



# SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES

# INTRODUCTION

The impacts of climate change are already being felt, and not all communities have the same ability to adapt and recover.<sup>1</sup> Long-standing social, economic, and environmental disparities mean that some groups are at higher risk, facing greater exposure to climate hazards and more barriers to resilience. In King County, frontline communities—including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrant and refugee populations, people with low incomes, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, unsheltered populations, and outdoor workers—experience the earliest and most severe climate impacts. These communities often have the fewest resources to recover and are underrepresented in decision-making.

Despite these challenges, frontline communities are key leaders in climate resilience and adaptation.<sup>2</sup> Their lived experiences provide essential insights into how climate change intersects with housing insecurity, public health disparities, economic instability, and environmental risks. While these communities have historically contributed the least to greenhouse gas emissions,<sup>3</sup> they bear the greatest burden of climate impacts. Centering their voices in policy and planning is not just a matter of equity—it is essential for developing more effective, community-driven climate solutions that reflect the realities and priorities of those most affected.

## BACKGROUND

King County is home to over 2.3 million residents as of 2023, making it one of the largest and most diverse counties in Washington State.<sup>4</sup> The majority of the population—approximately 89 percent—resides within the County's cities and towns, while around 250,000 people live in unincorporated King County. Within these unincorporated areas, more than 119,000 residents live in urbanized communities, while over 127,000 reside in rural settings.<sup>5</sup> The County's population continues to grow and diversify, bringing both opportunities and challenges for sustainable and resilient community development. Since 2010, the percentage of BIPOC populations has increased over the decade from 39 percent to 46 percent of the total population.<sup>6</sup> As of 2023, 26 percent of people living in King County were born outside the U.S.<sup>7</sup>

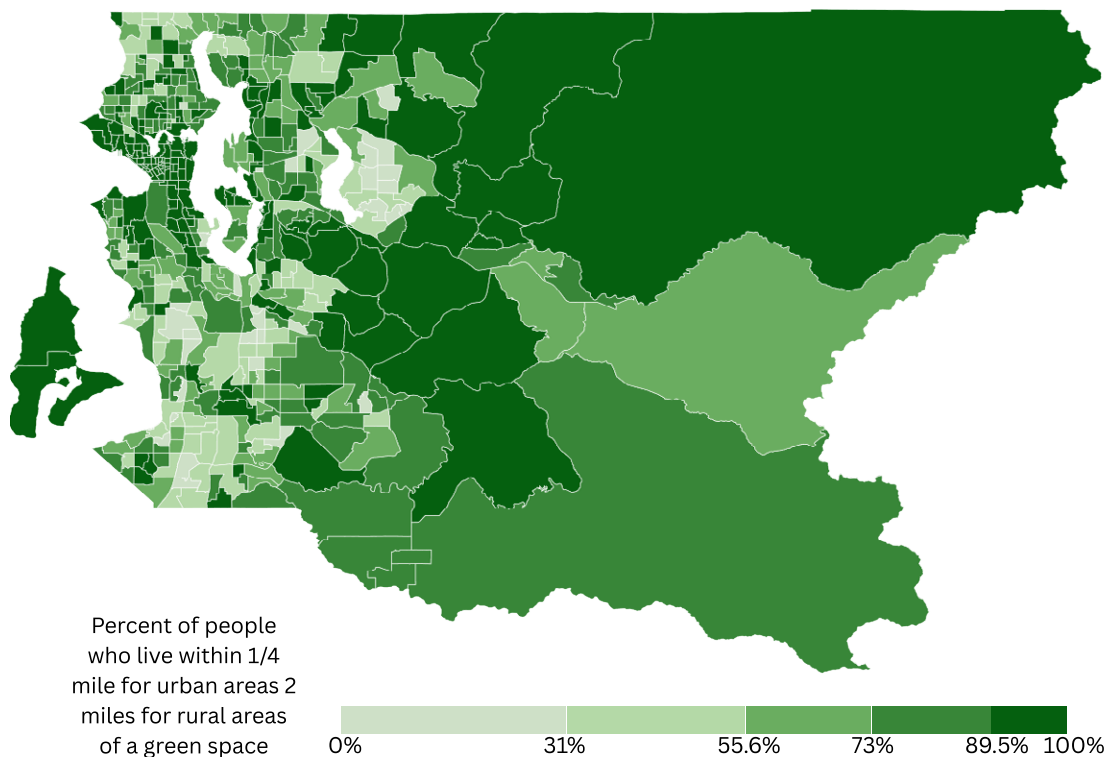
While climate hazards such as extreme heat, flooding, and wildfire smoke affect all communities, the burden is not shared equally. Decades of discriminatory policies and disinvestment have contributed to disparities in housing, economic opportunity, healthcare access, and environmental quality, all of which intensify climate vulnerability.

**Racial segregation and neighborhood disinvestment:** Historical practices such as redlining and exclusionary zoning have concentrated poverty and environmental hazards in certain neighborhoods, limiting wealth-building opportunities for BIPOC households. Today, these same communities often experience higher exposure to extreme heat, air pollution, and flood risks due to a lack of green space, aging infrastructure, and proximity to industrial pollution sources.

**Economic inequality and workforce disparities:** While King County workers earn higher incomes than the state and national averages, economic gaps persist along racial and geographic lines. BIPOC households—particularly Black, African American, American Indian, and Alaska Native residents—earn significantly less than White households. Incomes for Black and African American households are about half of those of White households, underscoring systemic inequities.<sup>8</sup> Many outdoor workers, who are disproportionately from frontline communities, face increased exposure to extreme heat, air pollution, and other climate-related hazards that threaten both their health and financial stability.

### Figure 15. Equitable Access to Green Space

This map shows percent of people that live within one quarter mile (in urban areas) or within 2 miles (rural areas) in a straight line of any kind of open space by Census Tract for 2020.



Sources: King County Parks (2024), Puget Sound Regional Council (2020), US Census (2020)

**Health disparities and climate risks:** Health outcomes vary significantly by race and place, with frontline communities experiencing higher rates of chronic conditions such as asthma, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes—conditions that are exacerbated by climate change. Black, African American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, and American Indian and Alaska Native residents have lower life expectancies than their White counterparts. Communities in South King County—where many frontline populations reside—experience shorter life spans compared to those in northern and eastern areas. Individuals with pre-existing health conditions face greater risks from extreme weather events, while older adults and people with disabilities may have difficulty evacuating or accessing emergency services during climate disasters. Nearly ten percent of King County residents live with a disability.<sup>9</sup> Unsheltered populations, who lack stable housing and healthcare, are at even greater risk. As of a 2021 count, King County had 40,800 people experiencing homelessness.<sup>10</sup>

**Linguistic and cultural barriers to adaptation:** Over 120 languages are spoken across King County,<sup>11</sup> and as of 2023, 31 percent of residents spoke a language other than English at home.<sup>12</sup> These linguistic and cultural factors can create barriers to accessing emergency services, healthcare, and climate adaptation resources. Climate communications that rely on technical language or fail to incorporate culturally relevant outreach strategies can exclude the very communities most affected by climate change.



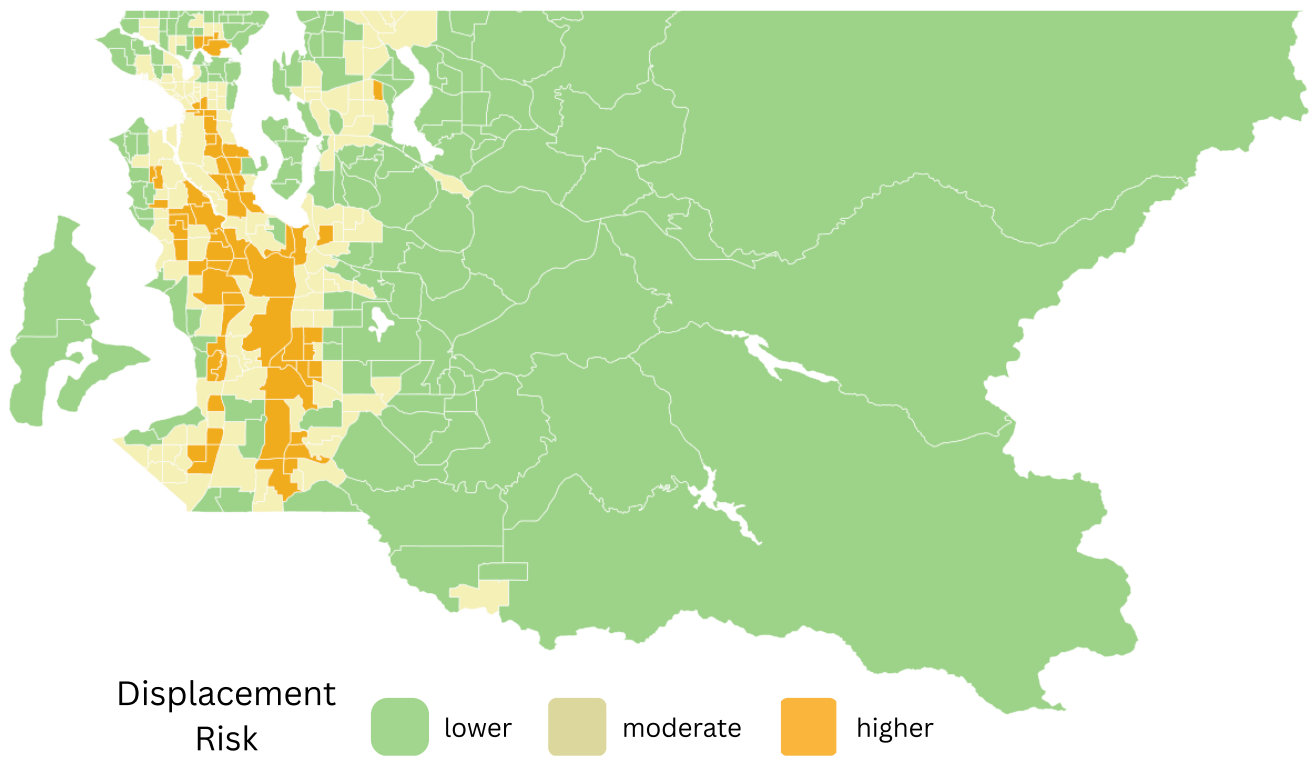
Educating our communities about climate impacts and resources is critical.

**Housing affordability and displacement:** King County faces an escalating housing affordability crisis, particularly in unincorporated areas where new development has largely consisted of single-family homes rather than a range of housing options accessible to lower-income residents. Between 2016 and 2022, median home prices increased by nearly \$300,000,<sup>13</sup> while rents rose by over 40 percent between 2015 and 2021.<sup>14</sup> Displacement pressures are particularly severe for Black and African American households, low-income renters, and residents in historically marginalized neighborhoods such as Skyway-West Hill and North Highline. Many immigrant and refugee communities—already facing barriers to housing stability—are at increasing risk of being pushed out of their neighborhoods due to rising costs.

Without addressing these systemic factors, climate policies risk reinforcing the very disparities they aim to reduce. Strengthening climate resilience requires a holistic approach—one that not only mitigates climate hazards but also expands access to housing, economic opportunity, transportation, healthcare, and community resources.

### Figure 16. Displacement Risk Across King County

This map defines areas with lower, moderate, or higher risk of displacement based on current neighborhood conditions.



Source: Puget Sound Regional Council (2021)

# KEY ISSUES

The systemic inequities outlined in the previous section—shaped by historical policies, economic exclusion, and social marginalization—have led to deep disparities in climate vulnerability. Addressing these root causes requires a focused approach on the specific barriers that frontline communities face in accessing resources, participating in decision-making, and building resilience. In King County, key issue areas such as lack of access, community health and emergency preparedness, housing security and anti-

displacement, economic opportunity and workforce development, and transportation equity are central to shaping an effective climate response. These challenges are interconnected, influencing how communities experience and recover from climate-related risks. By prioritizing action in these areas, King County aims to build more equitable, sustainable communities that are prepared for the growing impacts of climate change.



## Community Leadership and Community-Driven Policymaking and Building Capacity with Frontline Communities and Youth

- Frontline communities hold experiences and perspectives that can support the creation of effective, holistic climate solutions. Existing and historic racial, social, environmental, and economic inequities can limit access to resources and create barriers to participation in decision-making processes.
- Language barriers are an important consideration. Even among frontline community members who can read and speak English, frequent use of jargon and technical language in climate-related materials can make it difficult to understand and communicate climate risks to others.



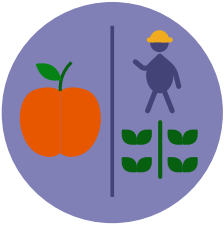
## Economic Opportunity and Workforce Development

- The clean energy sector is growing, but barriers such as skills gaps and limited access to training exclude frontline communities.
- Without equitable workforce development, the clean energy transition may deepen economic disparities.
- Existing inequities in job access must be addressed to ensure all communities benefit from emerging green industries.



## Community Health and Emergency Preparedness

- Climate change is intensifying extreme weather events and disproportionately affecting frontline communities.
- Rising temperatures, wildfire smoke, and flooding pose severe health risks, especially for communities with existing health disparities.
- Lack of equitable access to emergency preparedness information and resources increases risks for groups that have been marginalized.



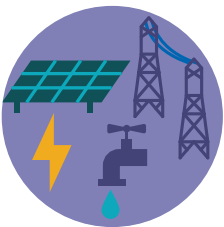
## Food Systems and Food Security

- Climate change is affecting food security and putting pressures on global and local food systems.<sup>15</sup>
- In South King County, nearly twice as many people already face food insecurity compared to the state average; this percentage is even higher in frontline communities.<sup>16</sup>
- Climate change impacts will only worsen disparities unless there are equitable, innovative solutions that balance the needs of farming with goals to restore and protect healthy ecosystems.



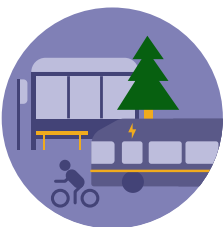
## Housing Security and Anti-Displacement

- Climate change and gentrification-driven displacement are forcing residents with low incomes further from economic opportunities and transit.
- “Bluelining,”<sup>17</sup> is an emerging practice where financial institutions raise costs in areas at high environmental risk. These areas often overlap with the same patterns of disinvestment established by redlining and further threaten housing affordability for frontline communities living in these areas.
- A growing affordability crisis is making climate-adaptive housing solutions inaccessible to frontline communities.



## Energy Justice and Utilities Affordability

- A 2024 King County utility renter affordability survey found renters are already making difficult trade-offs to pay their energy bills.<sup>18</sup>
- Climate impacts can increase utility cost burdens for all County residents, worsening a growing affordability crisis.<sup>19</sup>
- Frontline communities require reduced utility costs and affordable and accessible options for participating in an energy transition.



## Transportation Access and Equity

- Reliable and affordable transit is critical to reducing climate vulnerability.
- Housing costs are pushing frontline communities further from transit hubs, increasing transportation costs.
- Public transit remains inaccessible for many, limiting economic mobility and contributing to greater emissions where driving is the most accessible form of transportation.

# STRATEGIES & TOOLS

Recognizing frontline communities' leadership and expertise is not just about addressing inequities, it is also about harnessing the power of community-driven solutions. Historically, government-led climate responses have not fully accounted for the lived experiences and priorities of these communities, leading to solutions that do not effectively address their needs. Many frontline communities have deep-rooted traditions of environmental stewardship, sustainable living, and mutual aid networks. Despite holding invaluable knowledge about climate resilience, frontline communities have not historically been granted the resources and platforms necessary to take bold action or shape policy decisions.

## Foundations of the SRFC Framework for Action:

To address this, 22 frontline community leaders partnered with King County to develop the first community-driven climate justice framework for the 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP). The Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities (SRFC) framework, originally introduced in the 2020 SCAP, has evolved through deep partnerships with the Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF) and the Climate Equity Work Group. These working groups have helped refine the County's approach to climate resilience by identifying priority areas: community leadership, capacity building, economic opportunity, climate health equity, food access and security, housing and anti-displacement, energy justice and utilities, and transportation access and equity.

