

2025 STRATEGIC CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

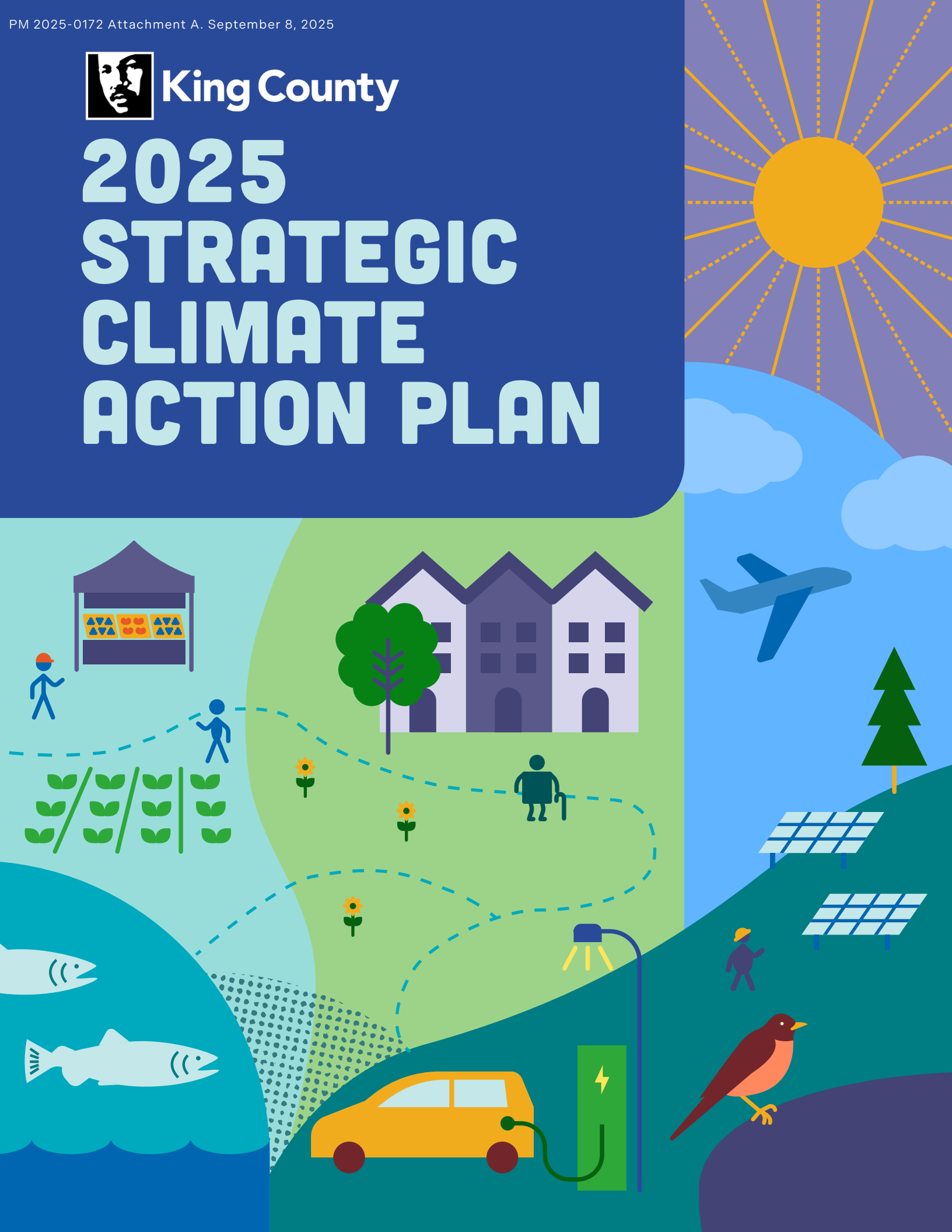
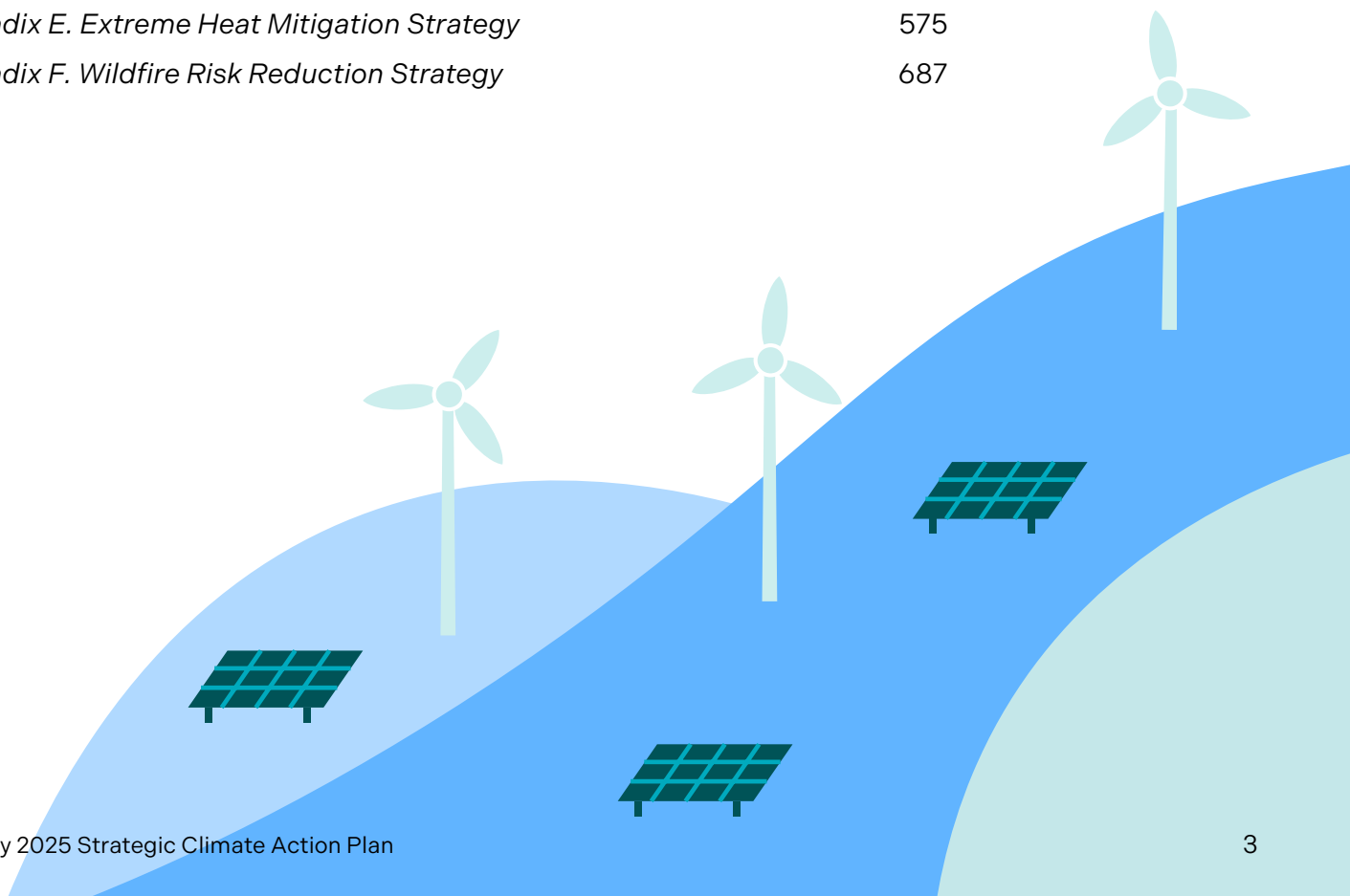


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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE

King County Residents, Visitors, and Partners,

Bold action to confront climate change is nothing new for King County, but this plan marks a fresh chapter in our work to ensure King County continues to lead in the fight against climate change.

For more than twenty years, we have listened to experts, made science-based decisions, embraced innovation, advanced clean energy solutions and forged strong partnerships in pursuit of climate preparedness, resilience, and equity. From adopting cutting-edge technology that reduces greenhouse gas emissions to launching a climate justice framework for strategic planning, we've broken new ground and surpassed our goals. Even as we celebrate that progress, we know that the toughest work is still ahead, and new obstacles continue to surface.

In challenging times and in inspired moments, King County leads with its values. Our compass is fixed on our True North: making King County a welcoming community where every person can thrive. Advancing a more sustainable, equitable, and resilient King County bolsters this vision.

The 2025 Strategic Climate Action Plan, SCAP, defines near-term actions, long-range goals, and performance measures to advance King County's climate action leadership. This five-year strategy advances the three main sections of the 2020 SCAP focused on greenhouse gas reduction, sustainable and resilient frontline communities, and climate preparedness, and introduces a new flagship section. The flagships show how our climate actions are integrated with our commitments to: prioritize and empower those most impacted by climate change; ensure every home and workplace can withstand climate risk; make it easy to get where you need to go; create pathways for economic stability and growth; support farms, farmers, and access to nutritious food; reduce consumption, protect our

environment for healthier communities; maintain roads, utilities, and services that work now and in the future; and work together for climate action and innovation. This framework is focused on making the whole of our climate action greater than the sum of its parts.

The 2025 SCAP is the fourth climate plan during my tenure as King County Executive. Each SCAP has been developed during a challenging time, but King County has always found a way to keep moving forward. I want to thank everyone who has contributed to this plan and the 2012, 2015, and 2020 climate plans. Countless people have joined together to make King County a climate action trailblazer.

Our charge to ensure the planet and people can thrive for generations is greater than one person, it is about collective action. Everyone has a role in reducing our collective carbon footprint, whether it's choosing transit, buying from local farms, checking on neighbors during a heat wave, or empowering the next generation to lead on climate action. To see and help our commitments and innovations mature over the last 16 years has been a true honor.

We have provided the roadmap for King County to continue advancing climate action over the next five years and beyond. The next page in this plan is intentionally left blank to give King County's next Executive the space to articulate their commitment to climate action as the next chief steward of this essential work.

With Gratitude,



Dow Constantine,

King County Executive (2009-2025)

LETTER FROM THE FUTURE EXECUTIVE

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LETTER FROM THE COMMUNITY

Dear King County Executive Dow Constantine and members of the Metropolitan King County Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF) and on the Climate Equity Working Group to support the update to the Sustainable & Resilient Frontline Communities (SRFC) Section of the 2025 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP). We were also excited to partner with staff to conduct an equity screening for the GHG Emissions Reduction and the Climate Preparedness sections. Our communities are deeply invested in holistic climate solutions. **This was an important continued step for us and for King County as our communities are on the frontlines of climate change and are facing disproportionate impacts** due to institutional racism and the legacy of historic injustices. These conditions produce unequal outcomes and too often restrict access to resources and opportunity. The community-based solutions included in the SCAP reflect the needs and aspirations of the diverse and distinct communities we represent.

Our participation in the development of local climate policy ensures that climate solutions account for disparities. We know if climate equity is present, we can continue to move the needle towards a climate and environmentally just King County. **We see the SCAP as an opportunity to ensure our communities are not only protected but also empowered to lead in the fight for climate justice.** Without a strong equity lens, policies risk reinforcing systemic inequalities rather than dismantling them. Integrating frontline communities in the policy making process reflects the County's commitment to elevating and aligning with community-driven expertise and knowledge. It also creates a process of accountability between policymakers and the communities most affected by climate and environmental injustice.

Climate action is not just about reducing carbon emissions; it's about protecting culture, history, and futures. For Indigenous people (native to the region, and from all parts of the globe) living in King County, climate change is deeply personal. It threatens ancestral lands, sacred sites, and the ability to pass down traditional knowledge to future generations. **Climate policy must also be gender-inclusive, recognizing the disproportionate burdens faced by women, nonbinary, and transgender individuals in crisis situations.** We are committed to supporting the SCAP and its efforts to prioritize solutions and uphold self-determination and community resilience, ensuring that frontline communities lead the way in shaping their own futures.

Lastly, we want to underscore that climate action must be sustained and adequately funded. Many frontline organizations and networks are doing the critical work of building climate resilience, advocating for equitable policies, and providing direct support with very limited resources. **King County and funding institutions must commit to long-term, community-driven investments to ensure that climate solutions are both effective and rooted in justice.** Thank you again Executive Constantine and the many County partners who worked to integrate our voices. We look forward to building solutions together.

Sincerely,

Members of the Climate Equity Community Task Force and the 2025 Climate Equity Working Group

1.



2.



3.



4.



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6.



1. Member of the Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF) sharing her climate story for King County climate communications, March 2025.

2. CECTF member making connections during a 2025 SCAP development workshop, August 2024.

3. CECTF member and member of the Heat Mitigation Strategy Work Group speaking during the launch of the King County Heat Mitigation Strategy, July 2024.

4. CECTF member and member of the Heat Mitigation Strategy steering committee and work group facilitating a workshop for Chinese-speaking seniors, June 2023.

5. Members of the CECTF exchange ideas at a King County End of Year event, December 2023.

6. Member of the CECTF at a King County End of Year event, December 2023.

2025 KING COUNTY STRATEGIC CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With a population of over 2 million people, King County is Washington's largest county, critical to shaping a healthy, sustainable future for the entire region. The County has a long-standing commitment to bold climate leadership, setting policies and ambitious targets to cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and build climate resilient communities. Despite decades of action, GHG emissions in King County are 5 percent higher than in 2007, though 6 percent lower than the 2019 peak. This signals some progress, but not enough.

