City of Portland

Office of the
City Administrator –
Sustainability Office
1221 SW 4th Ave. # 110
Portland, OR, 97204

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Sustainability Office
Sustainability and Climate Commission

SustainabilityOffice@portlandoregon.gov

Memo: Implementing Climate Justice Audit recommendations requires support and resources
Date: April 17, 2026
From: Sustainability and Climate Commission
To: City Councilors, Mayor Keith Wilson, City Administrator Raymond Lee III

As the Sustainability and Climate Commission (Commission), we write in response to the City Auditor's February 2026 Climate Justice Audit. The Audit—and City Administrator's endorsement of all five recommendations—affirms our point of view: Portland cannot meet its emissions reductions and climate justice commitments without dedicated, sustained investment in the Sustainability Office, Chief Sustainability Officer (CSO), and this Commission. Acting on these recommendations will enable the Commission to deliver specific, timely, and actionable guidance back to the Council, Mayor, and City Administrator. ~~for consideration and action.~~

The CSO, Sustainability Office, and Commission were established to deliver the coordination and accountability the Audit demands, with just one staff position and are responsible for:

~~The CSO, Sustainability Office, and Commission were established to deliver the coordination and accountability the Audit demands, yet are resourced with just one staff position and are responsible for:~~

- Staffing and managing the Commission and its committees
- Advancing near-term emissions reductions and climate justice policies
- Coordinating cross-bureau climate action
- Developing the next Climate Action Plan
- Supporting community engagement and accountability processes

The clock is ticking for Portland to respond to the climate crisis. Delayed action undermines city resilience, economic prosperity, and trust from frontline communities, whose health and livelihoods are put at risk daily when climate commitments remain symbolic. ~~The clock is ticking for Portland to respond to the climate crisis. Delayed action undermines city resilience, economic prosperity, and trust from frontline communities, whose health and livelihoods are put at risk daily when climate commitments remain symbolic. Without additional resources – funding, staffing and policy support – we're failing in our civic responsibilities and sacrificing our communities to devastating climate impacts.~~

The Commission stands ready and eager to fulfill our mandate and requests the following:

~~The Commission stands ready and eager to fulfill our mandate. We ask City leadership to fulfill its mandate of~~ by ~~providing the CSO with the authority, funding, staffing, and coordination capacity required to implement the Audit's recommendations.~~

Commented [DV1]: Edit for consideration, "in the development of the City's next climate action plan." Suggest clarifying "consideration and action" for what...

Commented [DV2]: This almost suggests our current climate commitments are symbolic. Perhaps the word "if" instead of "when" or rephrase to suggest building on the traction and success of previous climate actions to tackle current challenges, etc.

Commented [DV3]: This almost suggests our current climate commitments are symbolic. Perhaps the word "if" instead of "when" or rephrase to suggest building on the traction and success of previous climate actions to tackle current challenges, etc.

Commented [DV4]: The ask is unclear. Do we want to outline a specific request such as additional FTE for cross-bureau collaboration and coordination, $XX budget for programming, etc. Do we know what resourcing is needed or would be reasonable to ask for?

1. **Expand Operational Capacity**: Allocate 4–5 new full-time employees (FTE) and $500,000 in annual ongoing funding to support climate implementation.
2. **Codify Centralized Authority**: Grant the CSO formal authority to collaborate directly with Deputy City Administrators and Bureau Directors to align and direct the workplans of subject matter experts. As a peer to leadership, the CSO must have the mandate to ensure cross-bureau accountability.
3. **Expedite Budgetary Review**: Provide a formal response to this request within 30 days to ensure essential resources are integrated into the current budget cycle.

This budget cycle is a critical decision point. City leaders must support the work of the CSO, Sustainability Office, and Commission to enable Portland to regain its position as a global leader in climate action and justice.

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