## Key Strategies of the SRFC Framework:

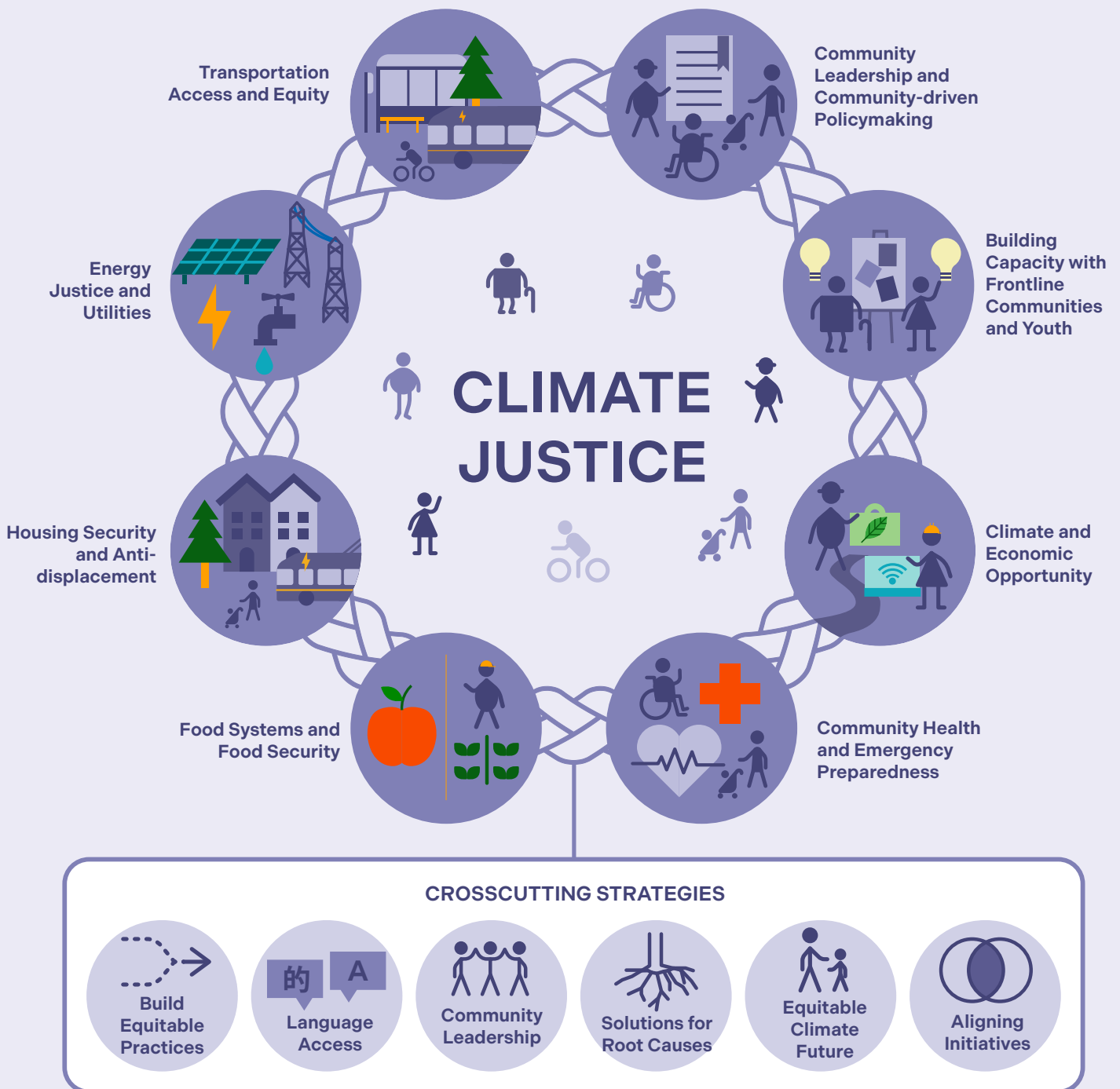
The SRFC framework uses the following six cross-cutting strategies across eight Focus Areas to advance climate and equity in frontline communities:

- 1. Build equitable practices:** Build King County and community capacity to prioritize climate equity.
- 2. Language access:** Prioritize collaborative language access in partnership with trusted community partners.
- 3. Community leadership:** Advance frontline community leadership by investing in long-term community and tribal partnerships, community capacity development, and improved infrastructure for community-driven policy and decision-making.
- 4. Solutions for root causes:** Address root causes of climate vulnerability by prioritizing comprehensive solutions co-developed with frontline communities that reduce systemic inequities and have co-benefits.
- 5. Equitable climate future:** Advance an equitable climate future by investing in climate solutions and opportunities with and for frontline communities.
- 6. Align initiatives:** Align with and elevate actions in related County programs that support frontline communities and climate resilience.

The actions in the following section integrates input from the CECTF and the Climate Equity Work Group, ensuring that frontline communities' priorities remain embedded in County climate policies and programs.



Figure 17. Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities Framework



## County Policies and Strategic Plans

As a regional government, King County has a unique role in shaping climate resilience through land use planning, transportation investments, public health initiatives, and funding allocations. By embedding climate equity into its policies and programs, the County can address systemic inequities, reduce climate risks, and expand opportunities for frontline communities. Through its regulatory authority and partnerships, King County is committed to ensuring that climate solutions are inclusive and community-driven. The following policies and strategic plans provide a framework for integrating climate resilience and equity across different sectors:

- **[Equity and Social Justice \(ESJ\) Strategic Plan \(2016\)](#)**. Embeds equity in climate policies and funding.
- **[King County Comprehensive Plan \(2024\)](#)**. Integrates climate resilience and equity into countywide planning.
- **[Metro Strategic Plan \(2021\)](#)**. Enhances transit access in underserved areas.
- **[Public Health – Seattle & King County \(PHSKC\) Strategic Plan \(2024\)](#)**. Addresses climate-related health disparities.

## Programs and Initiatives

In addition to policy and planning efforts, King County invests in programs and initiatives that directly support frontline communities in building climate resilience. These efforts focus on increasing community leadership, expanding economic opportunities, improving public health outcomes, and ensuring equitable access to climate solutions. Through partnerships, funding opportunities, and workforce development, the County is working to remove systemic barriers and create pathways for frontline communities to thrive in the face of climate change. The following programs and initiatives play a critical role in advancing these goals:

- **Climate and Health Dashboard** – Tracks climate-related health disparities.
- **Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF)** – Ensures frontline communities have a voice in County climate planning.
- **Community Climate Resilience Grant Program** – Funds community-led climate initiatives.
- **Energize Heat Pump Program** – Expands access to energy-efficient technology for low-income households.
- **King County JumpStart** – Provides clean energy workforce training for frontline communities.
- **NextGen Internship Program** – Creates career pathways in climate policy and planning.
- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Metrics** – Ensures new transit investments prioritize frontline communities.

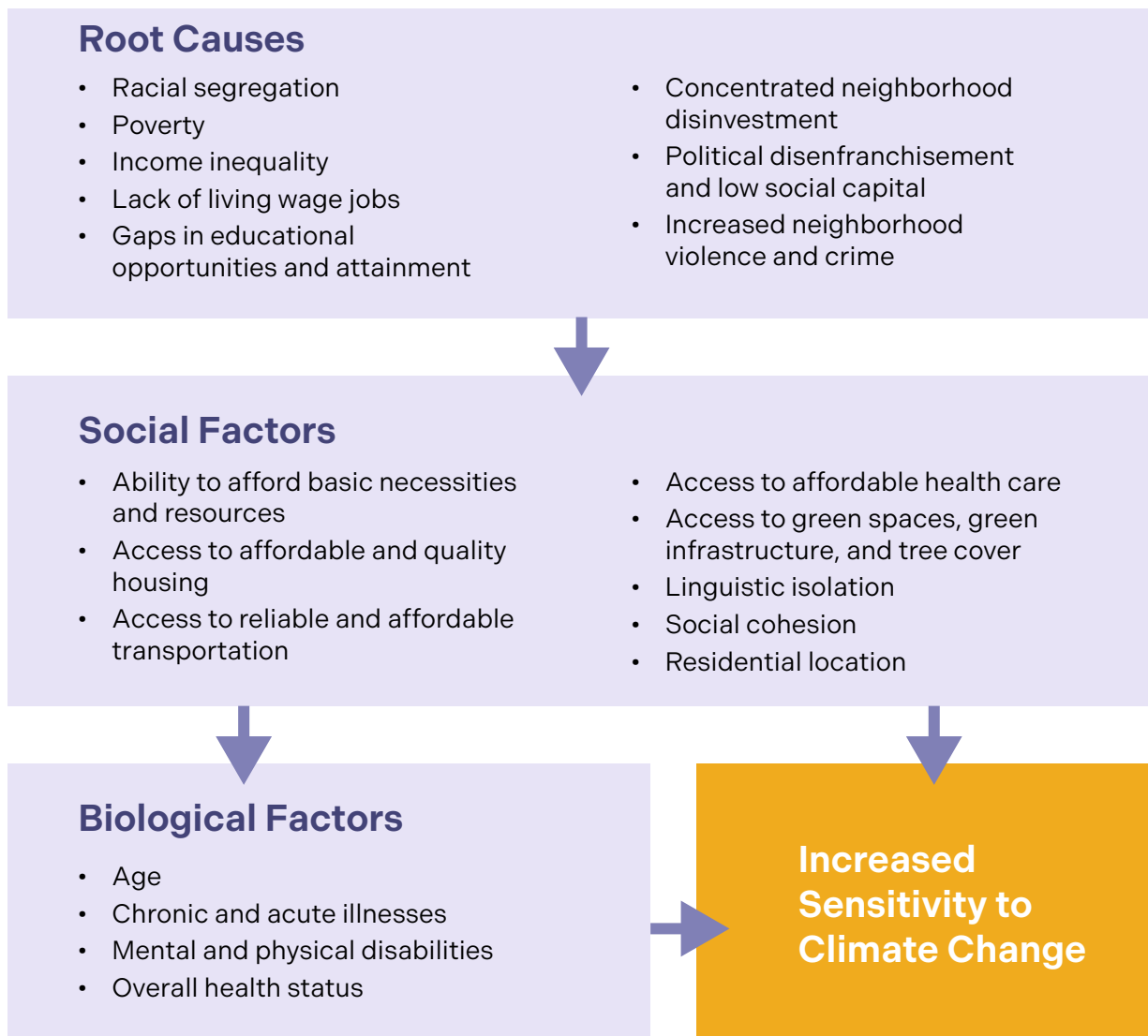
# SUMMARY

King County is committed to integrating frontline community leadership into climate action, ensuring policies are driven by those most affected. Supporting and investing in these communities ensures that climate action is both just and effective, fostering resilience that benefits the entire region. The following pages will describe how the County plans to work with frontline communities over the next five years to:

- **Deepen community partnerships** through expanded leadership pathways and policy development;
- **Enhance climate resilience** with improved housing protections, emergency preparedness, and climate health monitoring;
- **Scale up investments** in clean energy workforce development and green job training; and
- **Expand transit accessibility** to ensure displaced communities remain connected to economic opportunities.

## Figure 18. Sensitivity to Climate Change

This diagram illustrates root causes and factors affecting sensitivity to climate change.



Source: Adapted from “Root Causes and Factors Affecting Sensitivity to Climate Change” in Urban Sustainability Directors Network Guide to Equitable, Community-Driven Climate Preparedness Planning (2017)



# COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN POLICYMAKING

The burdens and benefits of climate change will affect King County's current and future residents, communities, and businesses in different ways. Frontline communities are often hit first and worst by climate change impacts. This unique position generates critical expertise around the challenges posed to their communities and enables innovative solutions to manage daily impacts.<sup>20</sup>

Figure 19 shows the "Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership,"<sup>21</sup> a tool developed by Rosa Gonzalez to help elected officials, government staff, and community-based organizations work together. It describes the different stages of working together, as well as some of the common costs and benefits that

might be applied to policy development.

Traditionally, many local government approaches to community engagement have taken the forms of "inform" or "consult" (columns two and three) on the Spectrum of Community Engagement. The limitations of these approaches can uphold a wide variety of barriers, from financial to institutional, that limit both community access to decision-making tables and the implementation of bold solutions that address the root causes affecting sensitivity to climate change.

By investing in climate solutions and opportunities in partnership with and for frontline communities, King County can advance a more equitable and just climate future for all.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

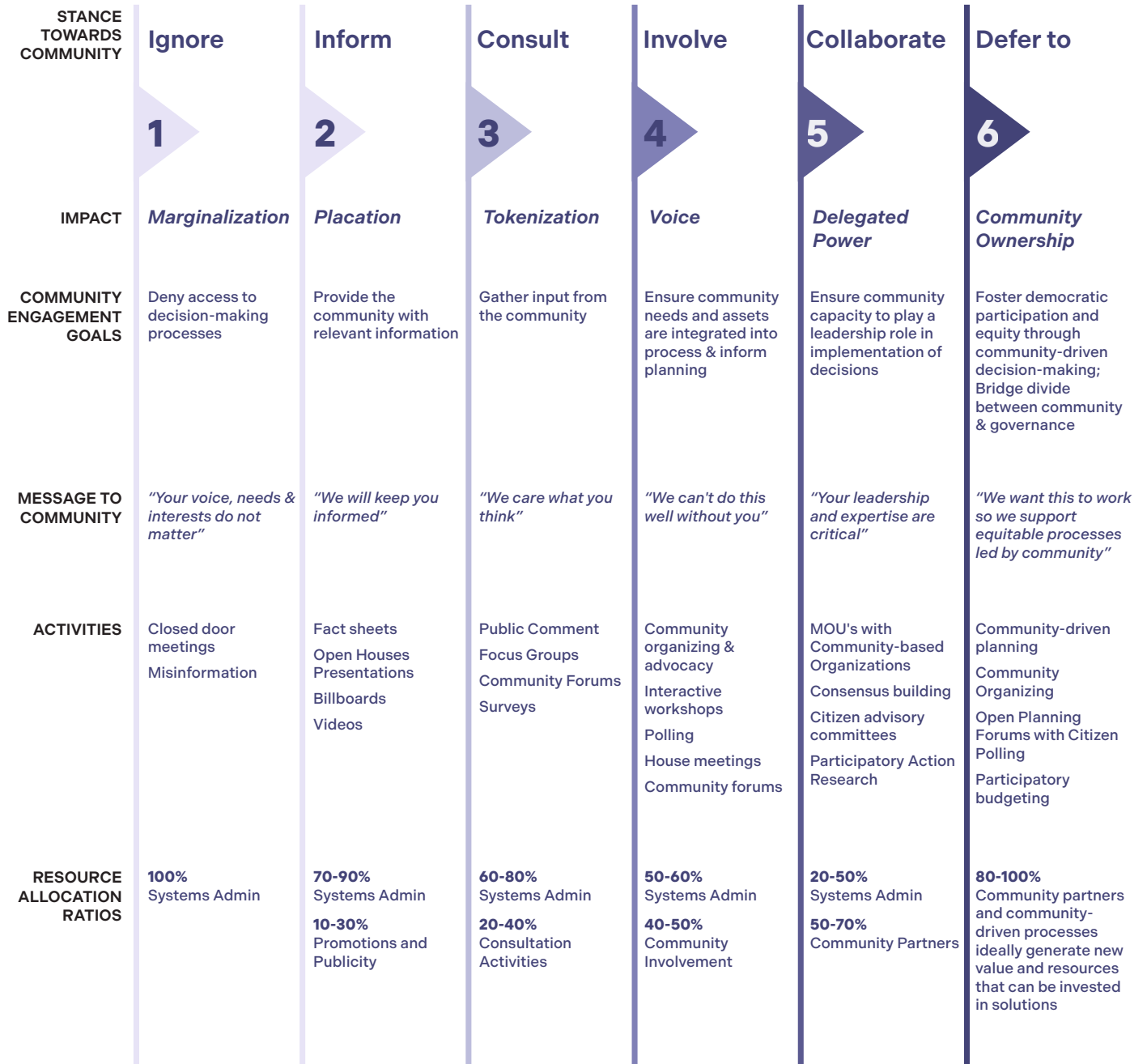
Climate impacts to the region can have adverse impacts to human health, weather, flooding, and to economic stability for the region.<sup>22</sup> At an individual level, this can translate to the disruption of pathways to gainful employment, poor health outcomes, and to barriers to food access, housing affordability, energy justice and utilities, and accessible transportation. For frontline communities, these impacts are intersectional and deepen overlapping disparities.

Effective action addresses climate change and social inequities simultaneously by understanding it is a threat multiplier to a host of social issues.

## A BETTER OUTCOME

By investing in community-driven planning processes and partnerships, King County can take innovative and equitable action aligned with the priorities and expertise frontline communities offer. Recent initiatives related to climate have started the complex and rewarding work of centering the communities bearing the brunt of a changing planet.

**Figure 19. The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership**



Source: Adapted from "The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership" developed by Facilitating Power and Movement Strategy Center (2019)

## WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET HERE

- Funded an ongoing Climate Equity Community Task Force, a community working group of frontline community leaders collaborating with the County on climate initiatives, funding decisions, and policymaking.
- Piloted an annual Community Climate Resilience Grant program designed to support community-driven climate action advancing local priorities.
- Established community working groups advising on open space, equitable development, the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update, and the 2025 SCAP.
- Launched and expanded a NextGen Internship program focused on creating career pathways to climate policy, planning, and program development.

## WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

King County will partner with frontline community leaders, cultivate pathways for emerging leaders, and resource community-led climate initiatives through the following actions:

- **SRFC 1.** Partner with the Climate Equity Community Task Force
- **SRFC 2.** Develop leadership pathways for frontline communities
- **SRFC 3.** Standardize community compensation
- **SRFC 4.** Support community-led initiatives through Community Climate Resilience grants



# SRFC 1. PARTNER WITH THE CLIMATE EQUITY COMMUNITY TASK FORCE

Local government recognizes the leadership, knowledge, and experience of frontline community members and their ability to strengthen the effectiveness of climate solutions. To this end, King County will maintain a funded partnership with the Climate Equity Community Task Force (CECTF) as a community working group partnering on and guiding equitable decision-making on climate change. The CECTF will continue to provide guidance for ongoing community-driven policy development processes and actions, support connection to frontline communities, and maintain the institutional knowledge of the development of King County’s Sustainable and Resilient Frontline Communities—the County’s first climate justice framework.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DNRP-DO; Metro-GM; Metro-Mobility; PHSKC-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Community-based organizations and climate justice leaders, i.e., Chinese Information Service Center; Mother Africa; Living Well Kent; UTOPIA WA; Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association; etc.