Emissions reduction is not only a policy goal, but a moral and practical imperative. People across the region are experiencing more frequent record-breaking climate events like heat waves and wildfires. These events pose serious and growing risks to infrastructure, public health, and ecosystems, especially in frontline communities. Emissions reductions are essential to slowing climate change and avoiding its most severe health, economic, and environmental consequences.

Addressing climate change requires an increase in the scale and speed of action while deepening coordination across all levels of government. King County plays a critical leadership role ensuring that communities across the region benefit from stronger, more unified climate policies and investments. The Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) outlines how the County can reduce GHG emissions, center frontline communities, and prepare for climate change impacts.

KING COUNTY'S PLAN: BOLD ACTION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The SCAP serves as King County's five-year roadmap to address climate change, with updates to three sections: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities, and Preparing for Climate Change. Since its inception in 2012, King County's SCAP has led to significant progress in clean energy adoption, sustainable transportation, ecosystem restoration, and community-led solutions.

The 2025 SCAP includes five sections, nine flagships, 25 focus areas, 177 actions, and 63 performance measures for building a more sustainable, equitable and resilient future for all.

Flagship Outcomes

The 2025 SCAP flagships represent King County's most visible and community-driven climate priorities. They connect actions across SCAP's three core sections—to broader, outcome-driven goals that improve the lives of King County residents. This approach ensures climate action is embedded in transportation, housing, food systems, infrastructure, and economic development, benefiting all residents, especially those most affected by climate change.

The following flagship outcomes represent climate solutions that ensure the work by King County is community-driven, equitable, and built to last:

- 1. Put Frontline Communities First:** Investing in leadership, expanding access to resources, and ensuring climate policies are designed with and for frontline communities.
- 2. Safe, Healthy, and Climate-Ready Buildings:** Strengthening housing and workplaces to withstand extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and flooding while ensuring affordability and preventing displacement.
- 3. Connected and Accessible Transportation:** Expanding sustainable mobility options like transit, biking, and walking to reduce car dependency and improve access to jobs, schools, and services.
- 4. Economic Mobility and Career Opportunities:** Ensuring the clean energy transition creates economic opportunities, particularly for historically excluded workers and communities.
- 5. Fresh, Local Food for Everyone:** Strengthening food security and sustainable agriculture by supporting farmers, reducing food waste, and increasing access to fresh, healthy food.
- 6. Design Out Waste:** Reducing consumption, preventing waste, and reusing valuable materials.
- 7. Clean Air, Water, and Healthy Ecosystems:** Protecting and restoring forests, waterways, and green spaces to improve public health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
- 8. Reliable and Future-Ready Infrastructure:** Modernizing roads, utilities, and public services to withstand climate extremes while ensuring equitable access to essential infrastructure.
- 9. Collective Leadership and Community-Led Solutions:** Embedding equity in climate governance by ensuring frontline communities, Tribes, and local organizations help shape and lead climate solutions.

Section Update: Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions Section

The 2025 SCAP charts a path toward continued greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction. The largest sources of emissions are from buildings and transportation, followed by smaller contributions: refrigerant gases, land use, solid waste and wastewater. Using 2007 emission levels as a baseline, King County seeks to eliminate countywide sources of GHG emissions over the next 25 years. The SCAP calls for a 50 percent reduction by 2030, 75 percent by 2040, and 95 to 100 percent (or net-zero) by 2050.

The 2025 SCAP outlines plans to work with partners and communities over the next five years to do the following:

- **Lead by example**, advocating for stronger GHG emissions policies, demonstrating local leadership, and strengthening accountability within County operations.
- **Accelerate clean energy and zero-emission solutions** through high-performance green buildings, energy efficiency programs, and the transition to zero-emission infrastructure and fleets.
- **Expand access to reliable transportation** by improving public transit, supporting active mobility, and reducing emissions from vehicle emissions.
- **Reduce waste through a circular economy** that focuses on reuse, recovery, and responsible consumption.
- **Take care of natural lands** and prepare infrastructure for the future by supporting farming and forestry practices that capture carbon and building public infrastructure that can handle climate impacts and serve all communities equally.

Outlook

The 2025 SCAP builds on King County's legacy of climate action. However, to achieve significant carbon reductions, climate action must be integrated across the federal, state, and local levels. Implementing existing federal and state emissions reductions measures and those proposed in the 2025 SCAP are only expected to yield a 35 percent emission reduction by 2030. This falls short of the 50 percent target, highlighting the need for additional partnership across all levels of government. As a regional government, King County can directly implement climate actions through its services and plays a key role in convening local partners to advocate for strong federal and state actions.

Section Update: Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities Section

Climate change does not affect all communities equally. Frontline communities—Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant and refugee populations, residents who are low-income, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, unsheltered populations, and outdoor workers—experience the earliest, most severe, and longest-lasting climate impacts. These communities are more likely to live in flood-prone areas, neighborhoods with less tree cover, or near major roadways with high pollution levels, putting them at greater risk of extreme heat, poor air quality, and displacement due to climate disasters.

These climate-driven challenges worsen existing health, economic and social disparities, making it critical to prioritize investments in climate resilience, infrastructure improvements, and community-driven solutions that protect those most at risk.

Community-Driven Leadership and Policymaking

The 2025 SCAP reflects community priorities for policymaking and leadership in climate action. Key focus areas include:

- **Housing security and anti-displacement efforts** that ensure investments in climate resilience do not displace residents by expanding affordable housing, protecting renters, and ensuring equitable access to energy-efficient home upgrades.
- **Expanded access to transit** and affordable, low-carbon mobility options for all communities.
- **Energy justice and utilities affordability** measures reduce energy burdens for households who are low-income, transitioning away from fossil fuels, and expanding clean energy solutions.
- **Green workforce development** efforts help create jobs, training, and economic opportunities, especially in frontline communities and with workers who have been historically excluded.
- **Food security and sustainable agriculture** strengthens food systems by supporting local farmers, reducing food waste, and increasing access to fresh, healthy food for frontline communities.

Outlook

King County is committed to advancing climate solutions that are effective and equitable. The 2025 SCAP reflects this commitment by prioritizing community-led strategies, investing in climate resilience, and ensuring that frontline communities are at the forefront of decision-making. This is the foundation for a future where all residents have access to clean air, safe housing, reliable transportation, and economic opportunities to climate change. The path forward requires continued collaboration, bold investments, and policies that center the voices of those most affected. A resilient King County is one where frontline communities are not just protected from climate change, but are leading the way toward a healthier, more just future for all.

Section Update: Climate Preparedness

The 2025 SCAP sets new targets for addressing climate preparedness. Climate change is already impacting King County, and the pace of it is increasing. The region is experiencing more frequent and severe extreme weather events, posing serious risks to the community, infrastructure, and natural ecosystems. As climate threats like extreme heat events, flooding, wildfires and sea level rise increase, King County is working on strategies to protect residents, businesses, infrastructure, and natural resources to ensure that communities are prepared for the challenges ahead.

To reduce risks and enhance climate resilience, the 2025 SCAP Climate Preparedness section includes the following strategic priorities over the next five years:

- **Help people and communities stay safe and healthy in the face of climate change** by reducing risks from flooding, sea level rise, extreme heat and wildfire; expanding community access to cooling spaces and flood protection tools; supporting locally led heat and wildfire resilience strategies; improving protections for rural infrastructure; and enhancing public health tracking to better respond to climate-related health risks.
- **Build resilient infrastructure** by incorporating climate risks, like flooding and extreme weather, into how the County designs, builds and upgrades capital projects. This includes flood protection, stormwater systems, wastewater facilities, and Metro transit infrastructure. New standards and planning tools will help ensure public investments are built to last in a changing climate.
- **Implement multi-benefit solutions**, including expansion of green infrastructure like stormwater parks, rain gardens, and street trees, to manage flooding, improve water quality, and create healthier communities. A key focus will be growing the urban tree canopy across jurisdictions to reduce heat and support

livability, while also accelerating the use of recycled water and nature-based solutions for habitat restoration and agricultural resilience.

- **Increase ecosystem resilience** through the restoration and management of forests, shorelines, and habitat with climate change in mind. Efforts include accelerating forest restoration on public lands, expanding the supply of climate-adapted seedlings, planting more trees, and supporting private landowners in applying best practices. The County will also improve lake conditions for fish recovery and map wildlife habitat corridors to protect vulnerable species into the future.
- **Strengthen collaboration, knowledge, and systems for long-term resilience**, including work with local, regional, and tribal partners to prepare for climate impacts like sea level rise, drought, flooding, and extreme heat. This includes developing shared strategies for high-risk areas such as the Duwamish Valley and supporting climate-informed planning across shoreline and capital projects.

Outlook

King County is committed to building a future where communities, infrastructure, and natural resources are resilient to climate change. The 2025 SCAP strengthens these efforts by expanding investments in climate preparedness, green infrastructure, and community-led resilience programs. Planning for climate impacts is not only about reducing risks, but also about ensuring long-term safety, stability, and well-being of King County's residents and economy. Investing in climate resilience now will reduce future costs and create a healthier, more livable region for everyone. Through stronger policies, partnerships, and on-the-ground solutions, the County will continue leading efforts to protect people and places from growing threats of climate change.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

King County will use data to drive action and stay accountable. The SCAP includes updated performance measures that track progress toward GHG reduction, equity, and climate preparedness goals. These metrics help identify what's working, where adjustments need to be made, and how to ensure that climate strategies deliver real results for communities across the region.

LEARN MORE

King County's approach to climate action prioritizes continuous improvement of plans, programs, and activities. This requires ongoing community engagement and responsiveness to evolving climate science and emissions sources, as well as a Biennial Report to inform each five-year update of the SCAP.

For more information about King County climate efforts, please go to www.kingcounty.gov/climate.

To stay up to date on King County climate action, please sign up for the newsletter at: bit.ly/kcclimateneews







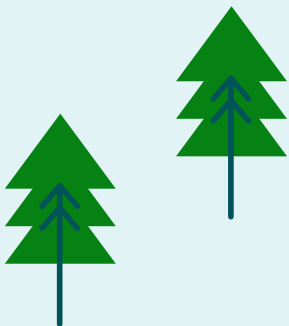
INTRODUCTION TO THE SCAP

INTRODUCTION

From the shores of Puget Sound to the crest of the Cascades, King County's communities are as unique and varied as its landscapes. As the most populous county in Washington State and 12th nationwide, it serves as home to an increasingly diverse population. The backgrounds, needs, and dreams of long-time locals, new residents, intergenerational families, young professionals, and everyone in between are not one-size-fits-all. Nor is King County's approach to climate action. The approach serves rural lands and urban areas; unincorporated neighborhoods and bustling cities; commuters who drive or take regional trains long distances to work or school and others who can get to their destinations by walking or biking. Some people can afford electric vehicles and heat pumps with air conditioning; others want to reduce their carbon emissions and stay safer with more frequent and intense heatwaves, but don't have the time or resources to invest in these climate mitigation and adaptation measures.

Today's reality is rooted in the way resources drove the region's history. Tribes and bands of Coast Salish people have called these lands home since time immemorial, and the waterways and forests they nurtured also drove settlers' to establish the area as a logging outpost in 1852. Now, nearly 2.3 million people call King County home, spread across 39 cities and towns, from the farmlands of Algona to the lakeside neighborhoods of Yarrow Point.

As King County has grown into a global hub for technology and business its communities and natural environment have come under increasing strain. King County's rivers, coastlines, and mountain ranges and the communities that surround them face heightened risks in the era of climate change: more frequent and severe flooding; wildfire smoke and extreme heat; shrinking salmon runs and struggling orca populations; and diminishing snowpack in the Cascades. Since the mid-2000s, the County has advanced bold policies to cut greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen community resilience, and protect the natural systems that sustain life here. The 2025 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) builds on this legacy, charting a course for accelerated, community-driven climate action in the years ahead.





KING COUNTY'S ROLE IN CLIMATE ACTION

King County's role is to take stock of those challenges and innovate, support, and lead in a way that both connects all people living here and honors their differences. From convening regional partnerships and taking direct action to reduce emissions, to partnering with frontline communities and preparing geographically diverse areas for climate impacts, King County can set an example for other regions and cause a ripple effect of impact.

The County's role also includes implementing climate action throughout its programs and services, which are shared with a wide breadth of rural and urban lands and neighborhoods where it serves as the local government. These include Bear Creek/Sammamish, Four Creeks/Tiger Mountain, Great Maple Valley/Cedar River, Snoqualmie Valley/NE King County, SE King County, Vashon/Maury Island, West King County, East Federal Way, East Renton, Fairwood, Klahanie, North Highline, and West Hills.

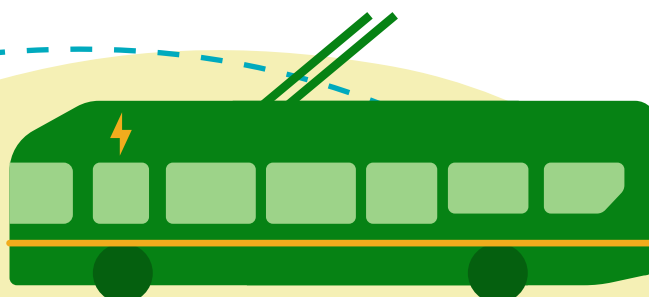
Beyond its geographic boundaries, King County plays a critical role as a convener, collaborator, and partner in the greater Puget Sound region with Washington State agencies and other county and city governments, such as the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency (PSCAA), Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), King County–Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C), Coalition for Climate Careers (C3), and the Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative (PSCPC), on efforts ranging from joint state legislative advocacy to coordinated grant proposals and implementation.

