the environmental degradation of ecosystems, among other harms. At the same time, fossil fuels have also been an important part of the economy, providing the vast majority of transportation fuels and a large portion of the commercial and residential heating fuels. The infrastructure that supports the use of fossil fuels, from well heads in far off places and large tank farms that supply a region, to a single gas pump fueling a car, is woven into the fabric of communities. The risks may be hard to recognize at first sight due to the ubiquity of fossil fuel infrastructure, but these systems can pose significant risks and cause serious harm when accidents occur.

The 2025 Oregon Department of Energy's Energy Strategy identified various pathways to meeting Oregon's energy policy. Under its least-cost pathway, total fuel consumption will drop by 70 percent by 2050, and most remaining fuels will shift from fossil-based to low-carbon alternatives. A transition to cleaner sources of fuel will need to be carefully managed; legacy systems need to be maintained in good working order up to the point that they are no longer needed. At the same time, as we consider alternative technologies - like low carbon fuels - we must also be thoughtful about any risks they may pose to our communities in the future.

In addition to the risks that fossil fuel use poses to the health and well-being of individuals and the planet, the infrastructure supporting the fossil fuel economy poses a significant threat in Multnomah County specifically. Multnomah County is home to the Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) Hub, a stretch of fuel depots along the Willamette River, north of downtown Portland. The CEI Hub stores 90% of the liquid fuels used in Or-

egon and is situated on soils that will liquefy during a major earthquake. The CEI Hub poses a grave threat to the community that is being addressed through new state rules like the Fuel Tank Seismic Stability Program. Other facilities that store hazardous toxic inhalants, and smaller fuel facilities are not currently regulated for seismic stability.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Percent of Multnomah County energy derived from fossil fuels.

Description: Gasoline, diesel fuel, and natural gas are the three primary fossil fuels combusted in Multnomah County for energy. In addition, significant portions of the electricity used in Multnomah County are generated from the combustion of coal and natural gas. Fossil fuels will decrease over time as a percentage of total energy use due to electrification and the use of other alternative clean fuels.

Current data:

Energy Type	% Fossil Fuel Based
Electricity	63% (Coal, Methane)
Gasoline	90%
Diesel	70%
Natural Gas	~99% (Methane)

Indicator 2: Number of annual carbon monoxide poisonings resulting in an emergency room or urgent care (ED/UC) visit.

Description: Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless toxic gas that can result in injury or death at sufficient exposure levels. Carbon monoxide is a by-product of combustion. A combustion appliance that is not properly vented to the outdoors can result in a dangerous build up of carbon monoxide.

Current data: 25 ED/UC visits October 2024 - April 2025

Data Source: Oregon ESSENCE, Oregon Health Authority

Strategy: Regulate liquid fuel storage facilities not currently covered by the DEQ Fuel Tank Seismic Stability Program.



Why does this matter?

According to the Department of Environmental Quality there are 8 facilities with fuel storage capacity between 50,000 - 1 million gallons in Multnomah County not regulated by the DEQ Fuel Tank Seismic Stability Program. These facilities may have a similar seismic risk profile to regulated facilities. DEQ anticipates spills from these facilities after an earthquake that would result in significant negative public health and environmental impacts. These smaller facilities, which still pose a substantial risk, should be included in a comprehensive above ground storage safety program, similar to the existing state-wide below ground storage program.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Conduct a study of above ground fuel storage facilities not covered by the DEQ Fuel Tank Seismic Stability Program to understand the geographic distribution and demographic risks from tank failures.
- Advocate for the creation of a comprehensive above ground storage safety program.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature, Oregon Environmental Quality Commission, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality

Strategy: Protect communities from uncontrolled release of stored hazardous materials.

Why does this matter?

A 2023 Multnomah County report Risk of Earthquake-Induced Hazardous Materials Releases in Multnomah County found serious risks posed by the storage of hazardous industrial chemicals, including toxic inhalation hazards, that are vulnerable to uncontrolled release because of an earthquake. Most of the highest-risk hazardous facilities in Multnomah County are in liquefaction zones in North Portland, and along the Columbia River Slew. These areas also tend to have higher proportions of environmental justice communities. The report models the release from 4 facilities that store toxic inhalants in above ground tanks and found that a seismically induced uncontrolled release could result in up to 2,500 deaths and 17,000 potential injuries. The report identified 70 type 2 facilities in Multnomah County that store gaseous hazardous materials that may pose a public health threat in case of release.