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

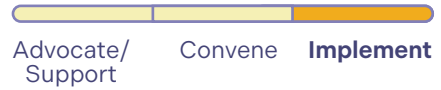
Accessibility; accountability; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement; relationship building

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





## SRFC 2. DEVELOP LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS FOR FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES

Frontline communities most impacted by climate change are also significantly underrepresented in formal planning and decision-making roles related to climate. To counter this “green ceiling”<sup>23</sup> King County will establish partnerships with existing leadership pathways programs for CBOs and community leaders to provide viable pathways to co-design municipal, county, and state climate policies, plans, communications, and data collection and survey methods. Programs would center community-driven and cultural knowledge that informs alternative models of leadership and planning. Graduates would be connected to boards, commissions, regulatory tables, cabinets, and job opportunities focused on environmental and climate solutions.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

PHSKC-DO; Communities of Opportunity

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Community-based organizations serving King County frontline communities

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

### EARLY ACTION

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:







# SRFC 3. STANDARDIZE COMMUNITY COMPENSATION

Traditional boards, commissions, and community working groups established by local government often carry structural barriers to participation for frontline community members where time, material resources, and access to accurate and culturally relevant climate education may be limited. King County will develop a standardized community compensation process that is equitable and timely for engagement on King County community working groups, advisory groups, etc., where climate action is a focus area. Compensation recognizes the disparate impacts of historical and current inequities in frontline community members’ ability to engage with local government proactively and to influence decision-making across long-term planning, policymaking, and programmatic processes. This action ensures County initiatives are racially just, equitable, and informed by the perspectives of the communities carrying a high and disparate risk of climate impacts.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO; OERSJ

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DCHS-DO; DNRP-DO; Metro-GM; Metro-Mobility; PHSKC-DO; PSB-Budget

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Climate Equity Community Task Force

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

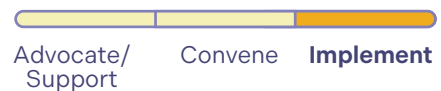
Capacity building; engagement; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County ESJ Strategic Plan; OESJ Community Compensation Project

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 4. SUPPORT COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES THROUGH COMMUNITY CLIMATE RESILIENCE GRANTS

Supporting and investing in frontline community organizations to build their capacity to address climate impacts is necessary to implement holistic, community-centered approaches. King County will establish a community co-created and sustainable community climate resilience grant program awarding multi-year grants. The program will lower barriers to access through equitable grantmaking, providing technical support, providing funding pathways for small minority-owned businesses, contractors, and community-based nonprofit organizations. Applicants and grantees will receive appropriate levels of support to complete applications, and if awarded, receive support to successfully execute activities and fulfill reporting requirements. This will support frontline community's ability to lead and organize effective action on climate change.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

PHSKC-DO; Communities of Opportunity

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Climate Equity Community Task Force; Open Space Equity Cabinet; Metro Mobility Equity Cabinet

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

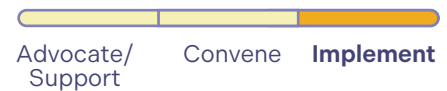
Accessibility; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; reduce disproportionate impacts; relationship building; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





Celeste White Wolf teaches ivy weaving at a community event hosted by yəhaw' Indigenous Creatives Collective with the support of the King County Community Climate Resilience Grant. Image source: yəhaw' Indigenous Creatives Collective



# BUILDING CAPACITY WITH FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES AND YOUTH

Combatting climate change requires an integrated, regional response that expands the shared vision and leadership of the region's public, private, and civic sectors, and the participation of all King County community members. Building on work in the 2020 SCAP, King County has continued growing effective partnerships for joint action on climate change.

As communities continue to feel the impacts at an accelerated pace, local government must continue to deepen engagement and capacity building with governmental staff and with frontline community members and youth. Increasing understanding of

how historical and current inequities can result in patterns of unfair outcomes, how climate change worsens these conditions, and what government and the public can do to increase community resilience requires focused effort.

By continuing to drive climate and equity education and engagement, King County can create connections across departments and communities for broader, integrated support and engagement on climate action.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

County staff cannot anticipate all the barriers frontline communities face in community engagement processes. These communities disproportionately bear the burdens of redlining, historical marginalization, environmental injustice, and institutional racism. Adults and youth in these communities who see and feel the impacts of climate change most acutely are often unable to access the foundational knowledge of climate change, the impacts they should expect, and how they can engage.

At this moment in the region's readiness for action, access to accurate, science-based, and in-language climate education that also provides historical context for current conditions is critical to cross-sector collaborations that do not leave any communities behind.

## A BETTER OUTCOME

Improving access to climate change education creates public support and builds political and social capital for equitable and comprehensive solutions. It also grows the number of government and community champions and future leaders who can continue to advance a cleaner future.

## WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET HERE

- Developed award-winning climate and health messaging with and for community through multi-language comics, fliers, web materials, and other public health programs.
- Grew leadership capacity in frontline communities by developing an annual Climate Justice Learning Series for the public, featuring local climate justice champions.
- Launched monthly Climate Action Talks for County staff highlighting climate work across a wide array of topics, including preparedness, vehicle electrification, green careers, and community-led action.

## WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

King County will continue building internal County staff capacity to embed climate equity and build frontline community capacity to drive just climate solutions through the following actions:

- **SRFC 5.** Provide Climate Justice training for King County employees and volunteers
- **SRFC 6.** Establish an interdepartmental Climate Equity Working Group
- **SRFC 7.** Partner with youth-serving organizations to build climate change literacy and civic engagement
- **SRFC 8.** Advance climate resilience in K-12 schools
- **SRFC 9.** Create relevant climate change communications and education outreach



# SRFC 5. PROVIDE CLIMATE JUSTICE TRAINING FOR KING COUNTY EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

County staff cannot anticipate all the barriers frontline communities face in community engagement processes and benefit from learning what communities need to mitigate these barriers. King County will develop climate impacts and environmental and climate justice training for County employees, boards, and commissions connected to climate, environment, sustainability, land use, and transportation topics. This training will provide staff and community advisory bodies with an understanding of disparate climate impacts, frontline community priorities, and examples of how to embed cross-cutting climate equity strategies into County initiatives. The goal is to prepare King County staff and community working groups with a shared framework for addressing and accounting for the disparate impacts of climate change.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO; DHR

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DCHS-DO; DNRP-DO; DLS-DO; Metro-ES; Metro-GM; Metro Mobility; OEM; PHSKC-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Climate Equity Community Task Force

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

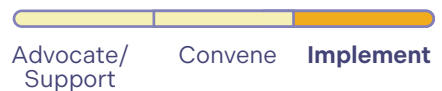
Accountability; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

### EARLY ACTION

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 6. ESTABLISH AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL CLIMATE EQUITY WORKING GROUP

Comprehensive and equitable climate solutions require integrated approaches and collaboration across County departments. King County will establish a County staff Climate Equity Working Group to focus on cross-cutting climate equity issues. This interdepartmental (IDT) working group will address issues related to climate and environmental justice and governance. IDT goals include collecting more specific data categories, coordinating on translation and interpretation guidelines, elevating community priorities and funding resources, advancing opportunities for energy and utility affordability, and other related topics. This group will identify needs across departments, develop goals and priorities, and strengthen alignment for addressing climate impacts on frontline communities.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DCHS-DO; DLS-DO; DNRP-DO; KCIA; Metro-GM; OEM; OERSJ; PHSKC-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Climate Equity Community Task Force; regional climate and environmental justice advocacy organizations

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

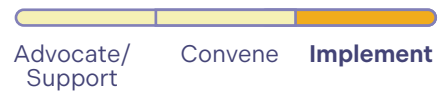
Accountability; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan; King County Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy; PHSKC 2024-2029 Strategic Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 7. PARTNER WITH YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS TO BUILD CLIMATE JUSTICE LITERACY AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Young people are inheriting the future shaped by the decisions currently being made in local government. King County will partner with youth-serving organizations within frontline communities to build youth’s climate change and climate justice literacy and civic education. Young people are likely to experience climate change more intensely and for a larger proportion of their adult lives than older generations. They are also likely to be more marginalized in spaces where decision-making on climate policy, investments, and action occurs. These partnerships will identify and grow pathways for youth to serve in leadership positions within government working and advisory groups.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

ECO

**PARTNER AGENCIES:**

Metro–Mobility; PHSKC–DO; DNRP–DO

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

School districts; youth-serving organizations

**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

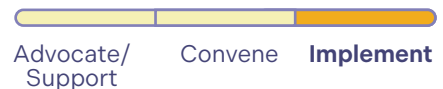
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

Metro Youth Equity Mobility Internship Program; ECO NextGen Internship Program; DNRP Youth Conservation Corps; DNRP Green Schools Program; ECO Climate Justice Learning Series; King County Comprehensive Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**



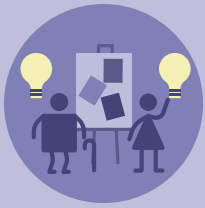
**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**







King County partners with Salmon Bay Elementary to plant native trees and shrubs at Big Finn Hill



# SRFC 8. ADVANCE CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN K-12 SCHOOLS

Public health evidence shows that the school environment can influence the physical health, cognitive function, mental well-being, and academic performance of students. These harmful impacts are often unfairly distributed across racial/ethnic groups and socio-economic status, with non-White students and those from low-income families bearing the burden. To improve the climate resilience of K-12 schools, King County will explore developing a local grant fund to assist overburdened schools with climate-related facility improvements. The County will research and prepare a fund development plan based on other models. If funding is secured, King County will administer the grants along with technical assistance. Additionally, the County will explore avenues and partnerships to increase climate health literacy among school educators, staff, and students, and student learning opportunities about green jobs. This action expands upon the current King County’s Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy’s Cool Schools Initiative.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

PHSKC-EHS

**PARTNER AGENCIES:**

ECO

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

King County schools; Puget Sound Education Service District; public and private funders

**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

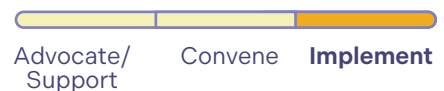
Alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; reduce disproportionate impacts; relationship building

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy; Washington Clean Buildings Performance Standards; Environmental Justice Assessment of Washington School Environmental Health and Safety Rule

**EARLY ACTION**

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**



**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**





# SRFC 9. CREATE RELEVANT CLIMATE CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS AND EDUCATION OUTREACH

Improving access to climate change information and focusing on climate change education drives broad support for climate action and builds pathways for community-supported decision-making. King County will partner with frontline community-based and youth-serving organizations, cultural groups, collectives, and faith-based organizations to co-design and implement culturally relevant communications and education outreach strategies. Strategies will be designed to inform the public about climate change and intersecting climate justice issue areas, including co-creating tailored materials with frontline communities that are culturally relevant and in accessible languages.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

PHSKC-DO; Language Access Program; DNRP-DO, Metro-GM

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Climate Equity Community Task Force; Public Health Community Navigators; Community Health Ambassadors

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

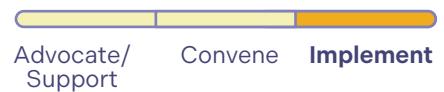
Accessibility; engagement; capacity building

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Plan

### EARLY ACTION

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# CLIMATE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

According to the 2024 United States Energy and Employment Report,<sup>24</sup> the clean energy sector created 149,000 new jobs in the U.S. in 2023, reflecting a three percent increase compared to a two percent growth for the overall economy. Job growth in Washington State is projected to rise by 12.8 percent through 2032,<sup>25</sup> indicating a promising future for the clean energy sector and the potential for significant economic growth.

In preparing for economic growth, King County recognizes the unique opportunity to collaborate with growing local industries over the next five years. King County's goal centers on ensuring that

residents from frontline communities impacted by climate change have access to economic opportunities through living-wage careers.

Specifically, King County has the opportunity and responsibility to leverage its platform and initiatives to accelerate clean energy deployment. This includes advancing skills training opportunities, business technical assistance, and workforce partnerships to help close the skills gap and prepare the local workforce for the clean energy transition as it unfolds.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Many local communities are missing out on the economic opportunities the clean energy transition presents. According to a Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council report, 28 percent of working-age households in Washington live below the self-sufficiency standard,<sup>26</sup> a measure of income adequacy based on the real cost of all basic needs, including taxes and savings for working families. If King County does not take action, low-income communities risk missing out on the economic benefits of the clean energy transition, similar to how many residents were left behind<sup>27</sup> during the tech boom in Seattle.

It is crucial to connect County residents to good-paying career opportunities. Failing to do so may reinforce the harmful notion that one must choose between advancing the clean energy transition and maintaining a strong economy. Missing this opportunity will make achieving the County's climate goals much harder.

## A BETTER OUTCOME

King County can be a region where the link between climate action and economic opportunity is clear and undeniable. In this vision, local businesses recognize the financial benefits of climate solutions, thanks to the incentives and resources that King County has made available to them. Additionally, this can be a community where cross-sector partnerships, programs, and outreach in frontline communities showcase a variety of career pathways for residents and young people interested in pursuing careers in the clean energy sector.

## WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET HERE

- Designed and launched a clean-energy-focused workforce development and business engagement program, [King County Jumpstart](#) to connect youth 18–24 with skills training and paid work-based learning with local clean energy contractors. 86 percent of youth served by JumpStart identify as Black or Latino, and 83 percent of participants successfully complete paid work-based learning with an employer.
- Developed the first countywide [Green Jobs Strategy](#) highlighted by third parties as a high-quality community, informed plan.<sup>28</sup>
- Completed an industry sector analysis through 2031 of local high-growth sectors such as construction, manufacturing, transportation, and professional services/tech.
- Led the creation of the [Coalition for Climate Careers](#), a public-private partnership and regional collaboration focused on promoting green job growth and quality skills training.
- Collaborated with County project managers and local contractors to require paid work-based learning for youth for County programs like Energize and [Equitable Wastewater Futures](#), developing a model for other capital projects across the County.
- Revised King County's [green building scorecard](#) to allow for more opportunities for project managers to advance economic opportunity through workforce development.
- Facilitated dozens of community events and job fairs, engaging hundreds in career exposure related to the green economy, including the [Green Jobs Green Futures Summit](#).

## WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

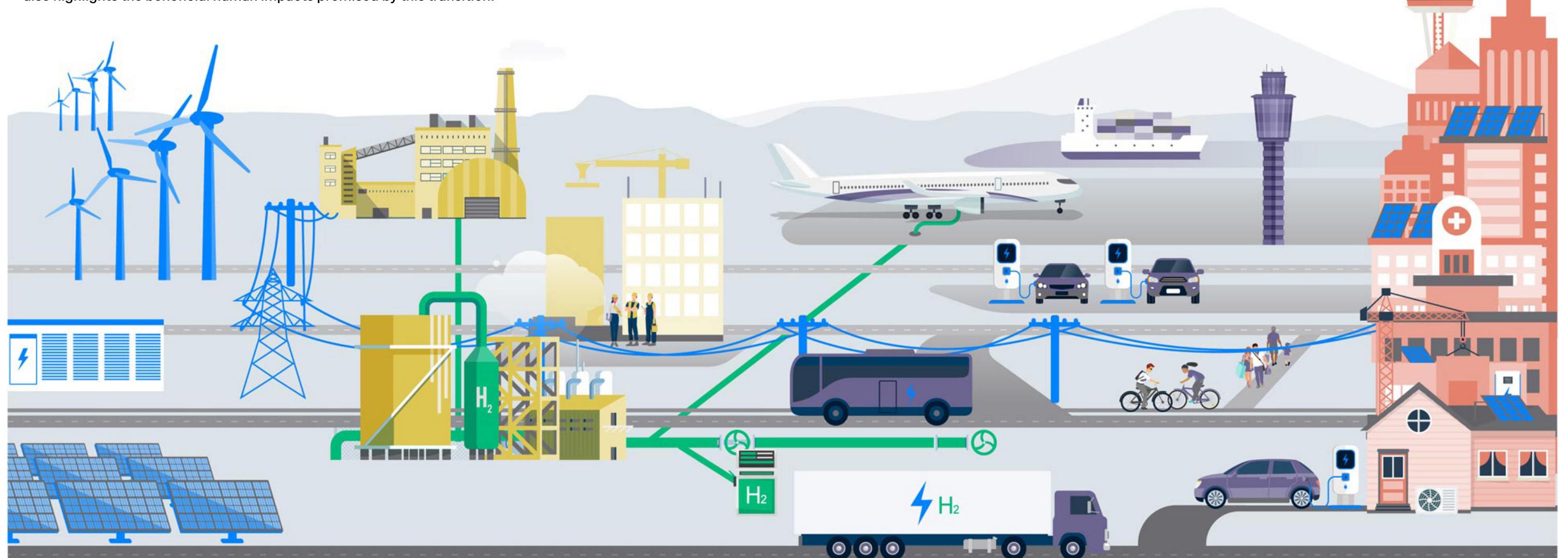
We will integrate climate-informed workforce development into capital projects, focus outreach campaigns and engagement, strengthen cross-sector and regional partnerships, and advance climate and workforce policies and programs through the following actions:

- **SRFC 10.** Integrate equitable, climate-informed workforce development into capital projects
- **SRFC 11.** Implement the King County Climate and Workforce Strategy
- **SRFC 12.** Communicate the economic benefit of the clean energy transition for local businesses and commercial property owners
- **SRFC 13.** Expand and scale youth and middle-worker campaigns
- **SRFC 14.** Establish cross-sector partnerships to expand climate-informed career pathways
- **SRFC 15.** Advance workforce and economic development in the clean energy economy through regional collaboration

King County's award-winning Operator-in-Training Program has produced a new generation of wastewater professionals.