King County also relies on state and federal partnerships to improve people's lives and well-being, while remaining a leader and responsible steward through changes in political and funding landscapes. Supporting sustainability, equity, and resilience remains key to County values, and the County and its partners will continue pushing toward progress to combat climate change.

While state and federal funding and regulatory action play a significant role in shaping climate progress, King County has direct authority over many of the key areas needed to close the remaining emissions gap. Local policies, infrastructure investments, and regulatory frameworks can significantly influence building decarbonization, transportation emissions, and land use decisions—all of which are necessary to meet climate targets. Reaching the remaining emissions reductions will require bold local action and expanded investment in several key areas within the County's control:

- **Public Services and Infrastructure:** King County manages Metro Transit, wastewater treatment, flood risk management, solid waste disposal, and regional parks, all of which provide opportunities for climate mitigation and adaptation. The County can transition Metro fleets to zero-emission, enhance climate-resilient infrastructure, and invest in clean energy solutions.
- **Regulatory Powers:** The County oversees land use, building codes, and environmental protections in unincorporated areas, allowing it to promote sustainable development, expand green building standards, and protect critical ecosystems. It also sets waste reduction policies and regulates emissions from County-owned operations and fleets.
- **Local Investments and Budget Priorities:** The County directs funding toward climate programs, sustainability initiatives, and community resilience projects, helping to catalyze clean energy adoption, support workforce training, and invest in frontline communities. By aligning capital projects and procurement policies with climate goals, the County can reduce emissions and drive sustainable economic development.
- **Partnerships and Regional Coordination:** While the County does not regulate cities, it plays a key role in regional climate coordination, collaborating with local governments, tribes, businesses, and community organizations. Through initiatives like the King County–Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C), the County helps cities align policies, share resources, and scale effective climate strategies.
- **Advocacy and Policy Influence:** King County actively engages with state and federal policymakers to advocate for climate funding, strong climate regulations, and policy alignment. By leveraging its expertise and regional influence, the County helps secure resources and shape policies that support local implementation.

While many climate actions depend on external funding and regulatory frameworks, King County has substantial authority to reduce emissions, build resilience, and ensure an equitable climate transition. By strategically using its regulatory tools, public investments, and service delivery systems, the County can lead by example and accelerate meaningful climate progress across the region.



WHAT IS THE SCAP?

King County's Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) has been described as one of the most ambitious climate action plans in the United States, and was awarded the most equitable climate plan by the U.S. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) in 2022. The SCAP is both a long-term plan and five-year roadmap for County climate action, integrating climate change into all areas of County services, operations, and work with King County cities, partners, communities, and residents. It outlines the County's priorities and commitments for climate action for decision-makers, employees, partners, and the public, and for County operations and for King County communities. The SCAP also sets performance measures to track progress and create accountability.

Foundational to King County's climate leadership is the practice of updating the SCAP every five years based on the understanding that climate change is an urgent local and global challenge. King County is working to reduce emissions and climate impacts in a dynamic environment with changes in technology, science, partnerships, and available resources. The SCAP updates allow King County to set bold long-term goals, together with near term actions and outcomes that are tracked regularly to monitor and adjust as needed.

The SCAP guiding principles were developed to help ensure King County's SCAP roadmap aligns with our values.

- **Act quickly:** We must move fast to address the climate crisis.
- **Promote fairness:** Focus on racial justice and equal benefits for all communities.
- **Involve communities:** Work with local voices to shape climate solutions.
- **Use science:** Base decisions on the best science available.
- **Think big:** Aim for long-term, transformative change.
- **Work together:** Partnerships are essential to success.
- **Lead locally:** King County must set an example of climate leadership.
- **Support health:** Climate action will improve public health.
- **Be accountable:** Clear goals, tracking progress, and sharing results will ensure the County stays the course.

The initial SCAP in 2012 focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In 2015, the County added climate preparedness. In 2020, the Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF) championed a third section empowering sustainable and resilient frontline communities. The 2025 SCAP builds on past work and continues to advance the goals and guiding principles in the SCAP to meet the moment, by adding a new flagship section focused on weaving the three core sections together through outcomes and co-benefits.

SCAP ACCOMPLISHMENTS BETWEEN 2020–2025

Since adoption of the 2020 SCAP, King County has grown its footprint with new plans and resources detailing specific focus areas, including:

The 2020 SCAP included 242 priority actions across the three main sections, and an additional 10 actions in the Green Jobs Strategy. The [2023 Biennial Report](#) tracked progress toward these actions, highlighting accomplishments across focus areas. (See Appendix C for the final progress report on the 2020 SCAP priority actions).



30-Year Forest Plan
(2021): roadmap to protect and manage forests, ensuring they are in good health now and remain healthy as the climate changes



Re+ Strategic Plan
(2021): develops a circular economy to keep valuable materials out of the landfill and reduce consumption based emissions



Metro Connects Long-Range Transit Plan
(2021): vision for improved mobility services to King County over the next 30 year to support healthy and equitable communities, a thriving economy, and a sustainable environment



Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy
(2022): provides recommendations to improve preparedness, response, and recovery to wildfire as the region experiences hotter, drier summers



Green Jobs Strategy
(2023): lays a foundation for King County to connect frontline communities to living-wage opportunities to build a diverse and skilled workforce



Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy
(2024): takes a comprehensive approach to prepare people and places in King County for hotter summers and more extreme heat events



Climate and Workforce Strategy
(2025): expands efforts to increase access to climate-related jobs and ensure a skilled workforce for growing clean energy opportunities

Below are 25 of the most transformational accomplishments achieved since 2020. They demonstrate a growing momentum as the County used lessons learned to propel future work, and began securing significant funding to achieve community-centered resilience priorities.

2020

Wildfire Smoke

Protection: Launched box fan filter distribution program to help residents protect themselves against the harmful health impacts of increasingly frequent wildfire smoke events. The County has distributed more than 3,700 filters in high-impact areas.

Urban Heat Mapping:

Partnered with City of Seattle to measure heat throughout the county, and demonstrated inequalities in the impacts of heat in different neighborhoods. This work informed future heat mitigation planning and investments in public health.

2021

\$20 million in Climate

Equity bond funds:

Launched one-time capital pool that funded community-driven projects, including infrastructure for farmers to grow culturally responsive food and park lighting improvements to ensure safety in underserved green spaces.

Energy-efficient building codes:

Developed and integrated new green building codes into the 2021 Washington State Building Codes to meet energy-efficiency targets. This was achieved through advocacy with cities across the region, as part of the K4C.

2022

New Wet Weather

Station: Opened a new combined sewer overflow control station in the Georgetown neighborhood to prevent stormwater and sewage overflows into the Duwamish River and Puget Sound during heavy rains.

Green Building

Ordinance: Strengthened requirements for County-owned or lease-to-own capital projects to meet certain green building requirements that encourage energy efficiency and resource conservation. The County also set up a team to provide resources to help department and project teams meet the requirements.

\$150,000 to protect land & prevent

displacement: Awarded a \$150,000 building grant to the Community Land Conservancy, a BIPOC-led organization that acquires land for parks in underserved communities. The group works to ensure community voices are centered during land use decision-making.

C-PACER Program:

Allows owners of eligible commercial properties to seek long-term financing from a private capital provider for qualified improvements related to energy and building resiliency. The program empowers work to use energy efficiently and promote water conservation.

Free Youth Transit

Pass: Allows youth to ride transit for free, empowering more young people to get familiar with public transit and encouraging use of lower-emission travel.

Climate Justice Learning Series:

Administrated learning series for County staff and community about topics within the climate justice space. This helped increase understanding of challenges within frontline communities and the importance of an equity-centered resilience approach.

2023

South Seattle Community Food Hub:

Opened space to increase food justice by connecting farmers, distributors, and community under one roof. It is designed to address systemic gaps in the local food system through community-led solutions.

“Ready, Set, Go!” wildfire evacuation messaging campaign:

Partnered with nine counties to simplify language regarding wildfire evacuations and educate communities on how to prepare for evacuation in the event of a wildfire.

Transit-oriented development:

Expanded projects to reduce carbon footprint by putting housing near public transit options, including adding 232 affordable housing units at Northgate.

Reinvented region’s waste system:

Launched Re+, a new initiative to return valuable materials to the economy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions created by the region’s waste system. It provides actions and services to

ensure more materials are reused, recycled, or composted rather than buried as waste.

Energize heat pump program:

Created program to install heat pumps in low-to-moderate income homes in South King County, targeting areas disproportionately impacted by poor air quality and extreme heat.

Executive Climate Office:

United and empowered County’s climate action efforts under one team. The Office has since grown to include more than 25 staff members and connects with team leads in other departments and within partnership organizations.

Transit improvements:

RapidRide H line launched with transit improvements spanning 12 miles from downtown Seattle to Burien with upgrades to the speed, reliability, and customer experience for more than 6,000 daily riders. Project achieved Envision Platinum certification in 2024.

2024

\$50M building decarbonization grant:

Awarded an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) to empower building decarbonization work across four counties.

New clean energy workforce program:

Launched JumpStart, a clean energy workforce training program equipping people aged 18–24 with training, paid work-based learning, and mentorships to begin careers in the growing industry. More than half of the first class of graduates secured full-time jobs upon finishing.

\$2M Climate Resilience Grant:

Secured a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to facilitate regional collaboration for better resilience outcomes in the Puget Sound Basin via the Puget Sound Climate Preparedness Collaborative, a network of local governments, tribes, agencies, and other groups hosted by King County.

Expanded Energize program:

Secured funding from Washington State’s Climate Commitment Act to expand Energize program, installing heat pumps and offering other weatherization upgrades for adult family homes and family home child cares.

\$9M for vehicle charging:

Secured \$9 million grant to empower vehicle charging across the region. The grant came as King County continued work to transition to more electric and zero-emission vehicles in its own fleet.

Climate & Health

Dashboards: Published new set of data dashboards exploring impacts of climate change on health in King County. It allows for tracking of impacts year-to-year based on data from emergency room visits.

\$150,000 to prepare for sea level rise:

Secured \$150k grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) to conduct a coastal hazards assessment for Vashon-Maury Island inclusive of sea level rise and related changes in coastal flooding.

Grants for community-based work:

Awarded inaugural Community Climate Resilience Grants totaling \$150,000 to five community groups. The grants assisted community-based organizations in continuing or expanding current climate resilience work.

Coalition for Climate Careers (C3):

Partnered with other public and private organizations and frontline communities to overcome silos and establish an inclusive and prosperous green workforce in King County. The Coalition offers policy guidance, promotes career opportunities, and fosters cross-community collaboration.



2025 SCAP ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The 2025 SCAP was developed in three phases, with input and oversight from subject matter experts, decision-makers, and implementing partners at each step. Internal partners included King County's Climate Team, Executive Climate Cabinet, the Executive Climate Office, King County employees, and other County subject matter experts. External partners included the CECTF and Community Equity Working Group, K4C partners, participants in three in-person SCAP workshops, participants of community roadshow events with nonprofits and commissions, and attendees at two virtual public meetings.



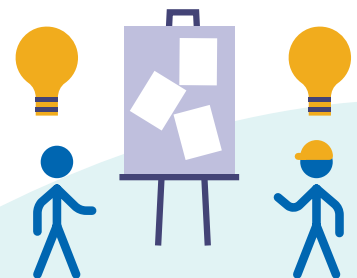
SCOPING AND ANALYSIS

The first phase in development of the 2025 SCAP focused on determining the update's scope. The Climate Team worked with subject matter experts to identify where the County's climate actions should lead by asking where we want to be in 2030 and how to get there. The charge was to:

- Focus commitments on outcomes at the desired scale
- Remove the barriers that have slowed down 2020 SCAP priorities to make more substantive progress on these carry-forward actions
- Ensure countywide partners have more ownership in the countywide climate actions
- Develop climate solutions that account for and mitigate inequities
- Embed frontline community voices across countywide climate actions
- Clearly articulate the countywide priorities for preparedness

Based on this guidance, the Climate Team conducted a review of the 2020 SCAP to identify actions to carry forward to 2025, gaps or other barriers to progress, and new opportunities. External partners and the Executive Climate Cabinet were engaged to validate these continuing actions, gaps, and new opportunities.

King County's goal for the 2025 update is to be more strategic and more focused on partnerships and community engagement. SCAP contributors worked collectively to develop a more strategic plan focusing on fewer, more impactful actions aligned with targeted outcomes, leveraging and integrating with other County plans and priorities, and breaking down silos to more effectively integrate climate actions. A greater focus on partnerships to strengthen frontline community leadership in climate action and policymaking, engage implementation partners to scale climate initiatives across the County, and build stronger regional alignment for implementation. Engaging community to provide in-person engagement opportunities to support community involvement in climate initiatives, engage frontline communities and youth in SCAP development, and to survey the public for additional feedback.



PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The next phase was to create new or modified actions to address the gaps and new opportunities. King County convened three in-person workshops with approximately 150 participants in July, August, and October 2024. Participants represented community-based organizations, students, academia, environmental, and climate organizations as well as local cities, counties, regional agencies, and state and federal partners. Participants were organized into working groups focused on specific countywide opportunity areas such as building energy and green building, transportation and land use, climate equity, climate preparedness, forest and agriculture, consumption and waste, and green jobs and the economy. Working group members were encouraged to recommend new actions that were urgent and impactful, actions that served as a critical next step or barrier buster, and actions that could be implemented at scale or replicated. King County also launched an online public survey from August–October 2024. Finally, Climate Team members conducted “road show” presentations during the latter half of 2024 on the SCAP to share emerging proposals and gather input with targeted organizations, commissions, and other thought-partners and implementers with expertise and key roles related to specific focus areas. Ten groups were asked for input including the Re+ Community Panel, Regional Code Collaboration, K4C, King County Agricultural Commission, King County Forestry Commission, King County Urban Forestry Forum, and internal workgroups including the Capital Project Management Working Group and Steering Committee, Green Building Taskforce, Building Energy Taskforce, and Fleet Planning Committee.