Much is still unknown about the extent of this threat, including the risks from facilities in neighboring jurisdictions. More analysis is needed to better understand the risk, current industry and regulatory practices, and what steps are needed to better protect public health. Many communities impose a fee on the storage of hazardous materials both to fund emergency response, and to encourage the use of alternative materials that pose less of a risk to the public.

Putting this into practice

- Explore seismic requirements for stored hazardous materials identified in the County's Risk of Earthquake-Induced Hazardous Materials Releases in Multnomah County report, and conduct further modeling to understand the scope of risk posed to Multnomah County residents.
- Work with state and local jurisdictional partners to explore and support development of a hazardous material storage fee to fund better emergency response capability, especially in areas close to hazardous material storage.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability, Office of Emergency Management

Supporting Department(s): Oregon State Legislature

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Research the potential public health implications of hydrogen when used to replace natural gas for residential and commercial use.

Why does this matter?

Green hydrogen is made using renewable electricity to split water molecules into hydrogen and oxygen. Hydrogen, when burned, does not create carbon dioxide and is therefore a carbon-free energy carrier when made with renewable energy. Green hydrogen can also be used to store renewable energy for later use, or replace fossil fuel derived hydrogen used in many chemical manufacturing applications. Many studies suggest that green hydrogen will play an important role in a fully decarbonized future.

As regulatory mandates require the use of less carbon intensive energy sources over time, hydrogen has been proposed as a way of reducing the carbon intensity of natural gas by blending it with the methane gas supply that reaches homes and businesses. Hydrogen, however, can present new safety challenges. The gas system is made of many interconnected components, transmission pipelines, the distribution system, and home appliances, for example. Understanding how various hydrogen blending rates interact with the legacy system under specific conditions - like distribution system pressures and distribution system materials - will be critical for understanding safety. Hydrogen can ignite more easily than methane, and can also leak more easily, in part because of the potential to embrittle metal distribution system components and leak through polymer based pipes. Hydrogen blend safety with existing home appliances also needs more study to understand safety issues like flashback and air pollution.

In recognition of the potential safety challenges, the 2025 Oregon Legislature passed Senate Bill 685 that requires gas companies to inform customers and the Oregon Public Utility Commission if they plan on blending more than 2.5% hydrogen into the gas system. Additional research is needed to fully understand safe blending rates and the economic and environmental value of hydrogen blending.

Additional research is needed to fully understand safe blending rates and the economic and environmental value of hydrogen blending.

Putting this into practice

- Request that state agencies:
 - Review literature and convene experts to compile a technical understanding of potential benefits and risks.
 - Host community forums to bring together parties interested in understanding the potential benefits and risks of hydrogen as a fuel source.
 - Use gathered information to inform future planning and regulatory decisions.
- Advocate for additional regulations if appropriate.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon State Legislature, Oregon Public Utility Commission, Oregon Department of Energy

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Manage the transition of fossil fuel service “gas” stations.



Why does this matter?

Gasoline and diesel fuel can be dangerous if not properly handled. As a result, gas stations are subject to a variety of regulations to ensure safety. Regulatory requirements include fire suppression standards, underground storage tank regulations, and air quality permits. The introduction of battery electric vehicles (BEV) presents a new challenge for gas stations businesses, including making the decision to include new charging infrastructure to compliment gas and diesel sales. Gas stations that serve a primarily local market may be particularly hard pressed because about 80% of BEV charging happens at home, and smaller stations may lack the capital assets to invest in charging infrastructure.

With the sales of BEVs increasing, Oregon is entering a period of mid-transition. This is a time of overlap between existing fossil fuel infrastructure and a future state where BEVs are dominant. The mid-transition requires deliberate management to ensure continued access to fueling stations, while also focusing on rapid phase-in of clean technologies. Ideally, management occurs in such a way where the cleanest and most efficient services are not inadvertently lost.

Putting this into practice

- Conduct research to understand thresholds in fossil fueling infrastructure that may lead to closures and how the transition can be effectively managed to limit disruptions and maximize benefits.
- Advocate for additional regulatory oversight of fossil fueling stations in Multnomah County that considers opportunities to transition sites to EV charging and remediation of site contamination when closure occurs.
- Consider strategies, like a prohibition on new gas station developments in Multnomah County, that also recognize the need to modernize existing fueling stations, meet changing geographic demand, and minimize environmental harms.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Department of Energy, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Cities

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Identify and pursue regulatory pathways to limit the growth of the natural gas system and support pathways for integrated energy planning across electric and gas utilities.