## Figure 20. Clean Energy Economy

Washington can produce and use more clean electricity and fuels, while helping to cut emissions in the process. This graphic illustrates the technology and infrastructure elements in four key sectors – in electricity, industry, transportation, and buildings – and how they combine to transform the whole energy economy. The graphic also highlights the beneficial human impacts promised by this transition.



Size of bars based on current annual greenhouse gas emissions (million metric tons CO<sub>2</sub>e)

# HUMAN IMPACT



**110,000**  
New Clean Economy  
**JOBS**



**\$2 Billion**  
per year saved from  
AVOIDED DEATHS



**3,000**  
FEWER YEARLY  
**Asthma Attacks**



**\$18 Billion**  
Potential Federal  
Investment from IRA

This data came from the Net-Zero America project and the Energy Policy Simulator and may not align with other state-specific modelling. Additional information at: [rmi.org/state-graphics](http://rmi.org/state-graphics)

Source: Rocky Mountain Institute (2023)



# SRFC 10. INTEGRATE EQUITABLE, CLIMATE- INFORMED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INTO CAPITAL PROJECTS

King County can leverage its multi-billion-dollar capital project budget to create career and workforce development opportunities within frontline communities affected by climate change. County capital project managers have reported wanting more resources to connect workforce development to their capital projects. King County will create a resource guide and sample contract language library for Capital project managers. This guide will help project managers access and use available tools, including small contractor and suppliers utilization, job training, internships, and employment opportunities for people from disadvantaged areas in their projects. The goal is to ensure that County projects benefit a diverse range of people and businesses.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DES-FBOD, WTD-Capital Project Training Team, SWD-Green Building Team; OEOCE; FMD

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

[Tabor 100](#); [Workforce Development Council of Seattle King County](#); Coalition for Climate Careers (C3)

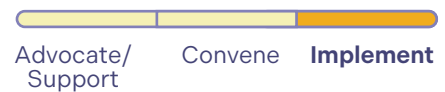
### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 11. IMPLEMENT THE KING COUNTY CLIMATE AND WORKFORCE STRATEGY

Comprehensive strategies are essential for advancing workforce development related to climate action. The King County Climate and Workforce Strategy provides a framework to engage key partners to create climate-connected, living-wage employment opportunities and build a skilled, diverse workforce. King County will collaborate across departments with local education and training providers, labor partners, employers, business owners, community-based organizations, and residents from frontline communities to implement the Climate and Workforce Strategy.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

Metro-GM, ES; DNRP-DO; DLS-DO; DES-DO; DHR; OEOCE

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Coalition for Climate Careers (C3); Workforce Development Council – Seattle & King County; Greater Seattle Partners; Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

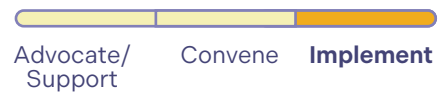
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; engagement; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan

**EARLY ACTION** 

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:







# SRFC 12. COMMUNICATE THE ECONOMIC BENEFIT OF THE CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION FOR LOCAL BUSINESSES AND COMMERCIAL PROPERTY OWNERS

Learning about resources related to the clean energy transition can be confusing and time-consuming for small business owners, which may lead to delays in their engagement. To address this, King County will develop a single platform to showcase County programs aimed at supporting local businesses and sharing positive updates about decarbonization. This will include creating a central webpage. King County will also collaborate with local business outreach organizations to enhance education and provide information on incentives for clean energy deployment. This initiative aims to help local businesses accelerate their progress in decarbonization and electrification.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DES-FBOD; DLS-DO; OEOCE

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

[Emerald Cities E-Contractor Training Network](#); [Breaking Barriers Collaborative](#); [Tabor 100](#); Seattle Metro Chamber of Commerce; Greater Seattle Partners

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County [DES 2024 Disparity Study Recommendations](#); King County ESJ Strategic Plan

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 13. EXPAND AND SCALE YOUTH AND MIDDLE-SKILLS WORKER CAMPAIGNS

King County has various programs and campaigns aimed at introducing youth to the green economy; however, there is a need for better coordination and promotion across these programs to increase and measure their impact. King County will collaborate with community partners to enhance and showcase specific ongoing initiatives within County departments, such as the Youth Conservation Corps, the Metro Youth Mobility Program, and the King County Green Schools Program. Through targeted community campaigns and events, the County aims to increase young people’s participation in career exposure opportunities in the clean energy sector, ensuring that the local workforce is prepared to meet future industry needs.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

ECO

**PARTNER AGENCIES:**

Metro–Mobility; DCHS–DO; DES–DO; DLS–DO; DNRP–DO; OEOCE; PHSKC–DO

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

Coalition for Climate Careers (C3); other local community partners invested in career and technical education and engagement

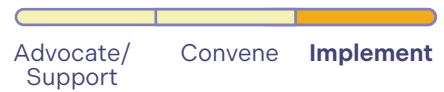
**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; share benefits

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**



**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**





# SRFC 14. ESTABLISH CROSS-SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND CLIMATE- INFORMED GREEN CAREER PATHWAYS

With over 16,000 employees across the region, King County is a large employer of choice that can design and promote high-quality green career pathways for recruitment and outreach. King County will create a dedicated “Green Jobs” category on its public-facing job board to highlight and promote already established green career pathway positions. This will include a user-friendly digital interface for easy access and navigation and job alerts to attract qualified candidates. Additionally, the County will expand its “application clinic” model to connect skilled job seekers with department recruiters, particularly those from local training and pre-apprenticeship programs. These actions will support and reinforce a climate informed lens to ongoing workforce development efforts across the County while reenforcing community-based connections between job seekers from frontline communities and King County departments seeking talent.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO; DHR

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

Metro-ES; DES-DO; DNRP-DO; DLS-DO; OEOCE

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Education and training providers across King County; Local Labor partners

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

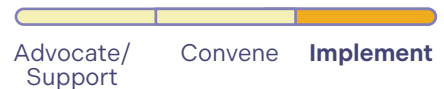
Accessibility, alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County Metro Green Jobs Pathways Implementation Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 15. ADVANCE WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY THROUGH REGIONAL COLLABORATION

King County recognizes that achieving its ambitious goals requires collaboration with the region and the private sector. To advance workforce development initiatives related to climate action, the County, as a founding member of the Coalition for Climate Careers (C3), will work with C3 to connect County departments interested in forming public-private partnerships for workforce development. This collaboration will assist County departments in identifying potential private and public sector partners, as well as funding sources for initiatives through C3 and its partner resource networks.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DCHS-DO; DES-DO; DNRP-DO; Metro-ES; OEOCE; PHSKC-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

[Coalition for Climate Careers \(C3\)](#); Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce; Greater Seattle Partners

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

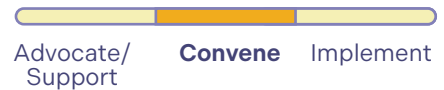
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement; economic opportunity and workforce development; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Plan

**EARLY ACTION** 

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





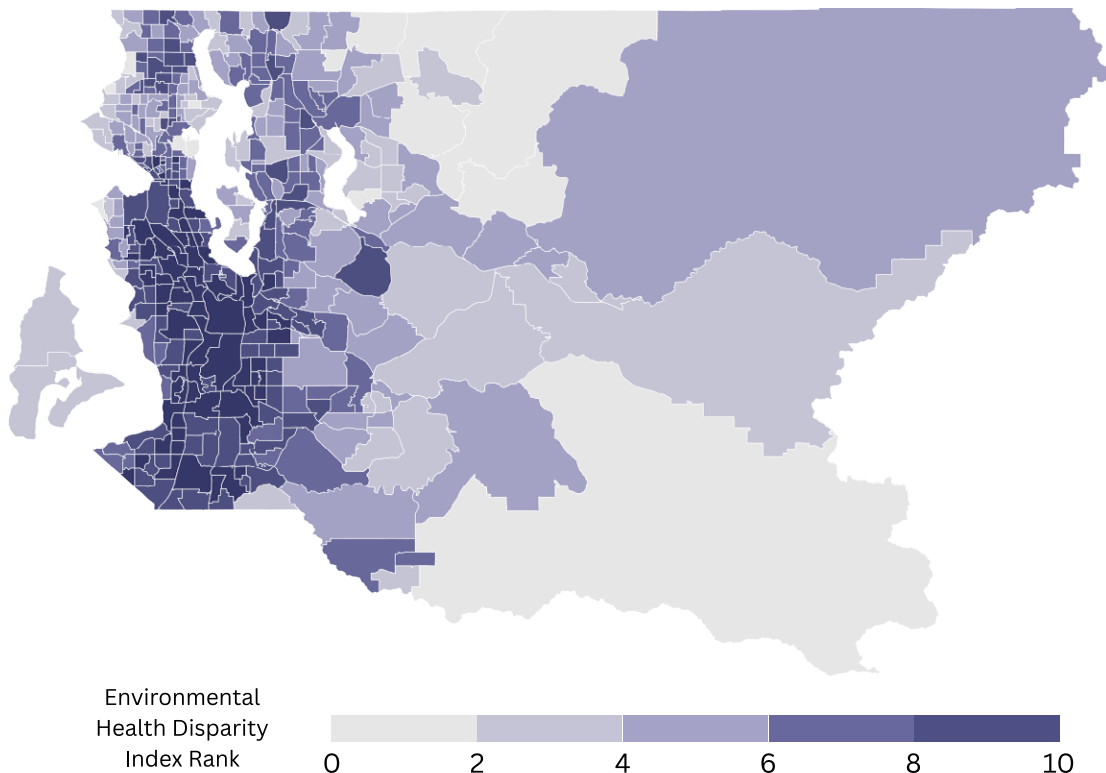
# COMMUNITY HEALTH AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

King County is home to approximately 2.3 million people, representing a diversity of communities who reside in urban, rural, shoreline, foothill, and mountain environments; and each with their own unique public health needs. As the County collectively transitions out of an intense, multi-year response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, challenges with racial inequities and environmental health disparities remain. Without dedicated action, climate change will worsen these disparities, with frontline communities facing the greatest impacts.

King County is dedicated to minimizing its impact on climate change by cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Although it cannot stop the effects of climate change that are already occurring, it can address the community health disparities that place some communities at greater risk than others, and work to prevent climate-related health impacts by promoting community health and emergency preparedness.

## Figure 21. Environmental Health Disparities Map

This map shows environmental health disparities across 19 different indicators. The higher the ranking, the more likely the communities living in the census tracts are vulnerable populations who are exposed to pollution and other toxics.



Source: WA DOH Environmental Health Disparities Map (2023)

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Climate change is already increasing the frequency, duration, and intensity of extreme heat and wildfire smoke events.<sup>29</sup> Extreme heat is already the deadliest weather event in the United States, and in June 2021 King County witnessed the impacts of extreme heat firsthand with record breaking temperatures. Since 2021, global temperatures have continued to increase with each subsequent year being recorded as the hottest year on record.<sup>30</sup>

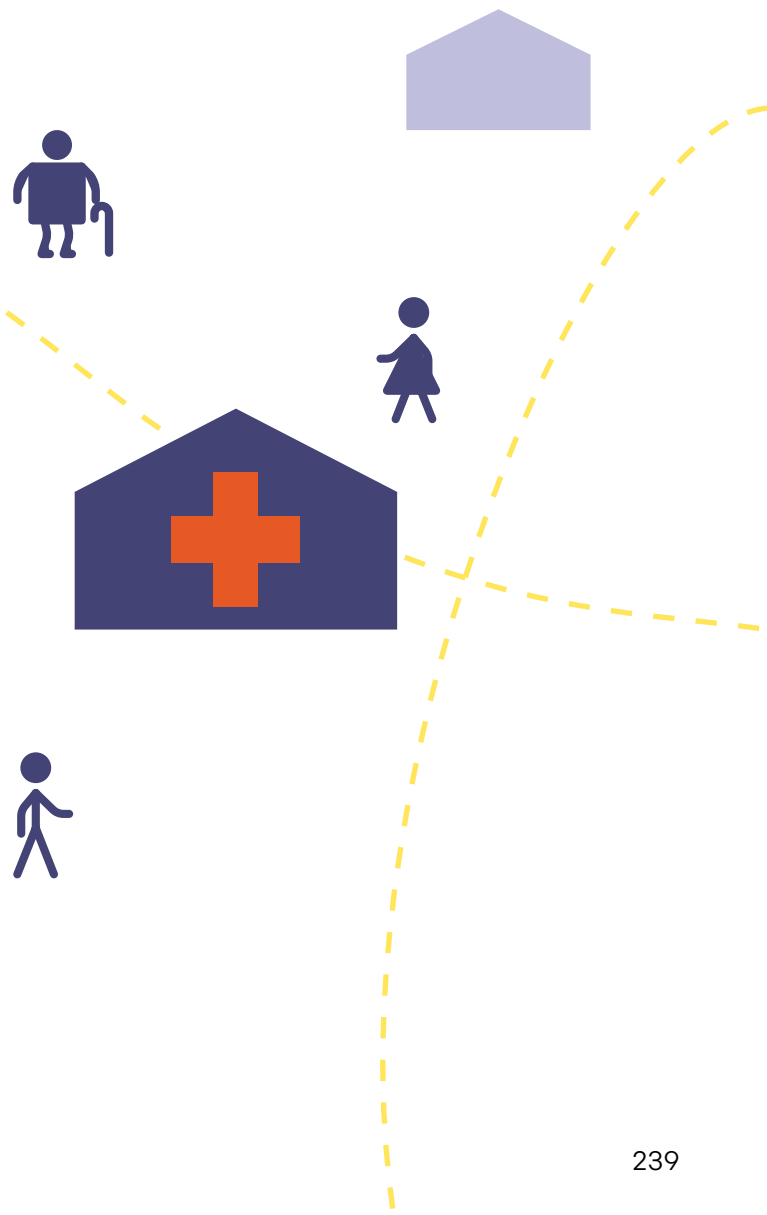
As temperatures continue to increase,<sup>31</sup> so does the risk of wildfires that can significantly impact air quality across hundreds of miles. In 2022, the Bolt Creak Fire in northeast King County burned 15,000 acres. It affected air quality throughout the County and caused Seattle to have some of the worst air quality in the world with the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency urging residents to shelter indoors.

Additionally, at the end of 2022 the effects of king tides coinciding with atmospheric low-pressure systems and heavy rainfall caused lowland flooding throughout areas of the County, submersing the South Park neighborhood in flood waters that displaced residents from their homes. These events provide a preview of the effects climate change is anticipated to have on low lying areas with more frequent and intense rainfall and sea-level inundation.

Without committed action to address existing community health disparities, these climate impacts will continue to disproportionately impact communities who have been historically marginalized and deepen existing health disparities.

## A BETTER OUTCOME

King County can be healthy and racially equitable; a place where all people have access to the necessary conditions, information, and resources to prepare for and adapt to the local impacts of climate change. The County is already making headway on these measures through items prescribed in the 2020 SCAP and through the recent adoption of the Public Health–Seattle & King County 2024–2029 Strategic Plan.



## WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET HERE

- Engaged in the co-creation of community educational resources regarding climate change and health hazards, increased access to emergency resources and warnings, and collaborated with community service providers to provide training to prepare communities for emergency events, such as wildfire smoke.
- Launched a climate and health dashboard<sup>32</sup> to provide real-time access to community health indicators to monitor and evaluate community health impacts resulting from climate change.
- Distributed thousands of do it yourself box fan filter kits and high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration units to King County residents, schools, childcare service providers, homeless service providers, and other small businesses.
- Developed emergency guidance and public health recommendations, including action thresholds, for responding during extreme heat and wildfire smoke events.
- Translated and disseminated key messaging to ethnic media outlets to increase the reach and distribution of climate preparedness messaging.

## WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

King County will advance frontline community emergency preparedness, improve climate health equity data access, and address the unique needs of unsheltered communities related to climate hazards through the following actions:

- **SRFC 16.** Find gaps, identify goals, and implement strategies that build frontline community resilience to climate hazards
- **SRFC 17.** Explore King County capacity to provide disaster assistance and recovery support to frontline communities
- **SRFC 18.** Co-create climate hazards and resilience training delivered by trusted community messengers
- **SRFC 19.** Deliver accessible data and evaluation resources
- **SRFC 20.** Address climate-related mental health impacts and related community needs
- **SRFC 21.** Assess and address where the greatest risks of climate impacts and toxics exposure intersect
- **SRFC 22.** Coordinate with communities during severe weather events to support people experiencing homelessness
- **SRFC 23.** Provide technical assistance and capacity building for community partners supporting people experiencing homelessness
- **SRFC 24.** Convene system partners in response to climate emergencies to support people experiencing homelessness



# SRFC 16. FIND GAPS, IDENTIFY GOALS, AND IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES THAT BUILD FRONTLINE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE HAZARDS

Across agencies, plans, and programs, King County is working to strengthen a regional response to climate hazards. Yet there are ongoing gaps that create barriers for frontline communities to necessary information and resources in real time. The County will partner with agency and community partners to identify persistent gaps and develop goals and implement strategies to address them. Actions may include developing social network mapping to show how groups across geographies are or are not interacting and where additional investments are needed for maximum impact. Investments could look like focused distribution of culturally relevant and in-language communications (see SRFC 9), training on how to respond to extreme weather events (see PREP 20 and PREP 21), emergency response coordination (see SRFC 18), and developing a better understanding of how and where resource hubs could benefit frontline communities.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DES-OEM; PHSKC-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Climate Equity Community Task Force; City of Seattle Office of Sustainability and the Environment; King County Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C); Support the Trusted Partners Network

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

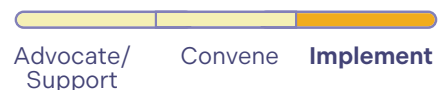
Alignment and partnership; capacity building; reduce disproportionate impacts

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy; King County Flood Control District Hazard Mitigation Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



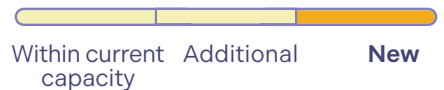
### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:







# SRFC 17. EXPLORE KING COUNTY CAPACITY TO PROVIDE DISASTER ASSISTANCE AND RECOVERY SUPPORT TO FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES

Frontline communities often experience disparate impacts from climate-driven hazards. Thresholds for authorized emergency response are high and hard to meet for smaller, localized shocks that can still harm and displace frontline communities. King County will explore models for integrating frontline communities into County-led emergency response operations and funding opportunities. These bodies of work would enable the County to deliver essential services and provide resource support to impacted communities that extend beyond the provision of routine County services. This work also includes assessing options to increase the County’s ability to offer recovery support through the provision of individual assistance to frontline communities disproportionately impacted by climate driven hazards for incidents that do not reach thresholds for traditional disaster declarations that enable state or federal reimbursement.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DCHS-DO; DES-OEM, DNRP-DO; Language Access; PHSKC-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Municipal emergency management agencies; municipal fire departments; community-based organizations serving frontline communities

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

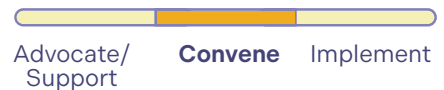
Accessibility; capacity building; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Emergency; King County Management Plan and applicable ESF annexes; King County Flood Management Plan; King County Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan

### EARLY ACTION

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 18. CO-CREATE COMMUNITY CLIMATE HAZARDS AND RESILIENCE TRAINING

Residents in communities who face health disparities benefit greatly from culturally relevant access to information about health risks related to climate change. They also benefit from knowing how to take action to protect the health of their families and their communities. To equip communities to proactively prepare for climate change impacts, King County will partner with community navigators and other community partners to co-create culturally relevant, accessible, and actionable community educational materials with trusted community messengers. They will also develop a community-oriented train-the-trainer curriculum to be offered to community service providers and interested members of the public on climate hazards and how to reduce health risks, prevent adverse impacts, and raise public awareness regarding available public and private sector support services. Climate impacts included in these trainings will include wildfire smoke, extreme heat, severe winter weather, windstorms, extreme precipitation, and flooding. (See Prep 20)

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO; PHSKC-EHS

### EXTERNAL AGENCIES:

DCHS-HCD; DES-OEM; DNRP-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

KCRHA; PHSKC Community Health Navigators; PHSKC Preparedness Community Advisory Board; Climate Equity Community Task Force

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

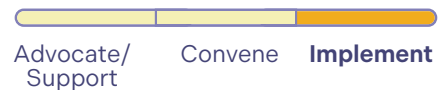
Alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

PHSKC 2024-2029 Strategic Plan; King County; Extreme Heat Mitigation Plan; King County Comprehensive Plan; King County Flood Control District Hazard Mitigation Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 19. DELIVER ACCESSIBLE HEALTH DATA AND EVALUATION RESOURCES

Climate and health data are essential for educating the community about the risks of climate change to health and what communities can do to protect their wellbeing. This information will support local health equity and environmental justice work. Data platforms through PHSKC’s Community Health Indicators and Communities Count will provide supports such as hosting data, indicators, interpretative narrative, conducting local data resource roadshows and presentations, and data storytelling. This work builds on efforts to decolonize climate data by empowering communities to engage in the process of informing, identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing climate and health indicators. Connecting communities to access and use of data that are useful for examining populations of interest and understanding existing inequities and how they will be impacted by climate events.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

PHSKC-EHS, HSci

**PARTNER AGENCIES:**

ECO

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

PHSKC Community Health Navigators; Climate Equity Community Task Force

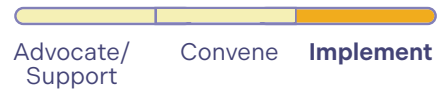
**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

Accessibility; accountability; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement; reduce disproportionate impacts; relationship building; share benefits

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

PHSKC 2024-2029 Strategic Plan

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**



**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**





# SRFC 20. ADDRESS CLIMATE-RELATED MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS AND RELATED COMMUNITY NEEDS

Climate change can have immediate and long-term impacts on mental health that can vary in severity across populations, levels of exposure, and demographics. King County and its partners will embed youth and community voices about climate change impacts on mental/behavioral health into existing and emerging interventions, programs, and policies. Through engagement, King County will align with community priorities to inform practice, policies, research, and training. King County will develop a youth-centered policy and program plan, convene partnerships on diverse workforce expansion, increase access to culturally responsive supports for youth and families, advance a communications plan, and support schools and other youth serving organizations in achieving these goals. These results can inform additional actions across agencies and community organizations.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

PHSKC-DO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DCHS-DO; DNRP-DO; ECO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Youth; mental health professionals; community-based organizations; King County Library and Seattle Public Libraries; hospitals; community health centers; schools; community and youth centers; park organizations (city and County); youth serving organizations; local universities and colleges; childcare facilities; local businesses

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

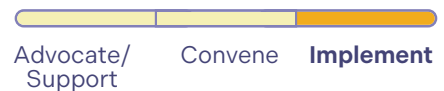
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; engagement; relationship building; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

PHSKC Strategic Plan (Youth Behavioral Health and Community Wellbeing Strategy; Climate Change Strategy); Youth Family and Prevention Strategic Plan; Best Starts for Kids, Youth action plan; Crisis Care Centers levy

**EARLY ACTION** 

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 21. ASSESS AND ADDRESS WHERE THE GREATEST RISKS OF CLIMATE IMPACTS AND TOXICS EXPOSURE INTERSECT

Climate impacts often intersect with exposure to toxics, such as chemical contaminants or particulate matter in the air during wildfire smoke events’ unintended chemical releases into home or waterways during flood events and leaching of contaminants into food or water stored in containers or bottles exposed to extreme heat. King County will assess these risks and develop interventions and policies to address the cumulative impacts worsened by combined exposure to climate and toxics. The results will uplift areas of focus and define gaps in funding, data, interventions, and policies. The County will highlight where climate impacts and toxics intersect and aim to make this information available to its communities to improve their resilience, starting with the communities with the greatest health and climate disparities. Outcomes will include improved trends and disparity mapping, improved prioritization, local approaches to address cumulative impacts, toolkits, communication materials, and interventions (before, during or after a climate event).

### LEAD AGENCIES:

PHSKC-EHS

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DNRP-SWD Hazardous Waste Management Program; ECO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Community Based Organizations; PHSKC Community Navigators

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

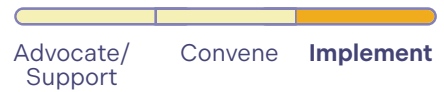
Alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Contaminants of Emerging Concern strategy (across KC agencies); PFAS strategy; 6PPD strategy; Clean Water Healthy Habitats Plan; State legislation (e.g., Safer Products for WA, HEAL Act, SEPA); State coordination (e.g. wildfire coordination group, heat mitigation group)

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 22. COORDINATE WITH COMMUNITIES DURING SEVERE WEATHER EVENTS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Community-based organizations are often the first responders during emergencies. Improved coordination with local government can greatly improve community preparedness overall. King County will work across agencies and with residents to develop and expand community engagement efforts to lead and inform emergency preparedness and severe weather response. This includes exploring strategies and/or opportunities for partnership to:

- Involve homeless service providers more directly in preparedness planning and coordination of emergency service delivery;
- Establish a regular forum that includes people with lived experience to provide feedback on climate preparedness and response, lead strategies to mitigate climate injustice, and ensure equitable distribution of severe weather supplies; and
- Create a communication infrastructure for information sharing between service providers, which can also be used during climate events to get real-time data on what agencies are operational, what resources are available or needed, and coordinate efforts to support people experiencing homelessness.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

PHSKC-CHS

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DES-OEM; Metro-GM

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

KCRHA; HCHN Governance Council and Community Advisory Group; Community based service providers, including outreach/field teams serving PEH, housing providers, etc.; Local jurisdictions; Washington State Health Care Authority; Department of Health; Harborview Northwest Regional Burn Model System; NWHCRN

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

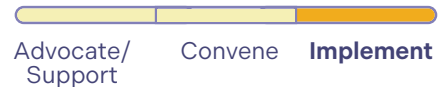
Accessibility; accountability; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

[Public Health Strategic Plan](#); [Public Health Extreme Weather Response Annex](#); [King County Environmental Health – resources for homeless service providers](#); [KCRHA 5-Year Plan](#); [KCRHA Severe Weather: Emergency Response Policy 2024](#); [National Health Care for the Homeless Council \(NHCHC\)](#) – published [resources](#) and [briefs](#) on disaster preparedness initiatives in other jurisdictions

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 23. PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS SUPPORTING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Community partners have firsthand knowledge of the unique and multi-faceted needs facing the populations they serve. King County will leverage community feedback and partnerships with key stakeholders to build knowledge and capacity in emergency preparedness and severe weather response. This includes exploring how to:

- Define emergency response thresholds during climate emergencies that are aligned to the needs of people experiencing homelessness and homeless service providers;
- Establish best practices for frequently occurring climate events such as heat, smoke, fire, cold, severe

winter weather, as well as less common events such as tornadoes, cyclones/high wind events, flooding, and climate-related civil unrest that incorporates feedback from people with lived experience of homelessness;

- Develop additional considerations and best practices for special populations, such as asylum seekers, people with language barriers, accessibility needs, older adults, behavioral health, disabilities, substance use disorder, etc.; and
- Lead regular homelessness specific training for service providers and volunteers based on established best practices.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

PHSKC-CHS

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DCHS-DO; DES-OEM; Metro-GM

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

KCRHA; HCHN Governance Council and Community Advisory Group; Community based service providers, including outreach/field teams serving PEH, housing providers, etc.; Advocacy organizations (ex. Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness – SKCCH, VOCAL-WA); Local jurisdictions; Washington State Health Care Authority; Department of Health; Harborview Northwest Regional Burn Model System; NWHCRN, National Weather Service (NWS)

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

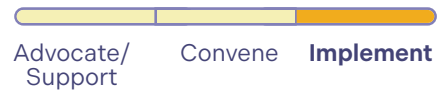
Accessibility; accountability; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement; relationship building

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

[Public Health Strategic Plan](#); Public Health Extreme Weather Response Annex; [King County Environmental Health – resources for homeless service providers](#); [KCRHA 5-Year Plan](#); [KCRHA Severe Weather: Emergency Response Policy 2024](#); [National Health Care for the Homeless Council \(NHCHC\)](#) – published [resources](#) and [briefs](#) on disaster preparedness initiatives in other jurisdictions

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 24. CONVENE SYSTEM PARTNERS IN RESPONSE TO CLIMATE EMERGENCIES TO SUPPORT PEOPLE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Agencies and community-based partners serving unsheltered populations carry specific roles, responsibilities, and knowledge that inform their approach to emergency preparedness and response. Identifying gaps in these approaches is critical to strengthening support for those most impacted. King County will serve as advisors to King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) and community partners to enhance knowledge of system limitations and explore opportunities to fill gaps in relation to emergency preparedness and severe weather response. This includes:

- Identifying strategies to strengthen safety net systems for people experiencing homelessness, including

transportation systems, basic survival needs, shelter options, etc., so systems are more resilient against disruption during severe weather incidents and other climate events;

- Exploring resources and opportunities to develop an interdisciplinary team providing environmental health and disease prevention consultation to homeless service sites and encampments; and
- Supporting development of supply distribution infrastructure and shelter options that meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness during severe weather events.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

PHSKC-CHS

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DCHS-DO; DES-OEM; Metro-GM

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

KCRHA; HCHN Governance Council and Community Advisory Group; Community based service providers, including outreach/field teams serving PEH, housing providers, etc.; Advocacy organizations (ex. Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness - SKCCH, VOCAL-WA); Local jurisdictions; Washington State Health Care Authority; Department of Health; Harborview Northwest Regional Burn Model System

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

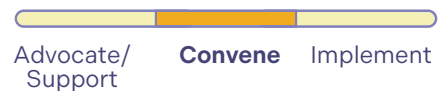
Accessibility; accountability; alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; engagement; relationship building

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

[Public Health Strategic Plan](#); Public Health Extreme Weather Response Annex; [King County Environmental Health – resources for homeless service providers](#); [KCRHA 5-Year Plan](#); [KCRHA Severe Weather: Emergency Response Policy 2024](#); [National Health Care for the Homeless Council \(NHCHC\)](#) – published [resources](#) and [briefs](#) on disaster preparedness initiatives in other jurisdictions

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



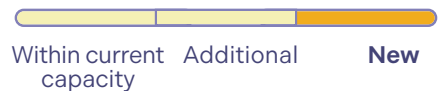
### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



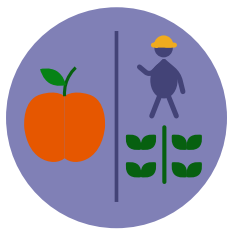
### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:







# FOOD SYSTEMS AND FOOD SECURITY

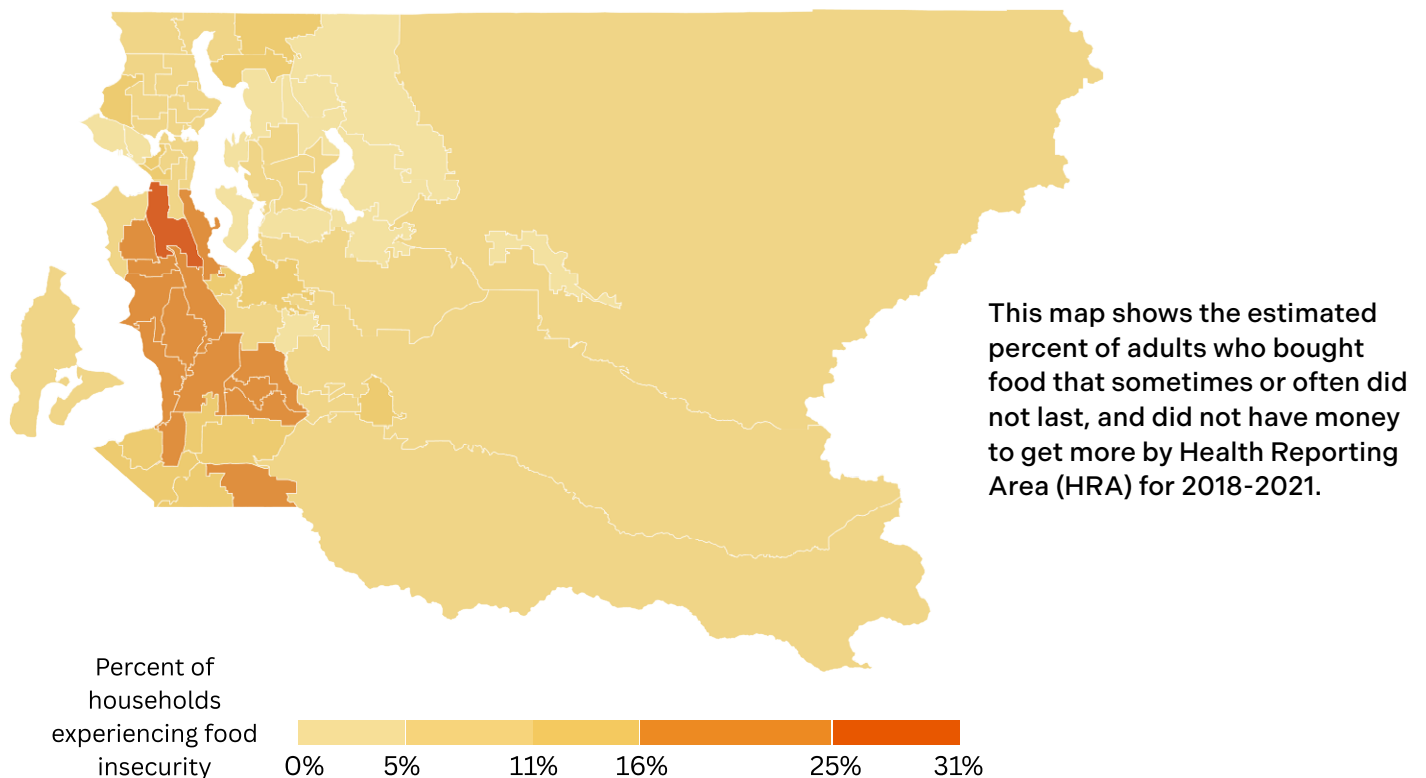
Globally, it is projected that climate change will impact agricultural systems with heavier rain, flooding, wildfires, and extreme temperatures becoming commonplace.<sup>33</sup> Those observed climate patterns are already affecting food security and putting additional pressures on the food system (production, transport, processing, packaging, storage, retail, consumption, loss, and waste<sup>34</sup>). Most of the food consumed in King County is grown and processed outside the region—making the region vulnerable to climate impacts and other disruptions across the globe.