REVIEW AND REFINEMENT

The third phase is where the plan’s format and structure began to take shape to reflect the actions developed by the working groups, King County staff, and other subject matter experts. Consultation with department leadership occurred throughout this process. The three main sections to the 2020 SCAP continued to evolve and were joined by a fourth new flagship section to show their intersection and co-benefits.

The 2025 SCAP integrated climate equity by partnering with frontline community members. Members of the Climate Equity Community Task Force were joined by newly recruited community members to form a Climate Equity Working Group (CEWG). The CEWG co-developed updated actions for the Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities section, the County’s community-driven climate justice framework. In addition to elevating frontline priorities, the CEWG partnered with SCAP leads to conduct an equity screening of topic areas in the Reducing GHG Emissions and Climate Preparedness sections. Common themes from the equity screening process called for expanding culturally relevant education on climate solutions, expanding access to community emergency preparedness programs and to public transit, prioritizing safety, strengthening partnerships, including anti-displacement strategies into an energy transition, and providing financial support for climate action.

Climate Team members reviewed the results of the equity screening to refine existing actions based on community direction. Common revisions included making explicit how actions will take steps to reduce disproportionate impacts and unintended consequences for frontline communities, and ensure language used to describe actions was clear for community.

ABOUT THE 2025 SCAP

This updated vision and new five-year roadmap has five sections, nine flagships, 25 focus areas, 177 actions, and 63 performance measures to serve as a guide on how King County will address the climate crisis. The 2025 SCAP updates the three sections of from previous years—Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities, and Preparing for Climate Change—and introduces a new section with “flagship” outcomes as a way to think about the intersection of sustainability, equity, and resilience. These flagship outcomes emphasize the opportunities for co-benefits as SCAP actions are implemented.

NEW ACTIONS

- Revising + simplifying contracting language
- 'smallify' → checklist to help businesses understand steps for contracting w/ the County
- Bring support to businesses → internal staffing support
- Language + accessibility → RFP templates
- Rapid continuous improvement approach to job ski

FLAGSHIPS: CONNECTING CLIMATE ACTION TO COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Flagships section in the SCAP represents King County's most visible and community-focused outcomes. They connect actions across the SCAP's sections to broader goals that improve the lives of those who live, work, and visit King County. The flagships show how climate efforts are integrated solutions, not isolated policies, delivering meaningful benefits to people, communities, and the environment.

Through the 2025 SCAP development process, King County identified nine new flagship outcomes:



Put Communities First: Investing in leadership, expanding access to resources, and ensuring climate policies are designed with and for frontline communities.



Safe, Healthy, and Climate-Ready Homes: Strengthening housing and workplaces to withstand extreme heat, wildfire smoke, and flooding, while ensuring affordability and preventing displacement.



Connected and Accessible Transportation: Expanding sustainable mobility options like transit, biking, and walking to reduce car dependency and improve access to jobs, schools, and services.



Economic Mobility and Career Opportunities: Ensuring the clean energy transition creates economic opportunities, particularly for historically excluded workers and communities.



Fresh, Local Food for Everyone: Strengthening food security and sustainable agriculture by supporting farmers, reducing food waste, and increasing access to fresh, healthy food.



Designing Out Waste: Reducing consumption, preventing waste, and reusing valuable materials.



Clean Air, Water, and Healthy Ecosystems: Protecting and restoring forests, waterways, and green spaces to improve public health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.



Reliable and Future-Ready Infrastructure: Modernizing roads, utilities, and public services to withstand climate extremes while ensuring equitable access to essential infrastructure.



Collaborative and Community-Led Solutions: Embedding equity in climate governance by ensuring frontline communities, tribes, and local organizations help shape and lead climate solutions.

These nine flagships show that climate action is not just a set of individual goals but a coordinated effort to create lasting, systemic change.

HOW TO READ THE FLAGSHIPS

Each flagship follows a structured format to help readers understand its intent, benefits, and implementation approach. In addition to describing the climate challenge and context, each flagship includes:

CO-BENEFITS

Climate actions don't just address one issue—they create ripple effects. The Co-benefits section highlights how investments in one area strengthen others. For example, expanding urban tree planting reduces heat risks, improves air quality, enhances public spaces, and lowers energy costs, demonstrating the interconnected impact of climate action.

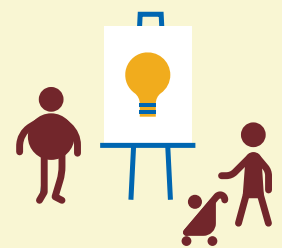
EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Drawing from community engagement themes and the CEWG's climate equity review, the Equity Impacts and Opportunities section ensures policies reflect the lived experiences and priorities of affected communities. The section identifies structural inequities in climate policies and opportunities to embed equity in solutions. It often includes real-life examples of climate hazards—such as extreme heat or flooding—and opportunities to illustrate the urgency of targeted interventions. By addressing barriers to clean energy, safe housing, reliable transit, and economic opportunity, King County ensures climate action advances justice, resilience, and community leadership instead of reinforcing existing inequities.

LEARN MORE

Each flagship concludes with a Learn More section, linking flagship priorities to specific Focus Areas within SCAP's Reducing GHG Emissions, Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities, and Climate Preparedness sections that help to show the interdisciplinary nature of taking climate action. Bullet points highlight key initiatives—such as green infrastructure, workforce development, or fleet decarbonization—and direct readers to the SCAP section where they can find detailed commitments, policies, and programs.

By providing a clear reference to where each initiative fits within the broader SCAP framework, these sections demonstrate how climate actions are coordinated, impactful, and aligned with community needs.



HOW TO READ THE FOCUS AREAS

A total of 25 Focus Areas appear throughout the Strategic Climate Action Plan. Each focus area describes a critical area of the Reducing GHG Emissions, Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities, and Climate Preparedness sections.

There are eight Greenhouse Gas Reduction Focus Areas, which include:



Countywide GHG Policy and Leadership



Transit and Transportation



Building Energy and Green Building



Circular Economy



Forest and Agriculture



Enterprise Leadership and Accountability



Sustainable County Infrastructure



Zero-Emission County Fleets

There are eight Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities Focus Areas, which include:



Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policymaking



Building Capacity with Frontline Communities and Youth



Climate and Economic Opportunity



Community Health and Emergency Preparedness



Food Systems and Food Security



Housing Security and Anti-Displacement



Energy Justice and Utilities Affordability



Transportation Access and Equity

There are nine Climate Preparedness Focus Areas, which include:



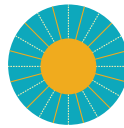
Sea Level Rise Preparedness



River Flood Management



Extreme Precipitation and Drought Mitigation



Extreme Heat Adaptation



Forest Resilience and Urban Tree Canopy Expansion



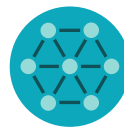
Wildfire Risk Reduction



Salmon Recovery and Habitat Connectivity



Climate-Ready Capital Projects



Regional Capacity Across Climate Hazards

Each focus area follows a structured format to help readers understand its challenges and opportunities as well as King County's accomplishments and next steps in each area. In addition to describing the climate challenge and context, each focus area includes:

WHAT'S AT STAKE

This section outlines the risks and challenges posed by climate change within the specific focus area. It highlights the potential consequences of inaction and the communities, ecosystems, and sectors most vulnerable.

A BETTER OUTCOME

This section presents the desired vision for the future, describing what success looks like if King County's strategies and policies are effectively implemented.

WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET THERE

This section summarizes the progress King County has made so far, highlighting key policies, investments, and partnerships.

WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

This section outlines the specific actions King County will take in the next five years to build on progress and address remaining challenges.

HOW TO READ THE ACTIONS

Each action follows a structured format to help readers understand its intent, benefits, and implementation approach. In addition to a narrative describing the action, each action includes performance measures, timelines, and clear responsibilities for each action. Annual reporting on these items provides transparency and opportunities for continuous improvement.



01

DEVELOP A SEA LEVEL RISE STRATEGY FOR UNINCORPORATED KING COUNTY

01 Sea level rise will have wide-ranging impacts on public and private shoreline infrastructure and shoreline ecosystems in unincorporated King County. To help guide current and future County work on sea level rise, the County will develop a sea level rise adaptation strategy for managing the impacts of sea level rise on public and private infrastructure and nearshore ecosystems in unincorporated King County, inclusive of unincorporated areas in the lower Duwamish Valley. This includes developing organizational policies and guidelines for managing sea level rise across King County programs and identifying approaches to managing the impacts of sea level rise on shoreline infrastructure and ecosystems.

02 LEAD AGENCIES:
ECO

PARTNER AGENCIES:
DES-OEM; DLS-Roads, Permitting; DNRP-WLRD, WTD;
PHSKC; PSB-RP

03 EXTERNAL PARTNERS:
Shoreline residents; Washington Sea Grant

04 EQUITY OBJECTIVES:
Engagement; reduce disproportionate impacts;
relationship building; share benefits

05 STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:
2024 King County Flood Management Plan; Clean
Water Healthy Habitat Strategic Plan; King County
Comprehensive Plan; King County Shoreline Master
Program

06 EARLY ACTION

07 KING COUNTY ROLE:

Advocate/
Support Convene Implement

08 ACTION TYPE:

Continuing Accelerated New

09 IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:

Easy Moderate Hard

10 FUNDING NEED:

Within current
capacity Additional New

11 FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:

County Grant Other

01 ACTION TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

The action title and description provide a brief explanation of a specific climate issue, what action King County will take, and what the projected outcome will be.

02 LEAD AND PARTNER AGENCIES

Identifying clear roles and responsibilities is critical to effective collaboration. This section identifies which King County agencies are responsible for initiating and leading the action, and which agencies are responsible for supporting the implementation.

03 EXTERNAL PARTNERS

Beyond internal efforts, partnerships are critical. This section identifies external partners—such as tribes, cities, regional agencies, businesses, and community organizations—who King County will collaborate with to align policies and scale impact. By leveraging collective resources and expertise, the County can drive large-scale climate solutions that individual jurisdictions couldn't achieve alone.

04 EQUITY OBJECTIVES

Each action also incorporates one or more of the following equity objectives, to ensure that all the proposed climate strategies directly address disparities faced by frontline communities. These objectives reflect key themes identified through community input, emphasizing reduced burdens, enhanced accessibility and engagement, community capacity-building, economic opportunities, and accountability.

- **Accessibility:** The action is proactive in ensuring that benefits are accessible to households and businesses throughout the community — particularly communities of color, low-income populations, and minority-owned and emerging small businesses.
- **Alignment and Partnership:** The action aligns with and supports existing communities of color and low-income population priorities; examples can include creating an opportunity to leverage resources to advance community priorities or building collaborative partnerships.
- **Accountability:** The action has appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure that communities of color or low-income populations will equitably benefit and not be disproportionately harmed. Examples can include planned report-backs to community, transparency in allocation of funds, and demonstrating alignment with community priorities and needs.
- **Capacity building:** The action helps build frontline community capacity through funding, expanded knowledge base, or other resources.
- **Economic opportunity and workforce diversity:** The action supports communities of color, low-income populations, and minority-owned and emerging small businesses through workforce development, contracting opportunities, or the increased diversity of staff.

- **Engagement:** The action engages and empowers communities of color and low-income populations in a meaningful, authentic, and culturally appropriate manner (i.e., engaging community in planning stages, ensuring language access is resourced, etc.).
- **Reduce disproportionate impacts:** The action mitigates impacts or burdens (including costs), either directly or indirectly, to communities of color or low-income populations.
- **Relationship building:** The action helps foster the building of effective, long-term relationships and trust between diverse communities and local government. These relationships can exist outside of a specific project or effort.
- **Share benefits:** The action's benefits are intentionally directed towards reducing historical or current disparities (i.e., supporting community-owned assets and prioritizing overburdened communities in that support).

05 STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

This section highlights the connections with strategies and metrics provided in other King County plans. Specific King County plans that connect to this work include, but are not limited to the following:

- [30-Year Forest Plan](#)
- [Department of Local Services Subarea Plans](#)
- [DNRP Implementation Plan for a Carbon Neutral King County Government 2016](#)
- [King County Clean Water Healthy Habitat Strategic Plan](#)
- [King County Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [King County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan](#)
- [King County Countywide Planning Policies](#)
- [King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan 2016–2022](#)
- [King County Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy](#)
- [King County Flood Management Plan 2024](#)
- [King County Green Building Handbook](#)
- [King County Green Building Ordinance \(Ordinance 19402\)](#)
- [King County Green Jobs Strategy Report](#)
- [King County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)
- [King County Metro Long-Range Plan – Metro Connects](#)
- [King County Metro Mobility Framework](#)
- [King County Open Space Plan](#)
- [King County Regional Homelessness Authority \(KCRHA\) Regional Action Framework for King County](#)
- [King County Shoreline Master Plan](#)
- [King County Wildfire Risk Reduction Strategy](#)
- [Lake Sammamish Kokanee Blueprint](#)
- [PHSKC 2024–2029 Strategic Plan](#)
- [PHSKC Blueprint for Addressing Climate Change and Health](#)
- [PHSKC Wildfire Smoke Response Plan](#)
- [Re+ Strategic Plan—King County](#)
- [Regional Stormwater Action Goals](#)
- [Regional Trails Needs Report](#)
- [Regional Wastewater Services Plan](#)
- [Skyway Stormwater Management Action Plan](#)
- [Snoqualmie Fish, Farm, Flood Recommendations](#)
- [Solid Waste Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment](#)
- [WRIA 8 Chinook Salmon Conservation Plan](#)
- [WRIA 9 Salmon Recovery Plan](#)

06 EARLY ACTION

This section indicates whether the action is either ongoing work or work that is critical to be prioritized first or expected to be kicked off and implemented by the end of 2027. Actions in this category should show progress by the plan's mid-point.