Why does this matter?

The transition to clean energy and the strategic electrification of end uses, like home heating, need to be carefully managed because the natural gas system currently provides substantial winter heating resources for Multnomah County residents. Natural gas also provides backup power and home heating for homes with gas generators or gas fireplaces respectively. Amidst growing demand for electricity, a poorly managed transition could lead to unintended consequences like overloaded electrical distribution circuits leading to localized outages, or insufficient power supply during periods of high demand leading to brownouts or blackouts. Similarly, a poorly managed transition could leave those least able to transition away from the use of gas responsible for the growing costs associated with a gas system that is losing customers and is therefore dividing its costs between a shrinking pool of customers. Integrated energy planning is needed to maintain the heating reliability and resilience of residents while also managing the transition to renewable energy.

The cost effectiveness of renewable natural gas and hydrogen as decarbonization strategies for the gas system are uncertain and the topic of some debate. A low carbon future will likely have a much smaller gas distribution network. Households with older inefficient gas furnaces can already save on heating bills by switching to high efficiency heat pumps, and the Oregon Energy Strategy least cost pathway assumes most households will use electricity for home heating by 2050. Limiting the growth of the gas system now can ensure adequate gas supplies for current needs while preventing investments in new assets that may not be needed before the end of their useful life or their full financial depreciation. This strategy aligns with regional precedents in limiting gas system expansion and the Oregon Energy Strategy's call for data sharing and joint planning across electric and gas utilities to ensure energy capacity and reliability.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate**
- Research**
- Convene
- Implement**

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New**

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Advocate at the state level, and explore local legal pathways, to limit expansion of the natural gas system in Multnomah County.
- Explore regulatory options for limiting the risk to residential customers from future stranded assets of the gas system, including accelerated depreciation of existing assets, enhanced assistance for low and moderate income households, and other approaches.
- Advocate for, and engage in, joint energy planning across the gas and electric energy systems to ensure reliability and support a just transition.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Add seismic safety valves to residential and commercial natural gas connections.

Why does this matter?

Natural gas leaks are dangerous and require immediate action. In the case of an earthquake, the connection point between a building and the gas system, typically near a gas meter, can break, leak, and even catch fire. Automatic shutoff valves can stop the flow of gas and prevent the uncontrolled release of gas.

According to Northwest Natural (NWN), overlapping redundancies exist in their system to limit damage to the gas system from an earthquake. These include valves that will automatically close if there is a loss of pressure, flexible polymer distribution pipes that are more resistant to earthquakes, and investments in retrofitting gas meters with smart meters that can shut off automatically. NWN is currently modernizing about 10% of gas meters with ultrasonic smart meters that have automatic shutoff capabilities. Dangers still exist, however, and automatic shutoff valves installed on the customer side of the meter can stop the flow of gas between the meter and the customer and provide an extra layer of protection. These valves are relatively inexpensive, but must be installed by a professional.

Putting this into practice

- Require seismic shutoff valves for new installation of gas meters that do not have a built-in emergency (seismic) shutoff.
- Explore new programs that help gas customers retrofit existing gas connections with emergency (seismic) shutoff valves.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon State Legislature, Oregon Public Utility Commission

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY





Contribute

Every community member has the opportunity to contribute to climate justice in Multnomah County.

Goal: Every community member has the opportunity to contribute to climate justice in Multnomah County.



Description

Climate justice is not a destination reached through policy alone; it is the active practice of shifting power to marginalized communities. It requires us to ask not only who receives resources, but how decisions are made, whose voices are prioritized, and how historical harms are acknowledged and repaired.

For too long, decisions made behind closed doors have misaligned with lived experiences and community priorities. Frontline communities are not a monolith; they experience climate impacts uniquely across Multnomah County's diverse populations and neighborhoods.

For every community member to have true access and autonomy in how they contribute to climate justice, it requires moving the spectrum of engagement to ownership. This shift in climate planning shifts from tokenization and simple information-sharing in favor of a community ownership model.

By shifting how we approach community from merely "informing" to community leadership and co-creating strategies, we ensure that climate action is no longer something imposed upon the community, but something built by them. Realizing this vision requires the active dismantling of systemic barriers, such as deliberate outreach and engagement to hard to reach populations, addressing language barriers, and ongoing relationship building. Only by shifting power can we foster a lasting culture of mutual trust and genuine civic empowerment.