Healthy ecosystems are the foundation of a climate-resilient food system in King County. Higher temperatures during the peak growing season will increase demand for already scarce

irrigation water and intensify competing priorities between balancing the needs of farming with goals to restore salmon, orca, and other species of concern. Salmon is a vulnerable species that is integral to ecosystems, economies, and to tribes. At the same time, multiple reports indicate that the number of people experiencing food insecurity is increasing.<sup>35</sup>

Innovative, local solutions can chart a path for bigger change by showcasing successes and lessons learned. King County is leading by example and can do more to protect the region's food system by focusing its efforts on ensuring food security for frontline communities, strengthening the regional food system, and supporting a just food economy that can address local impacts.

**Figure 22. Food Security by Health Reporting Area (HRA)**



Source: Public Health – Seattle & King County (2023)

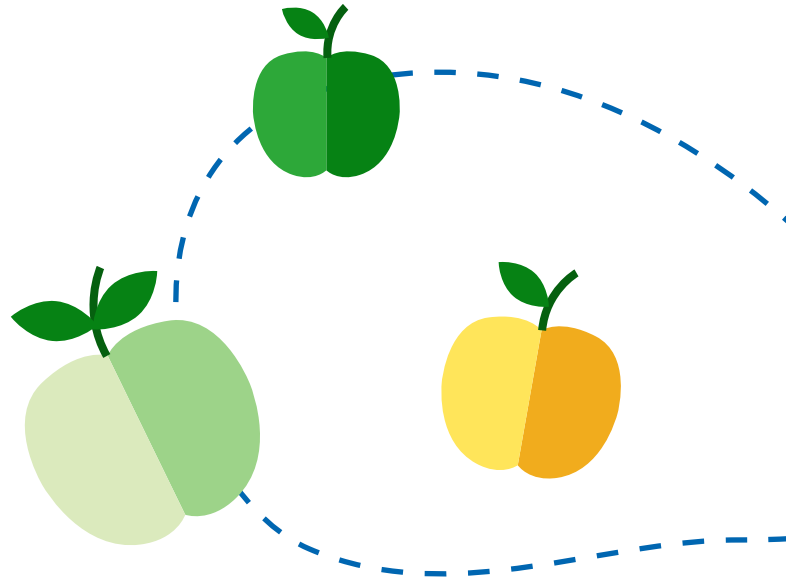
## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Approximately one out of nine households in Washington experience food insecurity. In South King County, nearly twice as many people face food insecurity compared to the state average. These disparities are seen even more among certain groups. People with lower incomes and less formal education experience food insecurity at twice the countywide rate. It is 50 percent to three times higher among communities of color and twice as high among individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, as well as those with fair to poor health.<sup>36, 37</sup> These disparities will grow as climate change worsens and threatens the region's food supply and security.

Climate change impacts will affect crop yields, available crop varieties, prices, and the nutritional value of food, putting already under-resourced populations at further risk of food insecurity and increased adverse health impacts. King County must make significant efforts to address these compounding issues.

## A BETTER OUTCOME

King County can take equitable steps to strengthen food systems and food security. These steps include investing in small farmers, increasing food rescue and food access, and integrating food system policy and goals as robust points of anchor.



A farmers market vendor helps a local shopper buy locally grown and harvested rainier cherries at the farmers market.

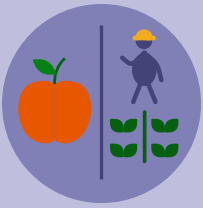
## WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET HERE

- Established and are currently implementing the King County Local Food Initiative (LFI) –the policy and strategy roadmap to grow the local food economy and make locally grown food accessible to all.
- Supported underrepresented and BIPOC farmers through the Farmland Access Program and by raising millions in grant funds to support farmland access, infrastructure development, technical assistance and market access.
- Partnered to support the opening of the South Seattle Community Food Hub.
- Provided technical support to partners and community for grant proposals to increase hunger relief organization capacity, train new and beginning farmers, support infrastructure development, and fund farm to food bank programming.
- Published a Food Insecurity in King County Report 2023 on the status of food insecurity and providing recommendations for hunger relief and supported enrollment in basic food benefits for food insecure residents.
- Reduced food waste equitably using programmatic and policy approaches.

## WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

King County will invest in farmer economic viability, strengthen food rescue coordination, increase food access, and integrate food system and policy goals through the following actions:

- **SRFC 25.** Scale up Farm to Food Bank Program
- **SRFC 26.** Support farm to food system infrastructure
- **SRFC 27.** Increase food rescue and recovery efforts
- **SRFC 28.** Expand and strengthen access to farmers markets in underserved areas and seek funding to bolster partner efforts that increase access to locally grown food
- **SRFC 29.** Subsidize nutritious foods from local farmers through 'Food is Medicine' program
- **SRFC 30.** Increase access to farmland by underserved communities and expand the availability of culturally relevant, locally grown food
- **SRFC 31.** Advance values-based food purchasing standards across the region



# SRFC 25. SCALE UP FARM TO FOOD BANK PROGRAM

Many food banks rely on processed foods for cost and shelf-stability, but local farmers often have surplus produce that don't meet retail standards of size or appearance. King County will connect small to mid-sized local farmers with food banks, senior centers, and other hunger relief organizations. This will increase access to healthy, local food and support local farmers. King County will advocate for and support partners in implementing and expanding the Farm to Food Bank Program by securing sustainable funding to increase farmer payments and provide necessary staff support. Backed by strong community, political, and organizational support, the program integrates food security with climate action, promoting a stable local food economy that is less vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions caused by climate change while ensuring equitable access to healthy food.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

LFI

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

PHSKC-HSci

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Harvest Against Hunger; farmers; hunger relief organizations

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

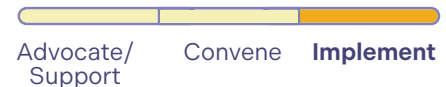
Accessibility; capacity building; reduce disproportionate impacts

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Local Food Initiative

### EARLY ACTION

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:

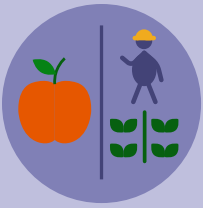


### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 26. SUPPORT FARM TO FOOD SYSTEM INFRASTRUCTURE

Institutional markets require large, consistent quantities of food delivered on a regular schedule, which require access to processing, cold storage, and distribution infrastructure to store and deliver products in bulk quantities. King County will continue to partner with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, regional food distributors, and other public agencies to develop and grow local food system infrastructure. One example of a partnership project is the South Seattle Community Food Hub. Partnerships such as this one will enhance the viability and productivity of the local food system. Opportunities for partnership include models such as food hubs, processing and distribution sites, refrigerated trucks, commercial kitchens, and storage facilities, all of which are essential to helping farmers access local markets, reduce costs, and increase profitability in a competitive agricultural landscape. This infrastructure is needed to support farmers in reaching markets, particularly institutional markets such as schools, health care facilities, and hunger relief organizations. Improving food system infrastructure supports local farmers and hunger relief organizations, reduces wasted food and GHG emissions, builds climate resiliency, and helps community members achieve food security with culturally relevant, sustainably grown food.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

LFI

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DNRP-SWD, WLRD; PHSKC-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

WSDA; Ecology; regional food distributors (Farmstand Local Foods, Puget Sound Food Hub); local hunger relief organizations (Food Lifeline, Hopelink, South King County Food Coalition, etc.); local farm organizations (VIVA, VIGA, IRC, etc.)

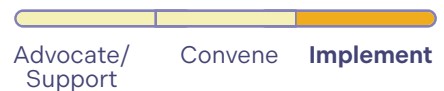
### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility alignment and partnership; capacity building; reduce disproportionate impacts; relationship building; share benefits

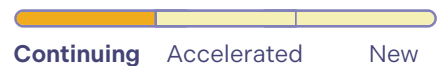
### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County Local Food Initiative; King County Re+ Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:

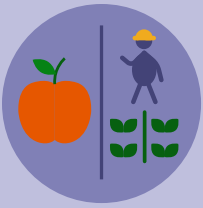


### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 27. INCREASE FOOD RESCUE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

Up to 30–40 percent<sup>38</sup> of food supply is currently wasted, with a significant portion of waste occurring at the production and retail levels. King County will increase food rescue from food producers and retailers by addressing the logistical difficulties, food safety concerns, and proper coordination between retailers, non-profits, and volunteers. King County will collaborate with local organizations by providing grants and supporting pilot projects that fund innovative solutions to enhance coordination between retailers, non-profits, and volunteers. Through these pilot initiatives, the County will test and refine strategies, collect data, and scale successful approaches to maximize food rescue efforts throughout the community.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

LFI

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DNRP–SWD, WLRD; PHSKC–DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Ecology; local grocery retailers (Safeway, QFC, etc.); local hunger relief organizations (Food Lifeline, Hopelink, South King County Food Coalition, etc.)

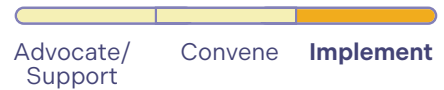
### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; reduce disproportionate impacts; relationship building; share benefits

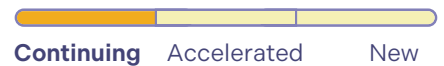
### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

Washington Organics Management Law; King County Local Food Initiative; King County Re+ Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:

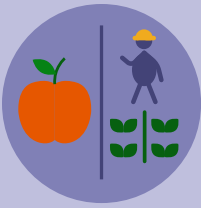


### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 28. EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN ACCESS TO FARMERS MARKETS IN UNDERSERVED AREAS AND SEEK FUNDING TO BOLSTER PARTNER EFFORTS THAT INCREASE ACCESS TO LOCALLY GROWN FOOD

Farmers markets bring fresh food directly to communities with limited access, provide a direct-to-consumer channel for local farmers and food entrepreneurs, and serve as community hubs. King County will invest in community-based organizations to strengthen and expand farmers markets, increasing food access in underserved areas, including south and unincorporated King County. This includes prioritizing initiatives that enhance economic opportunities for socially disadvantaged local farmers and improve access to food assistance programs like WIC and SNAP at farmers markets, support cold storage infrastructure, commercial kitchens, and places to get food ready for market. Investing in these markets will reduce food insecurity in low-income communities, increase access to healthy foods in King County food deserts, and be a vehicle for providing stable marketing outlets for growing number of immigrant, refugee, and BIPOC-owned farms.

King County will also seek funding for community-based organizations to enhance food access for communities disproportionately affected by climate change and food insecurity, ensuring equitable access to nutritious, local, and sustainably grown foods. This will support the local food economy, improve public health, and increase access to culturally relevant food.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

PHSKC-HSci

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DNRP-WLRD; LFI

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Community-Based Organizations; WDOH; WA Department of Social and Health Services; Washington State Farmers Market Association; Cities

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; accountability; alignment and partnership; engagement; reduce disproportionate impacts

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County Local Food Initiative; City of Seattle Food Action Plan; PHSKC 2024-2029 Strategic Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:

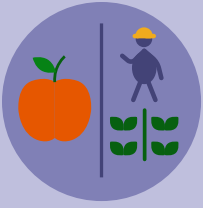


### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 29. SUBSIDIZE NUTRITIOUS FOODS FROM LOCAL FARMERS THROUGH ‘FOOD IS MEDICINE’ PROGRAM

Lack of access to healthy, nutritious, and locally grown food is often determined by having a lower income level, by living in food deserts, and by race.<sup>39</sup> King County will seek funding for ‘Food is Medicine’ programs that subsidize the purchase of nutritious foods from local farmers. This will improve access to nutritious, locally produced food and support the local food economy. By partnering with federally qualified health centers, this initiative will connect low-income individuals experiencing poor health with locally grown foods, thereby improving health and community resilience against climate-related challenges.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

PHSKC-HSci

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

LFI

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

City of Seattle; Federally Qualified Health Centers; WA Department of Health; Local Farmers

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County Local Food Initiative; City of Seattle Food Action Plan; PHSKC 2024–2029 Strategic Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



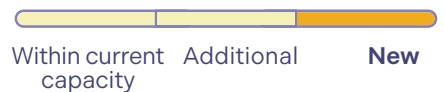
### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



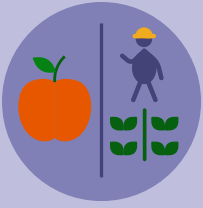
### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:







# SRFC 30. INCREASE ACCESS TO FARMLAND BY UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES AND EXPAND THE AVAILABILITY OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT, LOCALLY GROWN FOOD

King County has a rich diversity of BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities carrying a working and specialized knowledge of agricultural practices. Yet, access to farmland is a significant barrier for these farmers regardless of experience. King County will work with NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) to enhance its farmland leasing program. This initiative aims to support development of community-based farmland ownership and leasing models to better support farmers and organizations who have been historically underserved. This will provide opportunities to establish and build farm businesses while increasing availability of culturally relevant foods for local communities.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

DNRP-WLRD

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

LFI

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Community Based Organizations; King Conservation District; WA Department of Agriculture; Washington Farmland Trust; USDA (NRCS, FSA)

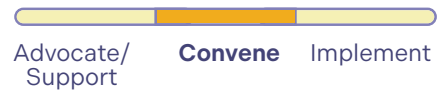
### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan; King County Local Food Initiative

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:

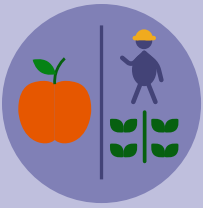


### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 31. ADVANCE VALUES-BASED FOOD PURCHASING STANDARDS ACROSS THE REGION

Purchasing standards can determine the sustainability of the region’s food systems and consumption patterns, ensuring that waste and carbon emissions are minimized, and that local and small businesses are supported. King County will partner with local farmers, community advocates, and the City of Seattle, to develop and support adoption of values-based food purchasing standards that, if adopted by government and institutional buyers across the region, would advance equity, climate, and sustainability goals. Large institutional purchasers such as hospitals and universities are found throughout the area. A coordinated approach to adopt and utilize these standards would maximize the meaningful impact.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

LFI

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

PHSKC-HSci; ECO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

City of Seattle; Universities and colleges; Health care institutions

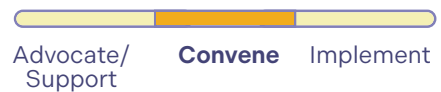
### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Local Food Initiative; City of Seattle Food Action Plan;  
King County ESJ Strategic Plan

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





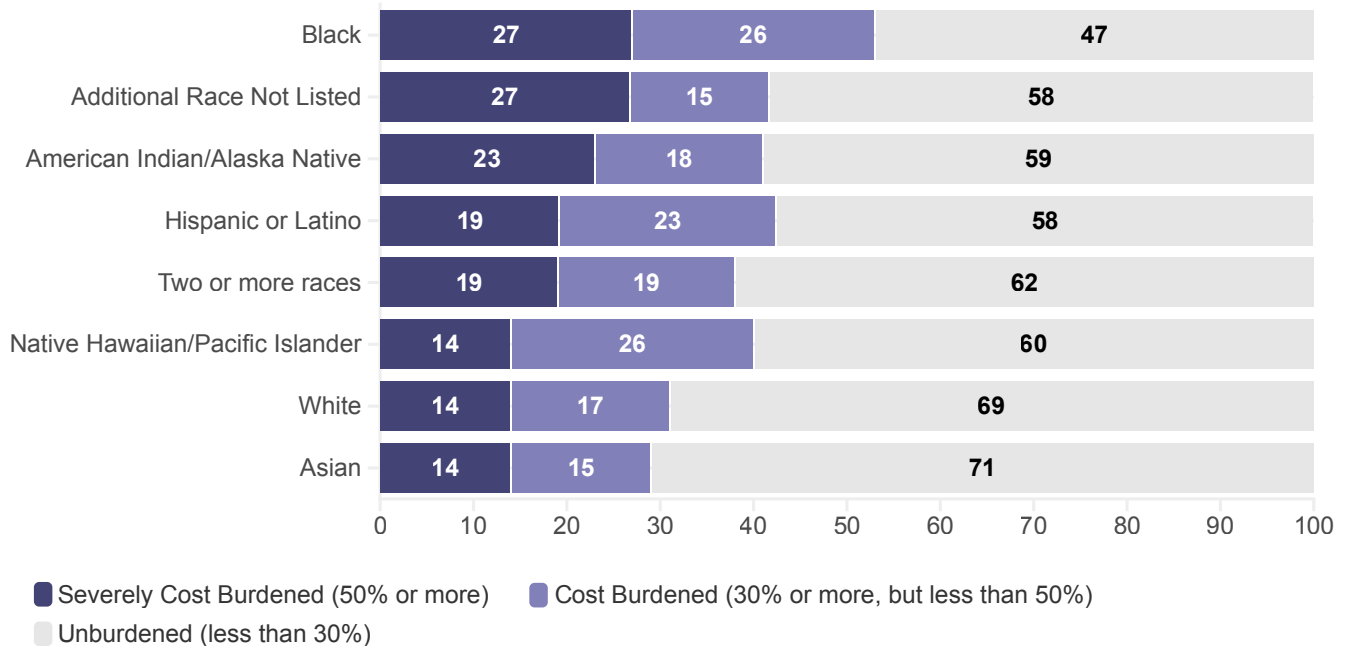
# HOUSING SECURITY AND ANTI-DISPLACEMENT

Affordable housing is a top concern for many communities, and most acutely, for frontline communities. In 2023, 70 percent of low-income households in King County spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing.<sup>40</sup> Complicating matters, climate change is increasingly recognized for its significant impacts on communities beyond extreme weather events. Some climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, such as investing in green infrastructure, may unintentionally contribute to higher costs for renters and property owners. An additional threat to housing security includes “bluelining” —an emerging practice in which financial institutions increase prices of or withdraw services altogether from regions they perceive to be at high environmental risk,<sup>41</sup> i.e., flooding and wildfire risk.