07 KING COUNTY ROLE

This section specifies King County's role for the action. It will fall into one of three categories:

- **Advocate/support:** to educate and articulate the need for action.
- **Convene:** to invite partners to engage or collaborate on shared action.
- **Implement:** to take direct action to implement or operationalize.

08 ACTION TYPE

This section categorizes actions based on their status and level of change:

- **Continuing:** an ongoing effort with little to no change in scope or scale.
- **Accelerated:** an existing effort that is expanding significantly in scope, scale, or pace.
- **New:** a completely new effort being introduced.

09 IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY

This section assesses the feasibility of implementation:

- **Easy:** straightforward to implement with minimal challenges.
- **Moderate:** requires effort or coordination but is achievable.
- **Hard:** complex to implement due to significant barriers.

10 FUNDING NEEDED

This section identifies the funding needs for an action:

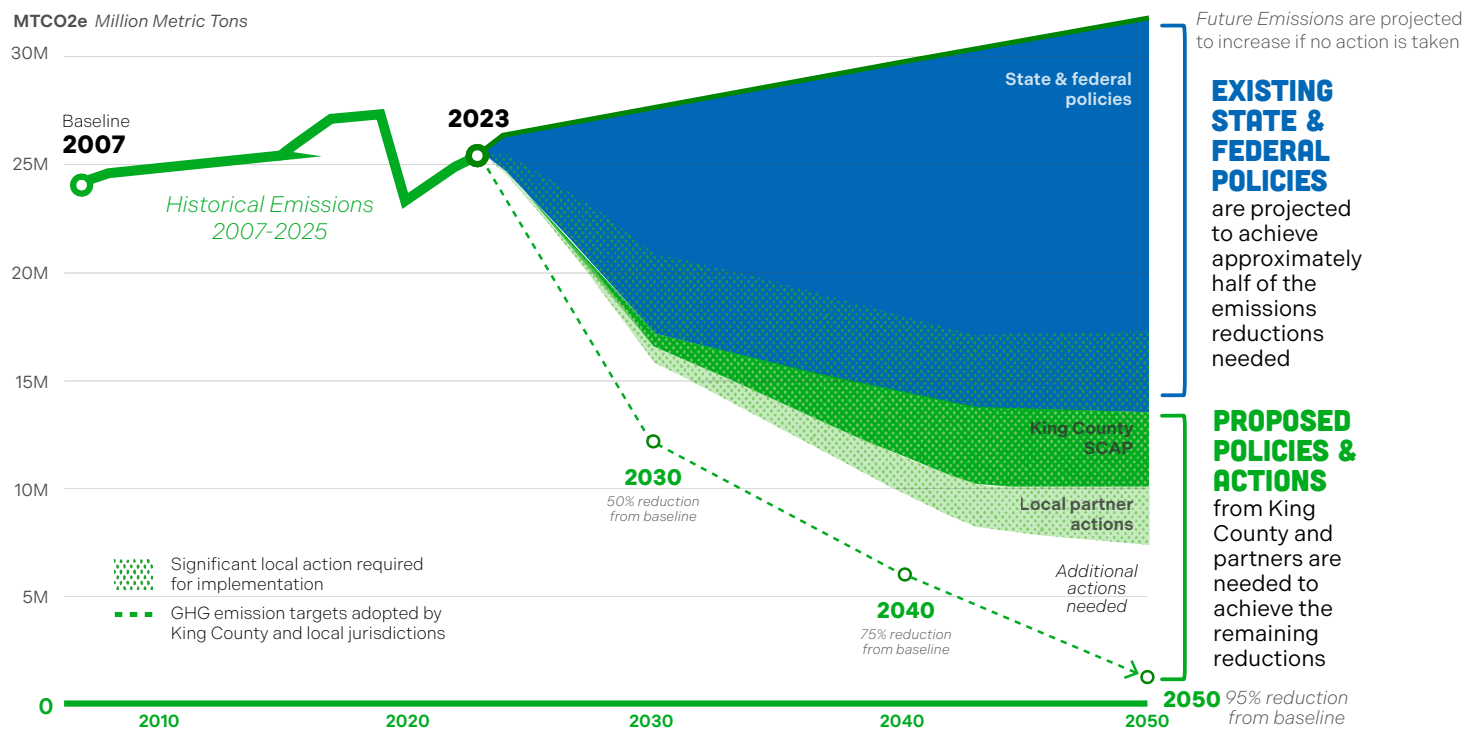
- **Within Current Capacity:** can be supported with existing resources.
- **Additional:** needs more funding to expand or scale up existing work.
- **New:** requires entirely new funding (e.g., for a new activity).

11 FUNDING DEPENDENCIES

This section identifies the primary funding source for an action:

- **County:** relies mainly on the County budget for implementation.
- **Grant:** depends primarily on grant funding.
- **Other:** funded mainly through alternative sources, such as user fees, voter-approved levies, or contributions from other agencies.

Figure 1. Role of Local Action to Achieve GHG Emissions Targets



Source: King County Executive Climate Office (2025)

LOOKING AHEAD

Analysis of existing federal, state, and local policies, along with proposed measures in the 2025 SCAP, is projected to reduce emissions by close to 35 percent by 2030, as shown in Figure 1. Progress is dependent on existing state and federal policies, where limited local action will be required to implement such as the WA Clean Energy Transformation Act, as well as policies where significant local action will be required to implement, such as the WA Clean Buildings Act. State and federal policies provide critical funding and regulatory support for clean energy, transportation decarbonization, and emissions reductions. The WA Climate Commitment Act (CCA)'s cap-and-invest program prices climate pollution and reinvests revenues in climate solutions, requiring that emissions in Washington State are reduced by 95 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. In 2024, Washington voters upheld the CCA, preserving this key funding mechanism.

Achieving King County's climate goals requires strong policies and stable, long-term funding. Climate solutions depend on sustained investments in infrastructure, clean energy, and community

resilience programs. However, the broader funding landscape in 2025 has become increasingly uncertain. Potential shifts in federal priorities, regulations, and budget allocations could impact key state and local programs. To stay on track, King County must continue leveraging state and federal resources while also identifying new local funding sources to implement SCAP strategies effectively. Many of the actions outlined in this plan rely on sustained investment, and without it, progress on climate and equity goals could be delayed.

At the same time, roughly half of the emissions reductions needed to reach our goals depend on local actions and shifts in behavior. Key priorities for local action in King County include:

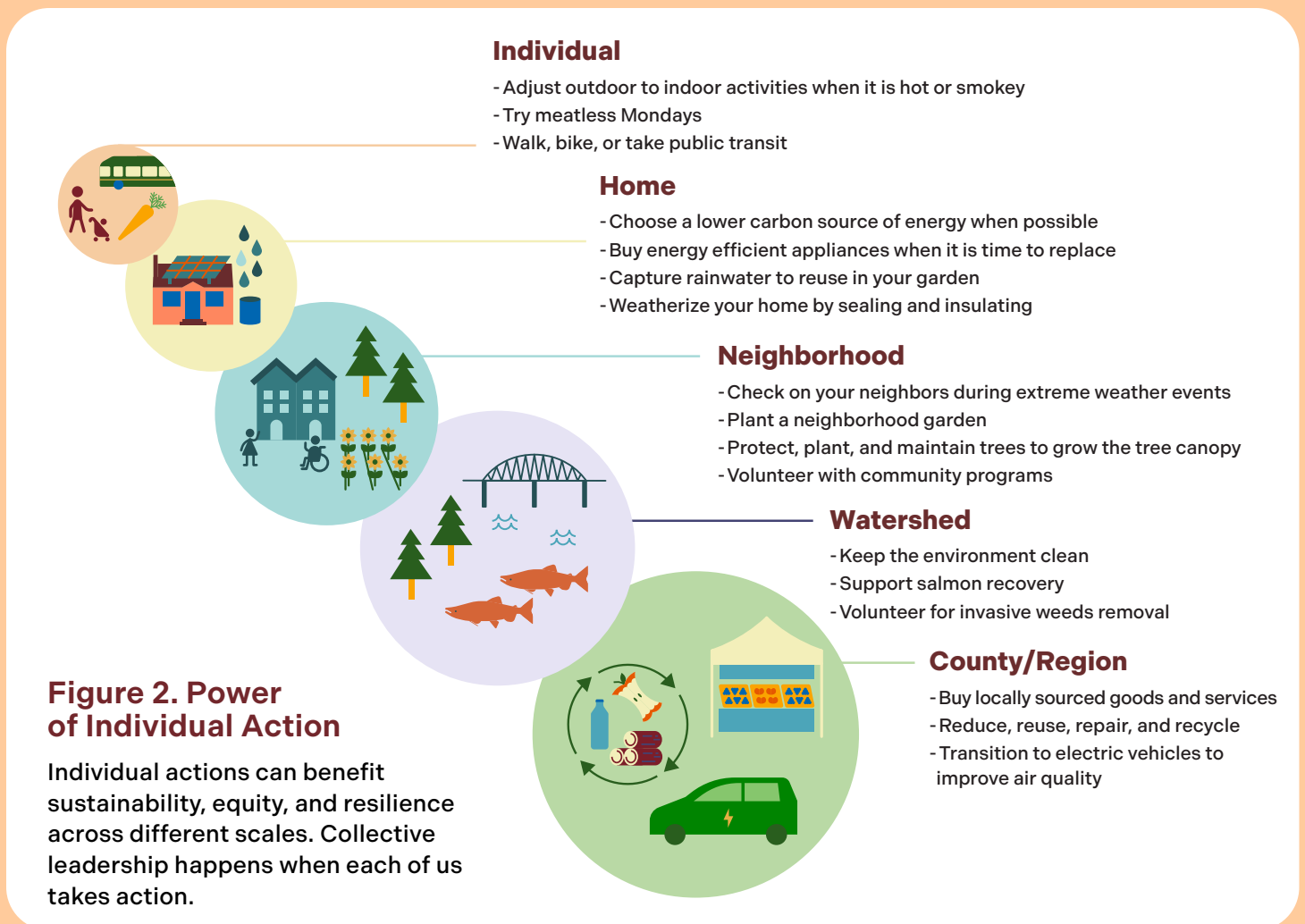
- Expanding transit access and reducing vehicle miles traveled
- Accelerating building electrification and clean energy adoption
- Enhancing waste reduction and circular economy initiatives
- Strengthening climate resilience measures

To make these sustainable choices more accessible and achievable, systemic changes are needed. Investments in clean energy, public transit, waste reduction infrastructure, and climate resilience will help remove barriers and expand opportunities for individuals, businesses, and communities to take part in climate solutions. When these systems are in place, sustainable choices become easier, more affordable, and more widely adopted.

However, King County government alone cannot drive these changes at the scale or speed required. Transformative climate progress demands broad-based, sustained leadership—across all levels of government, the private sector, advocacy organizations, community groups, and individual households. Systemic change happens when people, policies, and investments align to make sustainable choices accessible, affordable, and equitable for everyone.

To deliver the future we all want, King County needs partners who are willing to stand up and demand the necessary change—whether by pushing for bold climate action at the local, state, or federal level; advocating for investments in transit, clean energy, and resilient communities; or shifting cultural norms around consumption and sustainability. Collective action, backed by community voices and leadership, has the power to accelerate change, influence policy, and shape the markets and systems that define how we live and work.

Every action matters. Whether you're reducing waste, adopting clean energy, choosing sustainable transportation, or advocating for stronger policies, you are part of the solution. King County's climate future depends on all of us—residents, businesses, community leaders, and elected officials—working together to create a healthier, more resilient, and more equitable region.