How we measure progress

Indicator 1: Voter participation rates, including by age and geography for general election.

Description: The Multnomah County Elections Division developed a "Visualization Dashboard Pilot" with a detailed breakdown of voter turnout in Multnomah County for the November 2024 Election, comparing voter turnout by precinct to census block demographic data. This map provides insights into who is voting and which communities are engaging with the democratic process.

Current data: November 2024 voter turnout 73.66%

Indicator 2: Demographic data on who is applying for and appointed to County advisory committees.

Description: While Multnomah County maintains over 40 advisory groups, specific demographic reports for all applicants and appointees are not always published as a single standalone document. Instead, data is often released through the Office of Community Involvement (OCI) or within individual committees "Area Plans." In 2025, the County continued to refine its processes for tracking these metrics to ensure that committees reflect the diverse, "lived experience" of the residents. The County is developing a tracking system for this metric as part of the County's strategic plan.

Current data: *Data is being aggregated*

Strategy: Ensure Climate Justice Plan implementation is accountable and transparent to the community.

Why does this matter?

By codifying oversight within the Advisory Committee on Sustainability and Innovation (ACSI), the plan's implementation will move beyond government reporting toward true community-led accountability. This existing committee has provided valuable insights for over a decade. Codifying the role of the committee in helping to oversee implementation of the plan, and inform reporting and future revisions to the plan, ensures ongoing community involvement, oversight, and co-creation. Enhancing the committee structure by implementing a stipend policy would help to lessen the financial barriers to participation, honoring the labor of community members and ensuring that regional leadership reflects the diverse lived experiences of our residents. Ultimately, these measures transform the Climate Justice Plan from a static document into a living, accountable commitment to those it serves.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Putting this into practice

- Work with ACSI members to make recommendations on how to amend the Multnomah County Advisory Committee on Sustainability and Innovation Code (Chapter 3.450) to expand ACSI's oversight in the CJP implementation. Revisions will prioritize community-led governance, co-creation, and explicit oversight of CJP milestones.
- Develop a Climate Justice Plan tracking platform to regularly report on greenhouse gas emissions, goal indicators, and strategy implementation progress.
- Implement a stipend policy for ACSI members and community partners to compensate for their time and expertise, ensuring that financial status is not a barrier to influencing County policy.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability

Strategy: Support the development of a community-led data ecosystem to inform County policy and decision-making.



Why does this matter?

Relying solely on quantitative metrics can often obscure deep-seated inequities or overlook the reality of a neighborhood's climate vulnerability. Rooted in storytelling and lived experience, community-led data is a vital source of truth that compliments quantitative data. It can help fill the gaps left by overreliance on quantifiable data that might obscure inequities or miss important information that help enhance service delivery, community resilience, and health. A community-led data ecosystem can help to shift the power of narrative back to the community, allowing those most impacted to define success on their own terms.

One promising local example is the Collective Environmental Datahub for Action and Resilience (CEDAR) project led by the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC). CEDAR seeks to serve as a critical bridge between data-driven policy and the lived experiences of environmental justice communities in the region. This grant funded, multiyear project has been supported by Multnomah County and a number of other local community based organizations. In the context of the Climate Justice Plan, CEDAR provides a unique opportunity to move beyond simply "counting," to a deeper understanding of the lived reality behind the numbers. Community based organizations have collected significant qualitative community data as part of their organizing work, and CEDAR is working to provide a platform to organize that data across organizations. Projects like CEDAR can help build community power and provide an opportunity for local governments to better align programs and policies with community experience and priorities.

Putting this into practice

- Partner with community based organizations to identify and support existing community-led data efforts, and ensure these insights directly shape the ongoing implementation of the Climate Justice Plan.
- Support a community data platform such as CEDAR to serve as a repository for community-led research and health narratives.
- Establish formal processes for incorporating storytelling and qualitative feedback into County climate related decision-making to ensure policy is informed by more than just numerical data.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability, Department of County Assets, and Health Department

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE



Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY



Low Med High

Strategy: Explore partnership opportunities to support community-based organizations in climate justice planning and implementation.

Why does this matter?

The landscape of climate justice is rapidly evolving, with federal, local, and philanthropic initiatives creating both unprecedented opportunities and risks for frontline communities to lead this work. To capitalize on the opportunities and minimize risks, we must move beyond transactional engagement and toward restitutive, long-term partnerships. Authentic partnership is the cornerstone of community governance; it ensures that those most impacted have the sustained resources, decision-making authority, and structural support necessary to dismantle systemic barriers.