Yet, population growth has been steadily increasing in cities across the County,<sup>42</sup> forcing frontline communities, especially low-income communities, to move further from their places of work, their roots, and their community to areas that are underserved by public transit. As climate impacts are felt, households with fewer resources and rising cost burdens, including utilities, continue to increase. Over the next decade, it will be critical for King County to include affordable housing and anti-displacement policies in conjunction with other climate adaptation efforts accessible to communities.

**Figure 23. Housing Cost Burden by Race/Ethnicity**

This graph shows the severity of cost burden and its correlation with demographics in King County. When households spend 30 percent or more of their income on housing, they are struggling to afford other necessities. Households are severely cost-burdened when they pay more than 50 percent of their income on housing.



Source: 5-Year PUMS (2017-2022), compiled on King County Regional Affordable Housing Dashboard (2025)

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

Historically, structural racism—including practices like racially restrictive covenants, redlining, blockbusting, and other public and private practices—has shaped where frontline communities live in King County.<sup>43</sup> These forces have contributed to cascading disparities for BIPOC communities, restricting equal access to economic opportunities, health, wealth, and education. Many of these communities have the region's lowest incomes, the greatest health needs, and have historically lacked public infrastructure investments—making them more vulnerable to climate change impacts.<sup>44</sup>

These households will find it more challenging to afford to keep their homes resilient in the face of increasing heat waves, extreme weather

events, wildfire smoke, and other climate impacts. Low-income households will also become more vulnerable to displacement away from urban centers. This displacement increases their vulnerability to climate hazards and emergencies if they lose their social networks with shared language, local community gathering spaces, and access to public transit.<sup>45</sup>

King County can lead the way toward mitigating the housing impacts of climate change by centering frontline communities in actions that bridge housing affordability, climate preparedness, anti-displacement strategies, and by partnering on community-driven initiatives.

## A BETTER OUTCOME

Expanding capacity around climate and housing can help King County communities, especially frontline communities and decision-makers, understand the connections and identify strategies to address barriers to safe, affordable, climate-resilient housing.



## WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET HERE

- Developed the 2021 King County Skyway-West Hill and North Highline Anti-Displacement Report in partnership with residents and community leaders, provided recommendations for new affordable housing projects, inclusionary housing, and relocation assistance.
- Completed the King County Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) planning and implementation report—a community-driven framework for coordinating anti-displacement, climate resilience, and economic opportunity.
- Secured \$13 million to launch the King County EDI Implementation Plan recommendations and increase capital investments in community-driven housing related projects.
- Issued a \$20 million Climate Equity Capital Projects bond fund to implement seven projects located in areas and sites with high displacement risk that supported greenhouse emissions reduction, energy efficiency, green career pathways, and farmland infrastructure improvements.
- Integrated land use and community characteristics into Metro's rapid bus transit planning projects.

## WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

King County will deepen County and community partnerships to support community-driven equitable development through the following actions:

- **SRFC 32.** Invest in Equitable Development
- **SRFC 33.** Expand access to open space through partnering with frontline communities
- **SRFC 34.** Provide climate and housing community resources and training

A local tour of newly built affordable housing that features energy-saving and more sustainable building design and features.



# SRFC 32. INVEST IN EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Access to affordable housing and displacement are top concerns for many frontline communities. Historical racial zoning laws, restrictive covenants, redlining, decades of disinvestment, and increasing housing demand and rising costs have created conditions for gentrification and displacement of low-income residents, small businesses, and cultural spaces. Residential displacement makes households less resilient to climate impacts. Invest in King County’s Equitable Development Initiative by allocating at least \$10 million–\$25 million per year in new revenue to invest in community-driven and community-owned housing and resilience projects.<sup>46</sup> This action prevents housing, economic, and cultural displacement. It also promotes equity by investing in frontline communities disproportionately impacted by climate change due to existing and historic racial, social, environmental, and economic, inequities, and who have limited resources and capacity to adapt.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

DCHS-HCD

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DLS-DO; DNRP-DO, Parks; ECO; PHSKC-DO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

King County EDI Advisory Board;<sup>47</sup> community-based organizations and leaders representing priority communities in King County on equitable development and related policies such as anti-displacement, racial and economic justice, generational wealth building, climate resilience, and environmental justice; City of Seattle EDI; other public funders

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

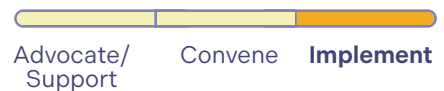
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Equitable Development Initiative Implementation Plan Phase 1 & Phase 2; King County Comprehensive Plan; Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan; Skyway West Hill and North Highline Anti-Displacement Strategies Report; King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force Five-Year Action Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 33. EXPAND ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE THROUGH PARTNERING WITH FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES

Integrating open space acquisitions with community-driven planning is essential to delivering multi-benefit climate action in partnership with frontline communities. King County will develop a replicable model for community-driven open space planning in urban areas to fill gaps in access and to align park acquisitions with transit, schools, environmental health, and other County plans and strategies. There is potential to align with affordable housing initiatives if new funding or tools become available for implementing anti-displacement measures in coordination with open space acquisition and development. Supporting community-driven planning strengthens community resilience and amplifies opportunities for co-benefits.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

DNRP-Parks

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DLS-Roads; ECO

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

King County EDI Advisory Board;<sup>48</sup> King County Open Space Equity Cabinet; Climate Equity Community Task Force

### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

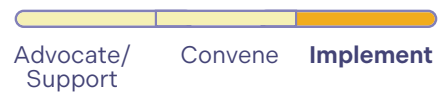
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; [King County Equitable Development Initiative Implementation Plan Phase 2 \(August 2024\)](#); [King County Equitable Development Initiative Implementation Plan Phase 1 \(January 2023\)](#); King County Conservation Futures; King County Open Space Plan

**EARLY ACTION**

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 34. PROVIDE CLIMATE AND HOUSING COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND TRAINING

King County’s capacity for advancing climate-ready affordable housing is strengthened when frontline communities understand climate change, planning, land use, and development, and have access to decision-making in local government. The County will partner to expand in-language resources for frontline communities that highlight connections between housing and climate change and provide information on equitable development. This will include multi-media information, partnerships, and accessible annual training.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

ECO

**PARTNER AGENCIES:**

PHSKC-DO; Language Access

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

King County EDI Advisory Board; King County EDI Community Planning Workgroup

**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

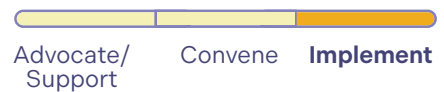
Accessibility; engagement; capacity-building

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force Five-Year Action Plan; King County Comprehensive Plan; DCHS Equitable Development Initiative

**EARLY ACTION**

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**



**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**







# ENERGY JUSTICE AND UTILITIES AFFORDABILITY

The utility burdens facing low-income households are part of a larger housing affordability crisis in the United States. Millions of Americans struggle to pay energy utility bills, and use a range of coping strategies such as engaging in risky temperature behavior (e.g. using a stove, dryer vent, or burning trash for heat), forgoing other expenditures (e.g. medical, food, etc.), seeking payment assistance from formal or informal networks, or using bill strategies (carrying debt, partial payments, or skipped payments) to avoid utility disconnection.<sup>49</sup>

Some climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, such as transitioning the energy sector to clean and renewable energy sources, can increase utility cost burdens on frontline communities. In addition, home energy efficiency and renewable energy upgrades could help reduce utility costs for households, but frontline community members can face barriers around cost, access to resources, and a lack of accessible information around energy options in their community and on the benefits of transitioning to more renewable energy sources.<sup>50</sup>

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

The major climate-related hazards that threaten utility and housing costs are heat, wildfires, flooding, and sea-level rise. Heat events will cause increased energy demand in summer, leading to spikes in energy prices, and reduced snowpack that can decrease hydropower generation. The more frequent and extreme weather events that come with climate change, like wildfires and drought, could also mean increased costs for electricity users. These climate events can also cause damage to energy distribution infrastructure and homes, causing electrical power outages during extreme weather events that can be life threatening for frontline populations.<sup>52</sup>

Most King County communities are served by Seattle City Light (SCL) or Puget Sound Energy (PSE). These companies have low-income energy assistance programs, but many low-income households are not actually receiving that assistance. A 2024 survey of County renters conducted by King County in partnership with the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE) showed that more than two thirds of renters who made less than \$50,000 in 2023 reported struggling to pay utility bills over the previous twelve months,<sup>51</sup> suggesting there are opportunities to expand and increase enrollment in utility assistance programs.

As additional climate impacts are experienced, the cost burden of other basic needs will increase, so it is even more critical that this energy assistance reaches all communities that need it. An equitable transition to more renewable energy requires that these frontline households thrive and not just survive.

Many of King County's frontline communities are supportive of and interested in transitioning to clean and renewable energy sources but face barriers in making these changes in their own homes or communities. The County must find ways to support expanding renewable energy and energy efficiency in frontline communities to ensure that these communities are not further cost burdened or face higher climate vulnerability.

# A BETTER OUTCOME

King County can advance energy justice and utilities affordability through supporting coordination and expansion of regional programs that incentivize weatherization, deploy equitable clean energy retrofits, and through expanding access to affordability programs. Integrating frontline community expertise in energy policy and decision-making will also be critical to ensuring there is not a disproportionate burden on frontline communities as energy companies transition to producing more renewable energy.

## WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET HERE

- Launched and expanded the Energize Heat Pump Program to install heat pumps and other clean technology in low- and moderate-income homes and small businesses in King County.
- Received approximately \$50 million from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant to reduce building emissions in King, Pierce, Kitsap, and Snohomish counties—funding will support improvements in multifamily, small commercial, and community buildings across the region.
- Conducted a 2024 Utility Renter Affordability Survey to better understand and address utility and housing affordability challenges for families who rent their home.

## WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

Reduce energy burden on frontline communities and strengthen community leadership through the following actions:

- **SRFC 35.** Establish a “one stop shop” for utilities affordability programs
- **SRFC 36.** Coordinate with local electric utilities to integrate existing community solar programs in the region and increase deployment of renewable energy and reduce utility costs for frontline community households
- **SRFC 37.** Encourage participation of frontline communities into utility decision-making



# SRFC 35. ESTABLISH A “ONE STOP SHOP” FOR UTILITIES AFFORDABILITY PROGRAMS

Access to energy and utilities assistance is essential, especially to those who already qualify for or are already enrolled in utility affordability programs, to support reducing the energy burden on frontline communities. King County, working closely with local jurisdictions and utility partners, will explore the development of a “one stop shop” for residents countywide to learn about and apply for a wide range of affordability programs focused on energy, utilities, and home efficiency resources. King County will coordinate with regional public and private utilities providers to explore establishing or enhancing a utility “one stop shop” website, auto-enrollment agreements, proactive relief for customers with past due or disconnect orders, and the implementation of language access and technical support. This County-led effort has the potential to reduce administrative burdens on program staff and households by developing a single application and eligibility process that could be integrated and aligned with existing County affordability programs such as ORCA Lift, Assessor low-income discount programs, or Washington Apple Health enrollment. King County will increase enrollment in affordability programs by expanding language services and support for the application process, with the goal of eliminating barriers to energy cost-savings programs to all County residents who may be eligible for these programs.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

PHSKC–CHS; DCHS–HCD

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

Local energy, water, wastewater, and solid waste utilities and municipalities; City of Seattle Assistance and Discounts program (Affordable Seattle); Community Action Agencies (Byrd Barr, MSC, Hopelink)

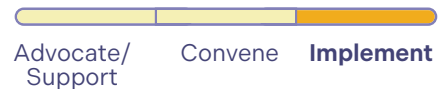
### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



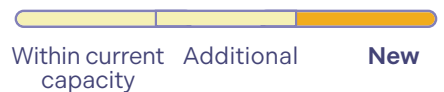
### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 36. ADVANCE THE DEPLOYMENT OF COMMUNITY-OWNED RENEWABLE ENERGY

An equitable transition to more renewable energy requires that all households thrive and not just survive. This can be made possible through focusing access to renewable resources where they are most needed and creating opportunities for co-benefits that may include economic relief, economic opportunity, environmental benefits, and increased resilience. To this end, King County will advance deployment of community-owned renewable energy through the implementation of three key strategies: 1) coordinating with local electric utilities to expand community solar programs in the region, 2) using existing County funding to pilot a community solar program to reduce utility costs for frontline community organizations and households, and by 3) pursuing additional funding opportunities to further expand community solar or other community-owned energy generating resources.

### LEAD AGENCIES:

ECO

### PARTNER AGENCIES:

DNRP-SWD

### EXTERNAL PARTNERS:

SCL; PSE; WSU Community Solar Expansion Program

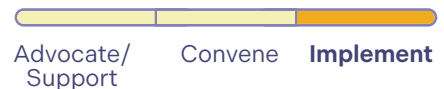
### EQUITY OBJECTIVES:

Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; economic opportunity and workforce diversity; engagement; reduce disproportionate impacts; share benefits

### STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:

King County Comprehensive Plan; Extreme Heat Mitigation Strategy

### KING COUNTY ROLE:



### ACTION TYPE:



### IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:



### FUNDING NEED:



### FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:





# SRFC 37. ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION OF FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES INTO UTILITY DECISION-MAKING

As the County transitions to using more renewable energy sources, involving frontline communities will be critical to avoiding unintended consequences for ecosystem health and cultural loss. King County will advocate for frontline community to participate in energy policy, decision-making, and regulatory tables (including outside of King County’s jurisdiction) while modeling frontline community participation within King County’s own energy programs and policies. This can include requiring policy equity assessments, partnering with energy advocacy organizations, and advocating for community testimony and comment on regulatory proposals or participation in local and state policy and regulatory bodies such as the Utilities and Transportation Commission, State Legislature, federal policymaking bodies, etc.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

ECO

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

City of Seattle; PSE; Puget Sound Sage

**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

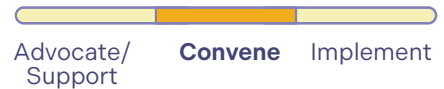
Accessibility; accountability; capacity building; engagement; reduce disproportionate impacts

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

King County Comprehensive Plan; State Legislature: HEAL Act

**EARLY ACTION**

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**



**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**





A recently built affordable housing project in King County features sustainable building design and energy-saving features.



# TRANSPORTATION ACCESS AND EQUITY

Population growth and rising housing prices are forcing low-income communities and communities of color to move to places further from their places of work, their roots, and to areas that are more affordable but potentially less transit integrated and accessible. Frontline communities, especially low-income communities, rely heavily on public transit and, as they are forced to move further away from urban areas due to rising housing prices, their transportation costs increase because they have less access to frequent and reliable public transit.

An outcome of these patterns is that communities who rely heavily on public transit often are not able to access it close to their homes, especially as they move further from

urban centers. The map of transit access in King County from the Metro Mobility Framework indicates that the geographic areas with the greatest need for accessible transit are concentrated in South King County.<sup>53</sup> Community members who are displaced because of higher housing prices will need to rely more heavily on transportation, both personal and public, to get to where they live, work, and play.

By partnering with the communities most impacted by displacement, King County is pivoting investments and expanding services to ensure all communities have access to all the quality-of-life benefits, including cleaner air, that a strong public transit system can enable.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE

The combination of increased transportation cost burden caused by displacement away from urban centers and inequitable access to public transportation creates negative impacts for frontline communities, especially low-income communities and communities of color that live in South King County. These constraints will be made worse as climate impacts, including emergency weather events, are experienced countywide.

Expanding transit accessibility creates opportunities for frontline community members to conveniently use public transit. Enabling people to move around King County regardless of what neighborhood they live in will be integral to advancing climate resilience in frontline communities.