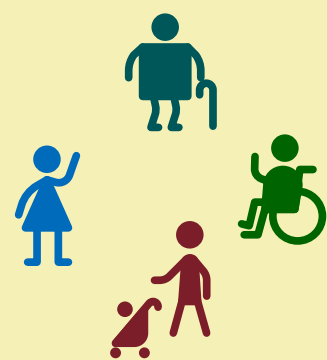




FLAGSHIPS

FLAGSHIPS

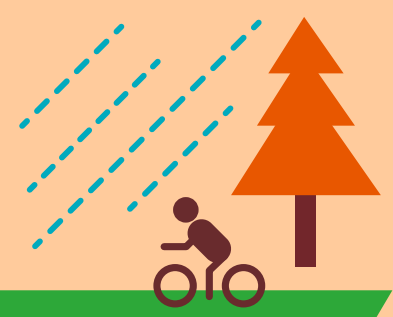
1
Put frontline communities first



2
Safe, healthy, and climate-ready buildings



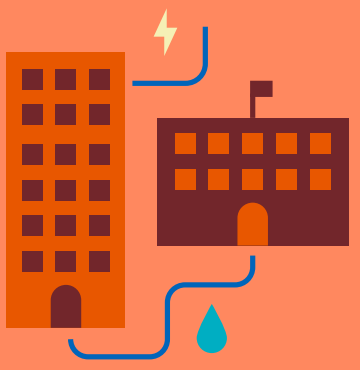
3
Connected and accessible transportation



6
Designing out waste



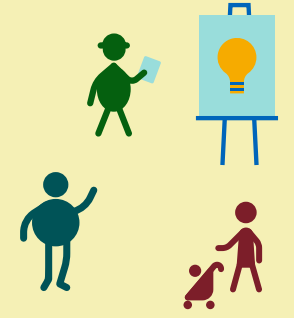
8
Reliable and future-ready infrastructure



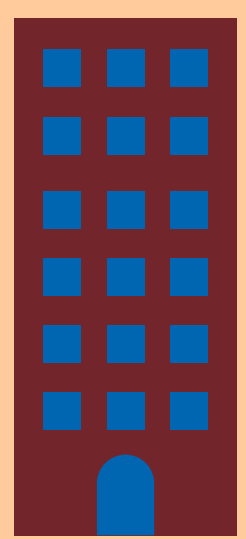
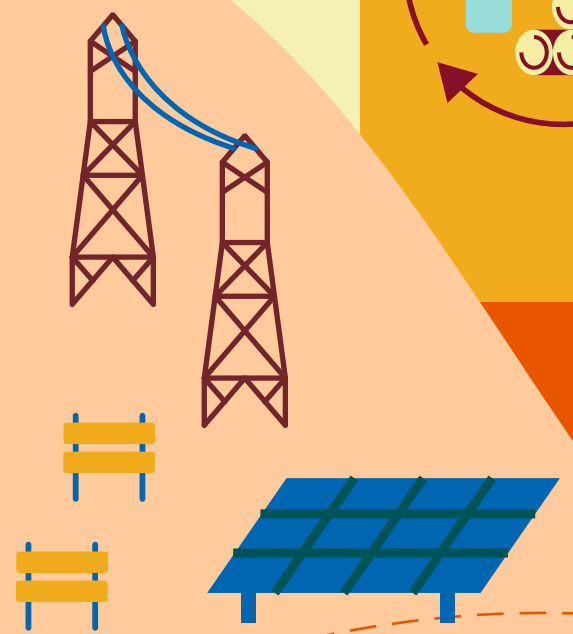
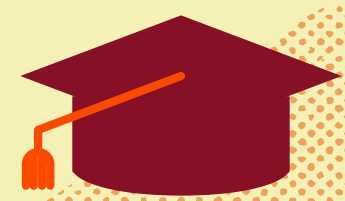
7
Clean air, water, and healthy ecosystems



9
Collective leadership and community-led solutions



4
Economic mobility and career opportunities



The Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) translates King County’s bold vision for climate action into nine flagship outcomes that drive real impact across our communities. Each outcome reflects our commitment to tackling the climate crisis while addressing the unique needs of our diverse communities. Together, they represent a comprehensive approach—one that cuts greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, builds climate resilience, and ensures that every investment we make contributes to a sustainable and equitable King County. These outcomes are more than goals; they are a commitment to create lasting change that benefits everyone.



1. PUT COMMUNITIES FIRST

PRIORITIZING AND EMPOWERING THOSE MOST IMPACTED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

Frontline communities—those with increased sensitivity to climate risks—are often the first to feel the impacts of a warming planet, yet the last to receive resources or representation in decision-making. In King County, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant and refugee populations, low-income residents, outdoor workers, and people with pre-existing health conditions face overlapping vulnerabilities—such as inadequate housing, food insecurity, and limited access to healthcare—that magnify the effects of extreme heat, air pollution, flooding, and rising costs.

Prioritizing these communities is the foundation of a stronger, more resilient region. Frontline community members not only bear the greatest costs of climate change, they also bring deep knowledge of environmental stewardship, mutual aid, and resilience strategies. When communities most at risk are equipped with the resources, decision-making power, and long-term investments they need, they become leaders in shaping solutions that benefit everyone. Building resilience from the ground up ensures that no one is left behind—and creates a healthier, more just future for all.

EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

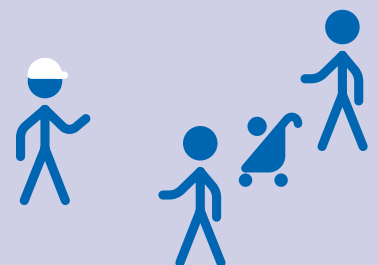
When extreme heat, wildfire smoke, or flooding hit King County, the risks aren't felt equally. Frontline communities—including low-income households, seniors, people with pre-existing health conditions, and outdoor workers—face disproportionate exposure to dangerous temperatures and poor air quality, often without access to safe housing, cooling systems, or healthcare.¹ During the 2021 heat wave, temperatures soared past 100 degrees for three consecutive days, contributing to at least 34 heat-related deaths in King County. Many of those who died were seniors living alone, people with chronic illnesses, or individuals without air conditioning—highlighting how systemic inequities leave certain communities far more vulnerable.

Recent investments show how long-term, community-driven solutions can close these gaps. In 2024, King County partnered with community-based organizations to install energy-efficient heat

pumps in adult family homes—small, residential care homes that serve seniors and people with disabilities, many of whom have fixed incomes and limited mobility. These homes often lack adequate cooling or heating systems, leaving residents especially at risk during extreme weather events. By working directly with frontline communities to design and implement these programs, the County is expanding access to life-saving technology, lowering household energy costs, and cutting GHG emissions—all at once. The same approach is needed across other sectors: whether it's ensuring multilingual emergency communication during disasters or making clean transportation options affordable and accessible. Prioritizing investments that are shaped by and serve the communities most at risk builds lasting resilience and ensures no one is left behind as the climate changes.

CO-BENEFITS

- Advances climate equity by prioritizing communities most at risk
- Improves community health by expanding access to clean air, safe spaces, and climate education
- Lowers climate risks through preparedness, emergency response, and local partnerships
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by implementing lower-emission solutions



LEARN MORE

The SCAP outlines a series of commitments that will prioritize frontline communities to strengthen public health, enhance emergency preparedness, and build community resilience in the face of climate change.



Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policymaking

These actions support partnerships with frontline community leaders, cultivate pathways for emerging leaders, and invest in community-led climate action.



Extreme Heat Adaptation

These actions mitigate extreme heat impacts by expanding nature-based solutions, strengthening community resilience, and enhancing emergency response.



Regional Capacity Across Climate Hazards

These actions strengthen climate preparedness across King County and the Puget Sound region through internal and external collaborations.

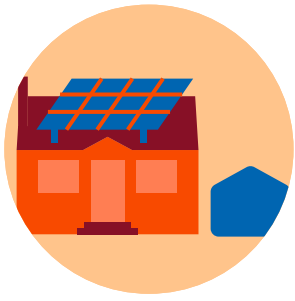


Wildfire Risk Reduction

These actions enhance wildfire resilience through proactive forest management, collaboration, and strategic investments to reduce risks in fire-prone areas.



Classrooms without air conditioning can get uncomfortably hot during heat events—affecting student learning and health. The “Cool Schools” initiative takes a multi-faceted, partnership-based approach to heat mitigation.



2. SAFE, HEALTHY, AND CLIMATE-READY BUILDINGS

ENSURING EVERY HOME AND WORKPLACE IS ENERGY EFFICIENT AND RESILIENT

As climate change reshapes our environment, the link between buildings and resilience is clear. Decisions about where and how homes and workplaces are built can shape vulnerability to climate risks such as extreme heat, wildfire, and flooding. For example, structures that are elevated are likely to be less damaged by flooding and homes that are properly insulated provide better protection against wildfire smoke and extreme heat.² At the same time, buildings are the second largest source of climate pollution in King County: residential, commercial,

and industrial buildings account for 41 percent of King County's greenhouse gas emissions. Combustion of fossil fuels for heating and cooking also worsens indoor air quality.³ Ensuring every home and workplace is safe, healthy, and climate-ready means delivering energy-efficient, disaster-resilient buildings equipped with clean, affordable utilities—especially for communities facing disproportionate risks. Investing in equitable building improvements strengthens our collective ability to withstand climate impacts while reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

CO-BENEFITS

- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by improving energy efficiency and reducing reliance on fossil fuels
- Protects public health by improving indoor air quality and reducing heat-related illnesses
- Increases climate resilience by strengthening homes and workplaces against climate hazards
- Prevents displacement by ensuring that climate upgrades do not drive up housing costs or force renters out of their homes
- Lowers energy costs over time by investing in high-efficiency appliances, weatherization, and renewable energy solutions

EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

For many King County residents, an energy-efficient, climate-resilient home remains financially out of reach. This lack of access can increase climate risks and affect the health and wellbeing of residents and communities. In areas where wildfire is a concern, for example, residents understand the importance of preparing their homes—clearing vegetation, changing roofing materials, properly sealing vents—but these improvements come with high upfront costs. Installing air filtration may also be needed. Wildfire smoke poses serious health risks to children, seniors, and people with respiratory conditions who lack proper air filtration.

Costs can also be a barrier to installing or using energy-efficient air conditioning systems to stay cool and safe as summer temperatures get hotter. Most King County homes, particularly multi-family units, lack air conditioning, leaving low-income renters and homeowners with few options when it is smoky and/or during extreme heat events. Opening windows may offer temporary relief, but when smoke fills the air, residents are forced to choose between hazardous air quality and hot indoor temperatures.⁴ Renters are particularly vulnerable. Even when landlords invest in long-term upgrades, the costs are often passed down to tenants through higher rents and utility bills. Without protections in place, well-intentioned climate improvements can unintentionally widen existing inequities.

Programs like King County's *Energize* show how climate upgrades can be paired with housing stability. Through *Energize* the County partnered with building owners to install energy-efficient heat pumps, providing cooling and cleaner air during extreme heat and wildfire smoke events while also reducing GHG emissions. In return, building owners agreed to keep rents stable for at least seven years, ensuring tenants benefit from healthier, more comfortable homes without facing rising housing costs. This model demonstrates how public investment and clear tenant protections can deliver both immediate benefits and long-term stability. By expanding programs like *Energize* and focusing resources on communities facing the greatest climate risks, King County can ensure that the transition to resilient, energy-efficient housing is equitable and inclusive.



King County's *Energize* Heat Pump Program installs heat pumps and other clean technology to help low and moderate-income homes in King County.

LEARN MORE

The SCAP outlines a series of commitments that will strengthen public health, enhance emergency preparedness, and build community resilience through:



Building Energy and Green Building

These actions improve energy efficiency, reduce utility costs, and enhance well-being for all residents, with a focus on low- to moderate-income households and frontline communities.



Housing Security and Anti-Displacement

These actions strengthen County and community partnerships to support community-driven equitable development and prevent displacement.



Sea Level Rise Preparedness

These actions prepare for rising sea levels to minimize economic and environmental impacts, protect shoreline habitats, and reduce risks to public health and safety.



Wildfire Risk Reduction

These actions enhance wildfire resilience through proactive forest management, collaboration, and strategic investments to reduce risks in areas where wildfire is a concern.



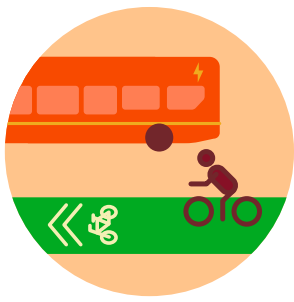
Climate Ready Capital Projects

These actions reduce energy use, lower greenhouse gas emissions, generate clean energy, and stimulate economic growth in the clean energy sector.



Countywide Greenhouse Gas Policy and Leadership

These actions support regional coordination by partnering with cities and jurisdictions to align state legislative advocacy, share resources, and amplify local successes to drive broader national and global climate action.



3. CONNECTED AND ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION

MAKING IT EASY TO GET WHERE YOU NEED TO GO

With King County's population projected to grow by 30 percent in the next 25 years, the way we invest in transportation today will shape both our region's future and our ability to meet climate goals. Transportation is the largest source of climate pollution in King County, responsible for nearly half of all greenhouse gas emissions—totaling 46 percent from on-road vehicles, aviation, marine vessels and off-road equipment.⁵ Expanding high-capacity transit, improving walkability and bike infrastructure, and integrating affordable

housing near transit hubs will reduce reliance on personal vehicles and lower transportation costs, while providing all residents—especially those historically underserved—with easier access to jobs, schools, services, and emergency resources such as cooling centers and evacuation routes. Prioritizing multimodal, low-carbon transportation options not only cuts emissions and improves air quality but also strengthens community resilience, well-being, and affordability as King County continues to grow.

CO-BENEFITS

- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by increasing transit ridership and walkability
- Improves public health by cutting air pollution in frontline communities
- Strengthens community resilience by ensuring affordable, reliable mobility options
- Creates safer, more walkable neighborhoods that reduce dependence on cars
- Reduces transportation costs by expanding affordable transit and clean mobility options

EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Transportation is one of the clearest examples of how infrastructure decisions can deepen or reduce inequities.⁶ Many BIPOC, immigrant, and low-income neighborhoods in King County continue to face the legacy of redlining and disinvestment, with limited access to reliable, affordable transit options. Transit services and facilities need to improve to serve more people especially in these areas of historical underinvestment. More frequent service, better bus stops, improved technology and better multi-lingual resources could make the system more accessible for working families, non-English speakers, people with disabilities, and communities throughout King County. Meanwhile, residents in these same communities often live



Sidewalks, bike lanes, and frequent transit make it easy to get where you need to go.

near high-traffic corridors, where exposure to air pollution and traffic noise contributes to higher rates of asthma and other health conditions. Without deliberate protections, transit-oriented development intended to increase the number of households that live near high-capacity transit can also drive displacement, pricing out the very residents who rely on transit the most.

