# Audit Highlights: Climate Justice

Portland City Auditor
Audit Services

## Cities have an important role in addressing climate change

Cities can take actions to reduce planet-warming emissions and help communities become more resilient to climate impacts, such as implementing 100 percent clean electricity law and expanding tree planting. The City of Portland uses a climate justice approach to address that climate change impacts the most vulnerable communities first and hardest. Since the transition to a new form of government in 2024, the City took steps to elevate climate work. However, work still remains to make climate actions more effective. Our report identified a few areas where the City could improve its efforts.

## The City should develop a strategy for helping communities be more resilient to more effectively address community impacts

The City's most recent climate action plan does not have specific goals for helping communities be more resilient to the impacts of climate change. The City does work to help communities be more resilient, like expanding tree planting, but a defined strategy could help improve effectiveness. The City can learn more about Portland's specific climate risks and the lived experiences from the community to help identify effective strategies.

## The City should be more transparent with the community about its climate actions to build trust

The City can increase transparency to build trust. For example, the City can communicate how it prioritizes climate actions and describe actions with enough detail to let community groups know more about how to support the City's climate work. The City can also continue to share progress about ongoing climate work. Building trust is especially important for a climate justice approach because some communities have been historically harmed by the City.

## A community engagement strategy could help the City to achieve climate goals

Engaging the community is critical to the success of climate action plans. Some community groups suggested that the City could improve engagement by sharing more climate work information with the community, clarifying how community groups can engage in climate work, and involving community groups in decision making. Community groups can also feel burdened by repeated requests for the same information, especially without compensation for their time. The City could develop a strategy to help community engagement for climate work to be more meaningful and have more impact.

## The City should provide clear direction to better prioritize and coordinate climate work

City leadership can help ensure climate action plans are implemented by providing centralized authority, defining structures for effective coordination, and developing a realistic funding plan.

## The City agreed with our recommendations

The City Administrator responded on behalf of the City agreeing with our audit recommendations and provided an implementation plan with most actions expected to be completed by 2028.

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