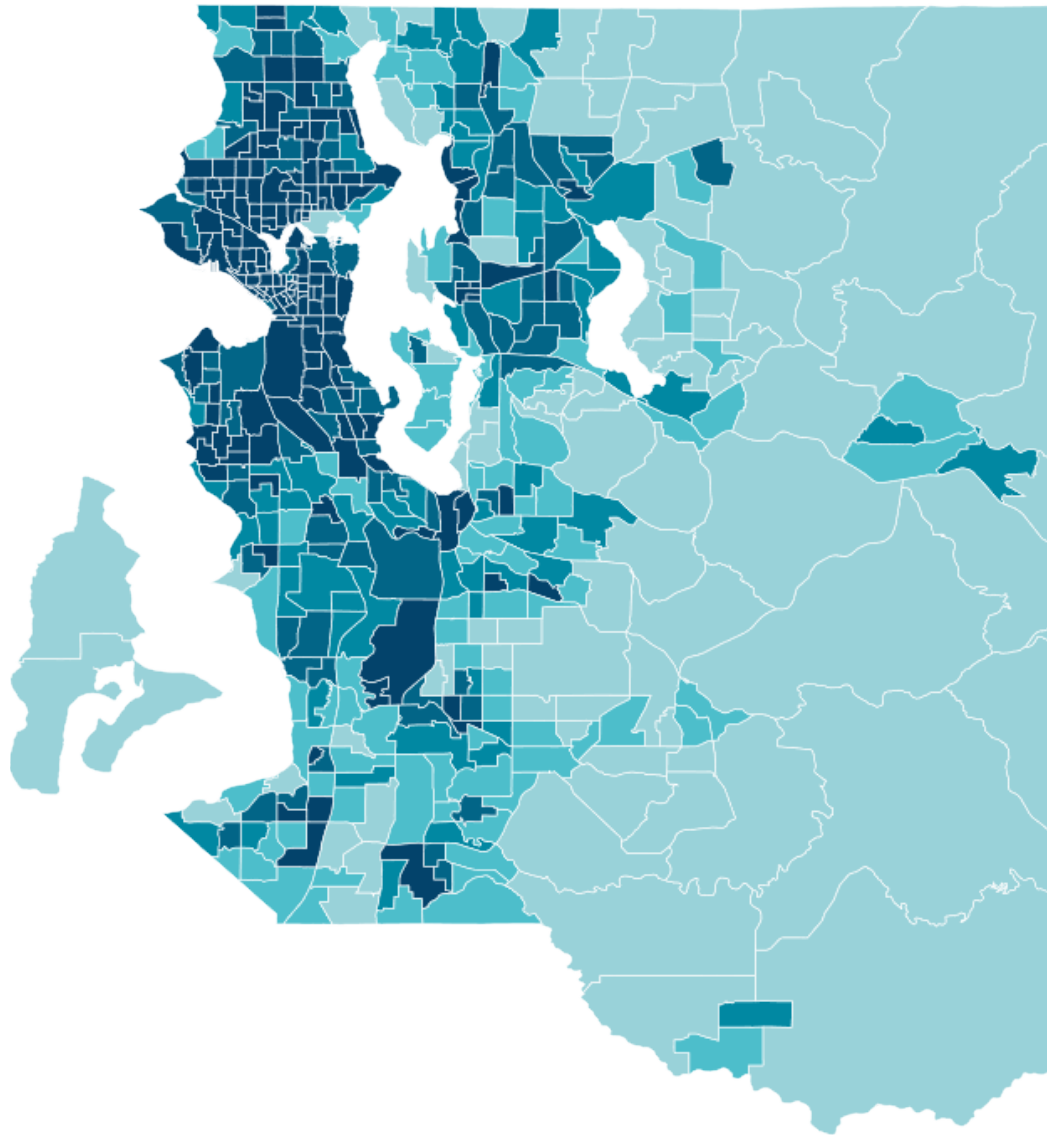
## A BETTER OUTCOME

In 2019, King County Metro convened a Mobility Equity Cabinet<sup>54</sup> to develop the King County Metro Mobility Framework, which envisions an integrated, innovative, equitable, and sustainable future. In continuing this work, the County can elevate actions to significantly reduce GHG emissions while advancing equitable outcomes by providing mobility where needs are greatest, improving access to public transit to encourage individuals to use transit over single-occupancy vehicles, and ensuring equitable and affordable fares.

## Figure 24. Affordable Housing within 1/4 Mile Of Transit

This map shows the percentage of housing units within 1/4 mile of bus service by Census Tract for 2020.

Note: only residential parcels are included in this analysis. Group quarters, like dorms, are not on residential parcels, so were not included.



Percent of units near transit 0% 24.1% 53.3% 75.7% 92.1%

Source: ACS population estimates (2020), Puget Sound Regional General Transit Feed Specifications (2024), and King County Metro Parcel Data (2024) and compiled by King County Metro



## WHAT WE'VE DONE TO GET HERE

- Convened a Metro Fares Cabinet made up of community members to co-plan improved reduced fare programs in 2024.
- Integrated the community-co-created Metro Mobility Framework into the 2021–2031 Metro Strategic Plan and implemented Service Guidelines to focus on equitable investments for priority populations.
- Applied a climate justice lens in Metro's capital planning and design process, and in emergency planning, to address climate resilience.

## WHAT WE'LL DO NEXT

King County will plan for and provide equitable transit services in partnership with frontline communities through the following actions:

- **SRFC 38.** Plan collaboratively with frontline communities to increase transit mobility
- **SRFC 39.** Develop and implement an equitable cashless fare transition plan
- **SRFC 40.** Improve access to ORCA cards and reduced fare transit cards and programs



# SRFC 38. PLAN COLLABORATIVELY WITH FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES TO INCREASE TRANSIT MOBILITY

In 2019, King County Metro co-created the Mobility Framework with the Metro Mobility Equity Cabinet, a group of leaders representing priority populations across King County including Black and Indigenous people, communities of color, immigrants and refugees, people speaking English as a second language, people with low incomes, and people with disabilities. The Mobility Framework is a set of guiding principles and recommendations for centering equity and sustainability. In 2021, Metro updated their Strategic Plan for Public Transportation, Metro Connects—their long-range plan, and the Service Guidelines that guide evaluation, design, and modification of service to integrate the mobility framework across these three primary policies. King County will continue to engage frontline communities and build upon Metro’s Mobility Framework foundation in updating their Strategic Plan for Public Transportation, Service Guidelines, and Metro Connects by July 2028.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

Metro–GM, Metro–Mobility

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

Metro Mobility Equity Cabinet; Metro Community Liaisons; Climate Equity Community Task Force

**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

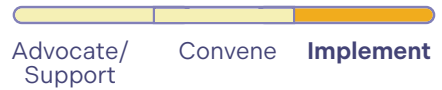
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; engagement; reduce disproportionate negative impacts

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

King County Comprehensive Plan; King County ESJ Strategic Plan

**EARLY ACTION** 

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**



**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**





# SRFC 39. DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT AN EQUITABLE CASHLESS FARE TRANSITION PLAN

The Metro Connects Long Range Plan and Metro’s Strategic Plan for Public Transportation call upon the County to phase out on-board cash fare payment to support operational efficiency and service reliability. Eliminating cash fare payment has equity implications and Metro has conducted studies, surveys, and engagement to understand customer perspectives and experiences. Recognizing the complexity of this transition, in 2024 Metro convened a Fares Cabinet to meet regularly to help identify the potential impacts of the transition, key barriers preventing cash payers from using other fare media, and key milestones and strategies to support these riders during the transition. The Fares Cabinet is comprised of 17 members who have lived experience as riders, cash payers, and users of a variety of reduced fare programs and products. They were recruited throughout King County and are paid for their participation.

King County will work with the Fares Cabinet to finalize a cashless transition plan that identifies key barriers, milestones, and recommended strategies. As the plan is implemented, Metro will share progress towards milestones and recommendations, engage with riders, and adjust implementation approaches as needed.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

Metro–Mobility

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

Fares Cabinet; Climate Equity Community Task Force

**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

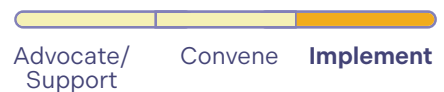
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement, share benefits

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

Metro Connects; Metro Strategic Plan

**EARLY ACTION** 

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



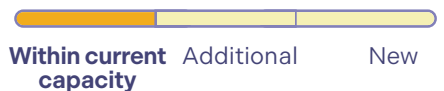
**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**



**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**





# SRFC 40. IMPROVE ACCESS TO ORCA CARDS AND REDUCED FARE TRANSIT CARDS AND PROGRAMS

Improving access to ORCA cards and reduced fare transit cards and programs has been identified as a critical strategy by the County’s community member-based Fares Cabinet. To deliver on this recommendation, King County will enhance access to fare products and programs by partnering with community-based organizations to provide ORCA card distribution and fare education, and by expanding in-person opportunities for riders to access fare-related customer service support throughout the county. This work ensures County residents with barriers to general channels of information (web-based, language access, disability, etc.) have increased opportunities to learn about and obtain public transportation resources through trusted sources in their own communities.

**LEAD AGENCIES:**

Metro–Mobility

**PARTNER AGENCIES:**

DCHS–HCD; PHSKC–EHS

**EXTERNAL PARTNERS:**

Community-based organizations; regional ORCA partners (Sound Transit, Pierce Transit; Community Transit; Pierce Transit, Everett Transit; Kitsap Transit; City of Seattle; and Washington State Ferries); labor

**EQUITY OBJECTIVES:**

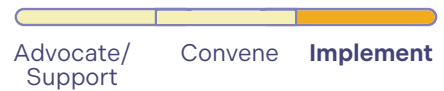
Accessibility; alignment and partnership; capacity building; engagement; share benefits

**STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS:**

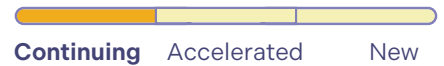
Metro Connects; Human Services Bus Ticket Program

**EARLY ACTION**

**KING COUNTY ROLE:**



**ACTION TYPE:**



**IMPLEMENTATION FEASIBILITY:**



**FUNDING NEED:**









**FUNDING DEPENDENCIES:**





# PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Tracking climate preparedness performance measures is essential to evaluating King County’s progress toward its climate commitments and ensuring accountability across multiple sectors. The table below organizes performance measures by **Focus Areas**, with each measure detailing objectives, **2030 Target**, and **Current Status**. The 2030 Target and Current Status data allow for a quick gap analysis to show what the County has planned to achieve, and how much progress has been made. Together, these metrics help the County ensure that climate actions remain data-driven, equitable, and aligned with regional and state climate policies.

Section	Performance Measure	Target
 <p><b>Community leadership &amp; community-driven policy making</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 1. Frontline communities leading on King County climate action.</b> Increase the number of frontline community members leading on climate action by establishing viable, sustainable pathways through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to consult on community-driven climate action</li> <li>• Access to climate internships in local government</li> <li>• Access to entry-level climate, environment, and community partnership careers in local government.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 50 <b>2030 Target:</b> 100</p>
 <p><b>Community leadership &amp; community-driven policy making</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 2. Community-driven climate projects.</b> Increase the number of community-driven projects King County will fund, partner on, or otherwise advance that address the inequitable, intersecting, and cumulative impacts of climate change on frontline communities.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 14 <b>2030 Target:</b> 40</p>
 <p><b>Building capacity with frontline communities &amp; youth</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 3. King County staff advancing climate equity and enabling climate justice countywide.</b> Provide training to at least 500 staff across seven or more departments on the intersections of climate change, climate justice, root causes, and strategies to embed climate equity across diverse initiatives in King County.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 25 <b>2030 Target:</b> 500</p>
 <p><b>Building capacity with frontline communities &amp; youth</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 4. Strengthen community capacity to address climate justice intersections.</b> Expand the number of frontline community members and youth informed on and skilled at identifying and addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change through culturally relevant trainings, workshops, media, and events.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 400 <b>2030 Target:</b> 2,000</p>

Section	Performance Measure	Target
 <p><b>Climate and economic opportunity</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 5. Advance economic justice.</b> Increase usage of ESJ credit 6 for advancing economic justice in the King County Sustainable Infrastructure Scorecard by 50 percent. Currently, it is at 30 percent, this would increase usage to 45 percent overall. This increase will demonstrate how economic opportunity is integrated into capital projects to deliver significant co-benefits to County residents, including skills training, workforce development, and living wage employment.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 30% <b>2030 Target:</b> 45%</p>
 <p><b>Climate and economic opportunity</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 6. Living wage jobs for frontline communities.</b> Directly connect a minimum of 500 members of frontline communities to living-wage climate connected jobs through King County programs, campaigns, and projects. As a result, over \$100 million in wages will be generated for frontline communities.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> N/A <b>2030 Target:</b> 500</p>
 <p><b>Community health and emergency preparedness</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 7. Growing community knowledge on climate hazards.</b> Provide frontline communities with culturally relevant information and resources enabling them to respond to accelerating climate hazards through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing community trainings on local climate hazards (i.e., flooding, heat, severe winter weather, wildfire, and vector-borne disease) to at least 500 frontline community members.</li> <li>• Reporting a 70 percent increase in knowledge and preparedness regarding climate hazards for participants in County trainings and workshops.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 0 <i>(assuming no trainings held)</i></p> <p><b>2030 Target:</b> 500 frontline community members trained; 70% increase in knowledge and preparedness reported</p>
 <p><b>Community health and emergency preparedness</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 8. Communities partnering on emergency preparedness.</b> Every five years increase the number of county-community partnerships supporting emergency preparedness for communities representing Census tracts identified as eight, nine, and 10 on the Washington State Environmental Health Disparities mapping tool.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 0 <i>(assuming no trainings held)</i></p> <p><b>2030 Target:</b> 20</p>
 <p><b>Community health and emergency preparedness</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 9. Increasing farm acreage supporting underserved farmers.</b> Increase the number of acres supporting underserved farmers through King County programs and grants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2030, 275 acres of farm acreage in King County is supporting underserved farmers.</li> <li>• By 2040, 400 acres of farm acreage in King County is supporting underserved farmers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 200 <b>2030 Target:</b> 275</p>
 <p><b>Food justice &amp; food security</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 10. Increasing funding for local food access.</b> Increase King County investments in community-based projects for local food access programs such as the Farm to Food Bank program and Harvest Against Hunger. Currently the funding is \$360,000 annually and the goal is \$460,000 annually to advance food justice and food security for frontline communities. This would be an increase of 28 percent maintained annually.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 0 <b>2030 Target:</b> 28%</p>

Section	Performance Measure	Target
 <p><b>Housing security &amp; anti-displacement</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 11. Increasing completed and awarded equitable development projects.</b> Complete CBO-led projects receiving awards that advance equitable development. If funding becomes available, King County would increase the dollars invested to close identified funding gaps to complete already funded CBO-led projects and make new awards to projects that meet the funding eligibility criteria set forth by the EDI advisory board.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 0 (5 projects awarded) <b>2030 Target:</b> 5 (or more completed)</p>
 <p><b>Housing security &amp; anti-displacement</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 12. Community-identified climate resilience.</b> Factor community-identified climate resilience goals into the planning and design of at least two equitable community-driven housing or community development projects that meet the funding eligibility criteria set forth by the EDI advisory board.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 1 <b>2030 Target:</b> 2</p>
 <p><b>Housing security &amp; anti-displacement</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 13. Community-driven affordable housing projects.</b> King County supported equitable community-driven affordable housing projects will provide over 300 units and 450 bedrooms of stable income-restricted housing, reducing the risk of displacement for the households who live in them.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 0 <b>2030 Target:</b> 300 units; 450 bedrooms</p>
 <p><b>Energy justice &amp; utilities</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 14. Lowering utility costs by connecting people to affordability resources.</b> Increase direct enrollments in utility affordability programs by 400 customers through establishing a “one-stop-shop” that connects residents with utility assistance and incentive programs.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 0 <b>2030 Target:</b> 400</p>
 <p><b>Energy justice &amp; utilities</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 15. Making energy efficiency available to frontline communities.</b> Increase the number of households with moderate to low incomes (below 80% AMI to 150% AMI) that receive home retrofits (i.e., heat pumps, weatherization, etc.) through King County programs and services.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 100 <b>2030 Target:</b> 800</p>
 <p><b>Transportation access &amp; equity</b></p>	<p><b>SRFC 16. Community Engagement with Metro.</b> 80 percent (on average) of medium and large transportation projects within Metro involve co-creation or shared decision-making with community.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 79% <b>2030 Target:</b> 80%</p>

Section	Performance Measure	Target
 <p>Transportation access &amp; equity</p>	<p><b>SRFC 17. Transit Access.</b> 80 percent of King County priority populations have convenient access to the transit network.</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 81%</p> <p><b>2030 Target:</b> 80%</p>
 <p>Transportation access &amp; equity</p>	<p><b>SRFC 18. Affordable Housing Near Transit.</b> 50 percent of new, and 25 percent of existing, rental units within a ½ mile walk of frequent or high-capacity transit are available at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI).</p>	<p><b>Current Status:</b> 27% new; 61% existing housing</p> <p><b>2030 Target:</b> 50% new; 25% existing housing</p>



A community member shows their ORCA card next to a King County Metro Trailhead Direct bus.



# ENDNOTES

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