The transition to a lower-emission transportation system presents a critical opportunity to correct these inequities. By focusing investments on communities historically overburdened by pollution and limited mobility options, King County can ensure that clean transportation benefits are shared equitably. This includes expanding public EV charging stations in neighborhoods identified

through the state's Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act framework—particularly in areas where the private sector is less likely to invest. It also means prioritizing deploying zero-emission buses that reduce both greenhouse gas emissions and harmful air pollution first in frontline communities of South King County, improving daily conditions for riders and nearby residents. Supporting mixed-use, transit-connected neighborhoods—with strong housing protections—further strengthens affordability and access while preventing displacement. Centering equity in every step of the transition will help build a transportation system that is accessible, affordable, and resilient for all communities.

LEARN MORE

By prioritizing equitable, accessible, and climate-friendly transportation investments, King County can ensure that every resident benefits from a cleaner, more efficient transit system. The SCAP outlines a series of commitments to strengthen public health, advance transportation equity, and build climate resilience:



Transit and Transportation

These actions reduce reliance on private vehicles, enhance public transit, and minimize traffic congestion in areas with high population and job density.



Transportation Access and Equity

These actions ensure equitable transit planning and expand reliable, accessible transportation options in partnership with frontline communities.



Zero-Emission County Fleets

These actions transition King County's fleet of over 6,000 vehicles—including buses, patrol units, and service vehicles—to zero-emission alternatives to reduce carbon pollution.



Countywide Greenhouse Gas Policy and Leadership

These actions support regional coordination by partnering with cities and jurisdictions to align state legislative advocacy, share resources, and amplify local successes to drive broader national and global climate action.



The King County Parks Levy funded the construction of the White River Bridge, connecting King and Pierce counties via the Foothills Trail.



4. ECONOMIC MOBILITY AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

CONNECTING CLIMATE ACTION AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

The transition to a clean energy economy is not just about reducing emissions—it's about creating lasting opportunity. As King County invests in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, and energy-efficient buildings, this shift presents a once-in-a-generation chance to stimulate regional economic growth, create high-quality jobs, and ensure prosperity reaches all communities—not just those already positioned to benefit. Meeting the workforce demands of this transition requires urgent action and sustained efforts. The 2024 Washington

State Residential Energy Workforce Gap Analysis identified a need for over 550 new electricians focused on residential energy efficiency projects by the end of the decade, in addition to more than 1,100 electricians needed across other sectors. By embedding workforce development into climate action, expanding support for local businesses, and prioritizing access to financial incentives, King County is advancing a clean energy transition that supports both economic mobility and climate goals.

CO-BENEFITS

- Adapts and accelerates investment and outreach for local clean energy needs
- Demonstrates the economic benefit of the clean energy transition within frontline communities and local businesses
- Expands economic opportunity through increased access to living-wage jobs, building a skilled and diverse workforce
- Promotes sustainable business models that reduce waste and lower costs



King County JumpStart participant completing 240-hours of paid work-based learning at contractor host site.

EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

For too many frontline communities, economic opportunity hasn't been evenly distributed. High-paying jobs in the clean energy sector are growing rapidly, but systemic barriers—such as limited access to training, lack of exposure to career pathways, and weak connections to employers—continue to prevent many BIPOC, immigrant, and low-income residents from accessing them.⁷ Programs like King County's *JumpStart*, which serves 86 percent Black and Latino youth, are already making an impact by connecting young adults to career opportunities in electrical work, HVAC, solar installation, and project management. Yet many job seekers, including youth from low-income households, struggle to envision themselves in these industries without early exposure, mentorship, and culturally relevant outreach.^{8,9} Without deliberate investment, the clean energy transition risks reinforcing existing inequities, excluding the very communities most impacted by climate change.

This shift presents a powerful opportunity to close long-standing gaps in economic mobility and wealth-building. Partnerships like King

County's Climate Equity Capital Pool Project show how public investments can deliver multiple benefits—by requiring sewer districts receiving County grants to offer paid work-based learning, the County helped pre-apprenticeship graduates gain hands-on experience and secure full-time employment in climate-related careers. Beyond new job opportunities, King County can build pathways to ensure that frontline communities also share in profits and leadership opportunities as business owners, contractors, and decision-makers. Programs like *C-PACER*, which increases affordability for building retrofits, and *Energize*, which contracts directly with local companies for heat pump installations for low to moderate income households, are designed to channel economic benefits to local businesses—particularly minority- and women-owned enterprises (MWBs). Through intentional engagement, expanded internships, certifications, leadership development, and sustained support for local businesses, King County is committed to building a green economy by and for the communities it aims to serve.



King County Metro employees graduate from the Green Custodial Health program, facilitated by the U.S. Green Building Council.

LEARN MORE

By aligning climate action with economic opportunity, King County can create a future where sustainability drives both prosperity and equity—ensuring that every community has the chance to build wealth in the clean energy economy. The SCAP outlines the following commitments to ensure an inclusive and equitable clean energy future:



Climate and Economic Opportunity

These actions integrate climate-informed workforce development into capital projects, expand outreach and engagement, strengthen regional partnerships, and implement the 2025 Climate and Workforce Strategy



Building Capacity with Frontline Communities and Youth

These actions strengthen County staff capacity to embed climate equity while supporting frontline communities and youth in developing just, community-driven climate solutions



Energy Justice and Utilities Affordability

These actions reduce energy burdens on frontline communities and strengthen community leadership in shaping energy justice policies and programs



Circular Economy

These actions minimize landfill waste, expand recycling and reuse programs, and strengthen community partnerships to create new markets and economic opportunities for a more sustainable waste system



Youth in VR headset explores virtual solar installation training module at 2024 Green Jobs, Green Futures Summit.



5. FRESH, LOCAL FOOD FOR EVERYONE

SUPPORTING FARMS, FARMERS, AND ACCESS TO NUTRITIOUS FOOD

Food systems are the backbone of healthy, resilient communities—but climate change is putting them under growing strain. Food is the second-largest source of King County’s consumption-based GHG emissions, after transportation, driven by the environmental impact of how food is processed, distributed, and wasted.¹⁰ Industrial farming has expanded global food production, often at the expense of long-term sustainability. These systems rely on monocultures and heavy chemical inputs that degrade soil, deplete water resources, and reduce biodiversity—making farms more vulnerable to

drought, floods, pests, and disease. In King County, local farmers, fisheries, and food businesses are facing growing challenges, from extreme weather to rising production costs and supply chain disruptions. Meanwhile, 30–40 percent of food produced goes uneaten, highlighting deep inefficiencies in the current system.¹¹ Building a more resilient, sustainable food system is essential—not only to reduce emissions and protect farmers’ livelihoods, but to ensure fresh, affordable food remains accessible to every community.

CO-BENEFITS

- Advances climate equity by prioritizing communities most at risk
- Improves food security by making fresh, local food more affordable and accessible
- Reduces waste and emissions by strengthening local food supply chains and recovery programs

EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

For many residents in King County, accessing fresh, affordable food is becoming increasingly difficult. Climate change and global disruptions are driving up food costs, disproportionately affecting low-income households and BIPOC communities. This includes access to culturally significant foods like salmon and shellfish, which are vital to Indigenous diets and coastal economies. Immigrant farmers across the region face additional barriers as they work to gain and preserve access to farmland and grow culturally relevant crops that connect communities to their traditions.

These challenges expose deeper inefficiencies and inequities in the current system. While low-income families struggle to afford fresh, nutritious food and producers contend with extreme weather and rising costs, an estimated 30–40 percent of food goes uneaten—generating methane emissions and wasting valuable resources. King County has an opportunity to create a more resilient and equitable food system by strengthening networks that connect small and underrepresented farmers—including immigrant and Indigenous growers—to institutional markets like schools, food

banks, and farmers markets. Expanding access to land, improving distribution infrastructure, and investing in food recovery efforts can boost regional food economies while ensuring fresh, culturally relevant food reaches the communities who need it most. By aligning climate action with food security, waste reduction, and local agricultural support, King County can reduce emissions, stabilize food access, and safeguard farmers, fisheries, and food traditions for future generations.



King County's annual CHOMP! festival highlights the regional food ecosystem—local farms, farmers, chefs, restaurants and organizations.

LEARN MORE

A resilient food system does more than withstand crises—it strengthens economy and well-being, supports farmers, and ensures that every resident has access to fresh, local food. The SCAP outlines a series of commitments to strengthen food security and sustainability:



Food Systems and Food Security

These actions invest in farmer economic viability, enhance food rescue coordination, increase food access, and integrate food system goals into broader policy efforts.



Forest and Agriculture

These actions protect and restore high-value forests and farmland by improving forest management and advancing sustainable agricultural practices.



Extreme Precipitation and Drought Mitigation

These actions improve stormwater management, support water quality, and expand recycled water and water conservation in response to changing hydrologic extremes.



Circular Economy

These actions minimize landfill waste, expand recycling and reuse programs, and strengthen community partnerships to create new markets and economic opportunities for a more sustainable waste system.



Countywide Greenhouse Gas Policy and Leadership

Includes action to support regional coordination by partnering with cities and jurisdictions to uphold the Urban Growth Boundary, which protects key forest and agricultural lands from development.



6. DESIGN OUT WASTE

REDUCING CONSUMPTION, PREVENTING WASTE, AND REUSING VALUABLE MATERIALS

Every day, over 100 trucks deliver tons of discarded materials—everything from half-eaten meals to plastic packaging to perfectly good wood—to King County’s Cedar Hills landfill. It’s the result of a “throwaway economy,” where goods are designed to be cheap, short-lived, and disposable. This system wastes valuable resources, pollutes the environment, and fuels climate change—so much so that the emissions tied to the goods and services we consume are more than double the emissions generated within the County itself. It’s not just single-use plastics: everything from clothing to electronics

to construction materials often ends up in the landfill far too soon. In fact, up to 70 percent of what we send to the landfill could be reused, recycled, or composted. As our population grows and our current landfill nears capacity, King County must rethink how we reduce, reuse, and manage waste. Shifting to a circular economy—where we use less, waste less, and keep materials in circulation—means cutting emissions, creating local jobs, and reducing pollution, while protecting our forests, waterways, and communities most burdened by waste.

CO-BENEFITS

- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by reducing resources used and the impact of what we do consume
- Advances climate equity by shifting power to frontline communities, ensuring they shape policies, funding, and decision-making
- Supports economic stability by investing in job-creating infrastructure and system changes
- Reduces food waste by strengthening local food supply chains and recovery programs
- Promotes sustainable business models that reduce waste and lower costs
- Expands economic opportunity through increased access to living-wage jobs, building a skilled and diverse workforce



A King County employee sorting mercury-containing bulbs at the Factoria household hazardous waste drop-off site.



Re+ engages community members to reimagine a waste-free King County.

EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Historically, low-income neighborhoods, immigrants, and communities of color have borne the brunt of pollution throughout the entire lifecycle of materials—beginning with the extraction of raw resources, through the production and manufacturing of goods, and continuing into our throwaway systems. The production of new materials often results in air and water pollution near manufacturing hubs, which are frequently located near frontline communities, both locally and globally.¹² In King County, many manufacturing and waste facilities are often located near historically underserved neighborhoods, while illegal dumping of construction debris, appliances, and hazardous materials disproportionately impacts these residents. Additionally, the costs for waste disposal can also leave many households without affordable, convenient options to manage their waste sustainably, compounding these inequities.

Yet many of these same communities have long practiced low-waste, circular economy approaches—stretching meals and not wasting food, sharing tools, and repairing items rather than discarding them. King County’s Re+ Community Panel ensures these lived experiences help shape waste policies, programs, and funding decisions. The transition to a circular economy presents an opportunity to correct past imbalances by making recycling, composting, reuse, and repair more accessible and affordable. Efforts like Cleanup LIFT lower disposal costs for low-income households, while Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policies shift accountability to manufacturers, reducing waste at the source. These changes, alongside investments in local recycling, repair, and composting industries, can ensure that the benefits of a zero-waste future are shared equitably—and no community is left managing more than its fair share of the burden.

LEARN MORE

The SCAP outlines a series of commitments to reduce consumption impacts and accelerate the shift to a circular economy where we waste less and reduce our footprint—equitably, sustainably, and reliably.



Circular Economy

These actions minimize landfill waste, expand recycling, composting, and reuse programs, and strengthen community partnerships to build a more sustainable waste system.



Climate and Economic Opportunity

These actions integrate climate-informed workforce development into capital projects, expand outreach and engagement, strengthen regional partnerships, and implement the 2025 Climate and Workforce Strategy.



Building Energy and Green Building

These actions improve energy efficiency, reduce utility costs, and enhance well-being for all residents, with a focus on low- to moderate-income households and frontline communities.



Sustainable County Infrastructure

These actions reduce energy use, lower GHG emissions, generate clean energy, and stimulate economic growth in the clean energy sector.



Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policymaking

These actions support partnerships with frontline community leaders, cultivate pathways for emerging leaders, and invest in community-led climate action.



Countywide Greenhouse Gas Policy and Leadership

These actions support regional coordination by partnering with cities and jurisdictions to align state legislative advocacy, share resources, and amplify local successes to drive broader national and global climate action.