Historically, government engagement has operated under a “savior” framework that assumes communities need to be “saved” rather than supported. True climate justice requires a fundamental shift in recognizing that the most effective solutions are already present within the community. We must build upon existing community strengths rather than imposing external mandates.

By prioritizing the leadership of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), as well as elders, youth, immigrants, refugees, youth and rural residents, we ensure that the Climate Justice Plan is a vehicle for co-creation and autonomy.

Putting this into practice

- Continue to collaborate with community-based organizations (CBOs), including on securing grant funds. This ensures the County uses its institutional weight to secure regional and federal resources that are directly funneled into community-led initiatives.
- Design community engagement that respects the specific cultural and linguistic needs of County residents. This includes hosting climate education in multiple languages and partnering with Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Lead Department(s)

Office of Sustainability; Health Department, Public Health Division

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL

Low Med High

COUNTY INFLUENCE

Low Med High

COUNTY PRIORITY

Low Med High

Strategy: Ensure age-appropriate climate justice education across K-12 curriculums for students in public schools.

Why does this matter?

Climate education is a fundamental life skill and a cornerstone of civic readiness in an age of climate crisis. Currently, most students only encounter climate topics in science classes or elective clubs, if at all, which can overlook the social, economic, and systemic impacts of the crisis, and holistic solutions.

Integrating climate justice into the K-12 experience is a fundamental strategy for equipping youth with the tools to navigate and lead in a changing world. By moving beyond traditional science lessons, this approach embeds climate literacy into social studies, math, and professional teacher development, transforming schools into hubs for civic agency. Investing in these educational pathways honors student activism and leadership that has demanded the critical need of a climate justice curriculum.

This approach ensures that climate literacy is treated as a universal life skill, empowering the generation most impacted by climate change to be the primary architects of their own future.

Putting this into practice

- Leverage the Portland Public Schools (PPS) Climate Crisis Response, Climate Justice and Sustainability Practices Policy to develop curriculum and best practices across school districts in the County.
- Utilize the Community Data Portland (contribute strategy 4) toward interactive, storytelling-based data. Using dynamic portals that allow students to explore the “story” behind the data rather than just static facts.
- Develop teacher training and support tools to help integrate curriculum into lesson plans.

Lead Department(s)

Local School Districts (e.g., Portland Public Schools, Reynolds, Gresham-Barlow), Multnomah County Educational Services District

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership**

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate Research
- Convene Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing Additional New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Strategy: Reduce voting age to 16 years old for local elections.

Why does this matter?

No demographic group is as impacted by climate change as young people. Because atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations continue to climb, young people will be living with the worsening consequences of the climate crisis throughout their entire lifecourse. Oregon has long been committed to expanding ballot access and the voting franchise, this step would allow young people to have a greater voice in decisions that impact their future. Lowering the local voting age to sixteen years old steers youth advocacy to the center of democracy and climate action. Expanding voter access to youth can support sustaining long-term health of our democracy and the success of climate action. Empirical evidence suggests that the earlier in life a voter casts their first ballot, the more likely they are to develop voting as a habit.

While initiatives like Oregon's pre-registration for sixteen year olds are important, they do not replace the power of casting a ballot. Allowing young people to vote on issues, such as climate justice, has a direct hand in shaping their environment. This early taste of political agency builds a foundation for broader civic participation, including community organizing and leadership. By integrating youth into the democratic process today, we ensure that the youth voices are recognized as essential partners in the present.

STRATEGY CATEGORY

- County Strategy
- Investment Opportunity
- Community Leadership

STRATEGY TYPE

- Advocate
- Research
- Convene
- Implement

COUNTY CAPACITY

- Existing
- Additional
- New

COUNTY CONTROL



COUNTY INFLUENCE



COUNTY PRIORITY



Putting this into practice

- Research state and local jurisdictions to identify viable pathways for reducing the voting age in cities and other local elections in Multnomah County, including potential changes in state law.
- Center youth voices in a community-led coalition that is championing change.
- Partner with community-based organizations and educational institutions to develop robust “voter readiness” programs, utilizing existing policies (like Oregon's pre-registration)
- Research efforts in other states and jurisdictions that have lowered the voting age to gather lessons learned.

Lead Department(s)

Oregon Legislature