7. CLEAN AIR, WATER, AND HEALTHY ECOSYSTEMS

PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT FOR HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES AND RESILIENT ECOSYSTEMS

The forests, rivers, and coastlines of King County are more than just landscapes—they are the lungs that clean our air, the waters that nourish our communities, and the habitats that sustain species and our way of life. These natural systems protect public health and strengthen local economies, yet decades of pollution, development, and climate change have left them vulnerable. From committing \$9 billion in the next decade toward protecting water quality and clean habitats to partnering to conserve 65,000 acres of land over the next 30 years, King County has worked for decades to honor our commitments to Tribes and the

County's 2.3 million residents. Decisive action is needed to ensure work continues and expands, from restoring habitats to prioritizing green spaces in historically underserved areas. Habitat restoration, urban greening, and multijurisdictional efforts require strong partnerships—with Tribal governments, federal and state agencies, and frontline communities. By implementing nature-based solutions, restoring degraded lands, and making environmental benefits accessible to all, we can ensure that clean air, clean water, and thriving ecosystems remain part of King County's future.



Cougar Mountain Park is part of King County's 30,000-acre park system. Located in the "Issaquah Alps," Cougar Mountain Park preserves important wildlife habitat while offering ample opportunities for recreation.

CO-BENEFITS

- Advances climate equity by prioritizing communities most at risk
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere
- Improves public health by reducing air pollution and expanding access to clean water and forests for recreation
- Strengthens climate resilience through tree cover, clean waterways, and ecosystem restoration
- Protects biodiversity by restoring and connecting habitats for salmon and other species



Children and families volunteer at trail work party at North Shorewood Park hosted by King County Parks and the Washington Trails Association.

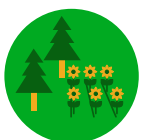
EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

For generations, the health of King County's lands and waters has been shaped by decisions that prioritized development over the wellbeing of ecosystems and the people who depend on them. But the consequences of those choices haven't been felt equally. For tribes, the decline of salmon is not just an environmental loss—it's a violation of treaty rights and a threat to cultural survival. Habitat destruction and polluted waterways are also affecting the health and wellbeing of residents in urbanized areas. Along the Duwamish River, for example, low-income families and tribes alike live with the legacy of industrial pollution, facing higher rates of asthma, cancer, and other chronic diseases.¹³ These burdens didn't happen by accident; they are the result of decades of disinvestment and exclusion from the decisions that shape the landscape—leaving certain communities to carry the heaviest costs.

Restoration efforts across King County offer powerful opportunities to reverse this harm and build a more equitable future. The resurgence of kokanee salmon in 2024—following years of collaboration led by the Snoqualmie Tribe—proves that recovery is possible when tribal leadership and knowledge are prioritized. Similarly, while federal agencies lead the cleanup of the Duwamish Superfund site, King County plays a vital role in restoring habitat, supporting public health, and ensuring that both tribal and immigrant communities share in the river's recovery. Beyond waterways, urban neighborhoods also face their own inequities. King County's urban tree canopy is a key defense against extreme heat, air pollution, and stormwater runoff. Historically redlined and low-income areas, however, often lack robust tree canopy—leaving them more vulnerable to extreme heat and pollution. By investing in habitat restoration, tree planting, and community-led solutions, King County can honor treaty rights, reduce environmental health disparities, and reconnect people to the land and waters that sustain them.

LEARN MORE

Restoring healthy ecosystems and protecting community wellbeing requires partnership at every level—from tribal governments to local governments to federal agencies and community leaders. By scaling up and accelerating habitat restoration, pollution cleanup, and urban greening efforts, King County can ensure that clean air, clean water, and thriving ecosystems remain part of our future. The SCAP outlines a series of commitments to protect ecosystems and community health:



Forest and Agriculture

These actions protect and restore high-value forest and farmland by improving forest management and advancing sustainable agricultural practices.



Forest Resilience and Urban Tree Canopy Expansion

These actions invest in forest resilience and support a more robust urban tree canopy, especially in mapped heat islands.



Extreme Precipitation and Drought Mitigation

These actions improve stormwater management, support water quality, and expand recycled water and water conservation in response to changing hydrologic extremes.



River Flood Management

These actions preserve and restore river floodplains to reduce flood risks while enhancing habitat and strengthening climate resilience.



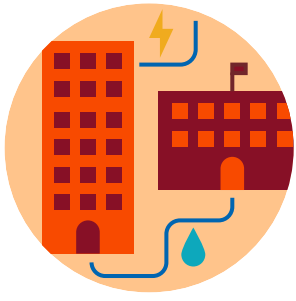
Salmon Recovery and Habitat Connectivity

These actions improve habitat to support native salmon populations and promote habitat connectivity, strengthening ecosystem and species resilience.



Sea Level Rise Preparedness

These actions prepare for rising sea levels to minimize economic and environmental impacts, protect shoreline habitats, and reduce risks to public health and safety.



8. RELIABLE AND FUTURE-READY INFRASTRUCTURE

BUILDING AND MAINTAINING ROADS, UTILITIES, AND SERVICES THAT WORK NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

Bridges, roads, stormwater systems, and public transit infrastructure are the backbone of daily life in King County but many of these assets weren't built for the pressures of a rapidly changing climate. Climate change increases the potential for more extreme events, adding further stress to aging infrastructure and increasing the risk of service disruptions, costly damage, and community harm. Meeting the climate crisis head-on requires rethinking how we design, build, and maintain the systems that move

people, deliver power, convey water and wastewater, and provide essential services. Meeting the climate crisis also requires bold action to reduce emissions from transportation and building infrastructure, the County's largest contributors to GHG emissions. To create a climate-ready future, King County must invest in infrastructure that can withstand climate shocks, reduce emissions, and reliably serve every community for decades to come.

CO-BENEFITS

- Enhances public safety by ensuring that infrastructure can function well in a changing climate
- Protects and improves public health through cleaner air, walkable and accessible neighborhoods, reliable sanitation, and reduced exposure to pollutants
- Lowers climate risks by making infrastructure adaptable to extreme weather and future demands
- Supports economic stability by reducing service disruptions, lowering long-term costs and creating local jobs through infrastructure improvements



Replacing culverts that block access to high quality stream habitat is important to helping salmon survive and thrive in a changing climate.



King County Wastewater Treatment Division is one of the first wastewater utilities in the nation — and the first in Washington state — to offer sewer heat recovery. Private commercial property owners and developers can recover renewable heat energy from sewer pipes for heating or cooling their buildings.

EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In November 2024, a bomb cyclone tore through the Puget Sound region, leaving behind more than \$11 million in losses in King County that included damaged homes and businesses, collapsed roofs, and widespread power outages.¹⁴ While the bomb cyclone disrupted many aspects of public service delivery, the event also highlighted the value of recent King County investments in resilience at the West Point Treatment Plant. In September 2024, King County completed a two-year capital project to install a unique high-voltage battery system designed to provide stable power to the treatment plant during power surges and outages. As powerful gusts swept through Western Washington overnight, the 16.8-megawatt battery system kept pumps operating continuously, preventing combined sewer overflows and protecting water quality.¹⁵

Investing in future-ready infrastructure presents an opportunity to address inequities and strengthen community safety and economic opportunity. This includes, for example, installing and operating zero-emission transit bus and EV charging stations first in communities overburdened by air pollution and creating safer, more walkable streets in neighborhoods historically left out of infrastructure

improvements. Requiring that infrastructure built by King County achieve the highest green and equitable building practices will help to ensure that design integrates community priorities, local communities benefit from economic development, lessens the burden and impact on frontline communities, and health of nearby residents and employees is protected. Because these requirements start from the beginning, the county is maximizing synergistic benefits that result in the management of public funds achieving multiple returns on a single investment, instead of requesting additional tax dollars to retrofit or redesign facilities to meet public interests and future climate preparedness. Ensuring equitable community engagement early on in the RapidRide H line design, meant that a stop was built right around the corner from a new food bank facility providing families with quick access to the bus line and avoiding having to carry groceries too far. By focusing on the communities most at risk, King County can build a resilient future that reduces our dependence on climate-polluting fossil fuel where every resident has access to safe homes, clean water, reliable power, and affordable transportation.

LEARN MORE

The SCAP outlines a series of commitments to build a future where infrastructure serves everyone—equitably, sustainably, and reliably.



Sustainable County Infrastructure

These actions reduce energy use, lower greenhouse gas emissions, generate clean energy, and stimulate economic growth in the clean energy sector.



Climate-Ready Capital Projects

These actions integrate climate risk considerations into capital planning and invest in resilient infrastructure to maintain reliable public services amid climate challenges.



Building Energy and Green Building

These actions improve energy efficiency, reduce utility costs, and enhance well-being for all residents, with a focus on low- to moderate-income households and frontline communities.



Zero-Emission County Fleets

These actions transition King County's fleet of over 6,000 vehicles—including buses, patrol units, and service vehicles—to zero-emission alternatives to reduce carbon pollution.



Transit and Transportation

These actions reduce reliance on private vehicles, enhance public transit, and minimize traffic congestion in areas with high population and job density.



River Flood Management

These actions preserve and restore river floodplains to reduce flood risks while enhancing habitat and strengthening climate resilience.



Sea Level Rise Preparedness

These actions prepare for rising sea levels to minimize economic and environmental impacts, protect shoreline habitats, and reduce risks to public health and safety.



9. COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY-LED SOLUTIONS

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CLIMATE ACTION AND INNOVATION

Sustained work on climate action requires more than policies and plans—it depends on collective leadership, accountability, and collaboration across communities, governments, and sectors. With a \$15.8 billion budget, a workforce of over 16,700 employees, and responsibility for more than 60 services, King County is uniquely positioned to lead by embedding climate action and equity into every aspect of governance. Climate solutions can't be siloed; they must be integrated into how decisions are made, how budgets are spent, and how services are delivered. From operational shifts to large-scale investments, every department and employee has a role to play in advancing science-based, equity-centered, and risk-informed policies that reduce emissions and strengthen community resilience. But leadership doesn't rest solely with government. Lasting solutions must be shaped in partnership with frontline communities, scientists, schools, businesses, and community-based organizations—those who understand their communities' needs, bring trusted relationships, and offer innovative solutions. As a regional government, King

County also has a responsibility to work across jurisdictional borders and share decision-making power—ensuring that communities most affected by climate impacts have the opportunity to lead. By centering community voices and forging strong partnerships, we can build a future where climate action benefits every resident, and resilience is shared equitably.



Participants at a SCAP workshop in 2024.

CO-BENEFITS

- Advances climate equity by shifting power to frontline communities, ensuring they shape policies, funding, and decision-making
- Strengthens public health by expanding access to clean air, safe housing, and climate education
- Builds climate resilience by replacing crisis-driven responses with permanent, community-led collaboration structures
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by engaging community and industry leaders to scale emission reduction programs and policies
- Enhances disaster preparedness and emergency response by integrating community voices into planning, ensuring faster, more effective action
- Increases accountability and innovation by embedding climate leadership across departments and fostering cross-sector partnerships

EQUITY IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

True climate action requires more than emergency response—it requires long-term investment in community leadership, employee empowerment, and shared responsibility at every level. Too often, frontline communities are left filling gaps without lasting change or resources.¹⁶ But recent successes show what's possible when leadership is collective. In 2023, Metro's shift to prioritize the electrification of its Tukwila base—after strong input from community partners—demonstrated how community leadership can directly shape major infrastructure decisions, ensuring cleaner buses operated first in communities overburdened by air pollution and more equitable service in historically underserved areas. Similarly, when King County employees are empowered to take ownership of climate solutions—from installing

LED lighting to supporting zero-emission transit—benefits achieved prove that leadership belongs to every worker who serves the public.

Greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, and climate impacts don't stop at jurisdictional boundaries—and neither should the solutions. The health of our air, water, and communities is interconnected across city lines, watersheds, and transportation networks. Through efforts like the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C), King County works alongside cities of all sizes—especially those with fewer resources—to help them access funding, tools, and programs that benefit their residents. But King County's leadership goes beyond policy; it also shapes broader industry standards that influence change across sectors. A clear example is how a bus manufacturer designs electric buses to meet King County Metro's specifications, knowing that if a model can serve King County's diverse and complex routes, it will meet the needs of most communities nationwide. The County's leadership shows that if solutions are built to meet the needs of our most impacted communities, they will work for everyone. By embedding permanent, resourced community advisory roles, ensuring equitable compensation for expertise, and supporting participatory planning processes, King County can continue to shift from short-term outreach to lasting, community-driven partnerships that allow us to build better solutions for our community with our communities. When frontline communities, employees, businesses, and local governments share leadership, climate solutions are stronger, more inclusive, and more effective.

LEARN MORE

The SCAP outlines a series of commitments that will strengthen existing collaboration structures, enhance emergency preparedness, and build community resilience in the face of climate change.



Building Capacity with Frontline Communities and Youth

These actions strengthen County staff capacity to embed climate equity while supporting frontline communities and youth in developing just, community-driven climate solutions.



Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policymaking

These actions support partnerships with frontline community leaders, cultivate pathways for emerging leaders, and invest in community-led climate action.



Countywide Greenhouse Gas Policy and Leadership

These actions support regional coordination by partnering with cities and jurisdictions to align state legislative advocacy, share resources, and amplify local successes to drive broader national and global climate action.



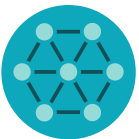
Enterprise Leadership and Accountability

These actions embed equity, efficiency, and accountability into County operations by ensuring employees, leadership, and policies advance King County's climate goals.



Climate-Ready Capital Projects

These actions integrate climate risk considerations into capital planning and invest in resilient infrastructure to maintain reliable public services amid climate challenges.



Regional Capacity Across Climate Hazards

These actions strengthen climate preparedness across King County and the Puget Sound region through internal and external collaborations.

ENDNOTES

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Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy Release park tour in July 2024