



Source: Gorka Gil for ArtistsforClimate.org

# Sustainability & Climate Commission (SCC)

## Public Comment Draft

March 2024



THE BUREAU OF  
**PLANNING &  
SUSTAINABILITY**

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# Background

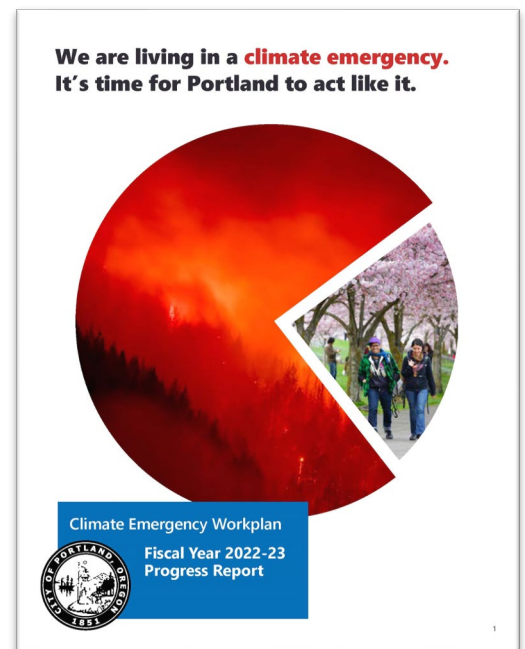
In 2010, the City of Portland combined the Planning Commission and the Multnomah County/Portland Sustainable Development Commission to create the Planning and Sustainability Commission (PSC). In the intervening years, the oversight responsibilities related to both land use planning and sustainability have become more than one commission can undertake effectively. In addition, issues related to sustainability and climate change have become more prominent and urgent. Commissioner Rubio therefore directed the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) to split the PSC into two distinct bodies — one to focus on planning and the other on sustainability and climate.

The [Planning Commission Code Amendments](#) project dissolved the PSC and formed the [Planning Commission](#) in February 2023.

This document outlines the proposed structure for the new distinct body focused on sustainability and climate: the [Sustainability and Climate Commission \(SCC\)](#).

**“While the early achievements of the Portland region are notable... more ambitious actions are required to mitigate the most extreme impacts of the changing climate.”**

— Climate Action Plan 2009, City of Portland & Multnomah County



# Goals

This new body will elevate the importance of building resilience and sustainability in our communities to combat the climate crisis. The SCC will:

- Reset the scope and expectations for a body focused on sustainability and climate.
- Establish a new authority on sustainability and climate.
- Create accountability for the City and its service areas, as well as the Portland community.
- Create the City's Climate Action Plan and other guiding documents on climate.
- Advance the City's efforts to mitigate the human-made climate crisis and prioritize environmental justice initiatives.
- Ensure the City is on track to meet established climate goals.
- Balance advisory, advocacy, and action in its charge.



Source: Dajana Orzo for ArtistsforClimate.org

**“We still have options that could change the course of events for the people of Portland – those here today and those who will come after us.”**

— Climate Emergency Workplan, City of Portland, 2022

# Structure proposal overview

The Climate Commission Coordinator, a position created within BPS to design the SCC, researched 14 existing climate advisory bodies around the country, ranging in membership size from 192 members to five (see Appendix A). After comparing different structures, BPS staff recommends a 20-member commission made up of community members including four youth commissioners and members recruited in areas of expertise, and non-voting City staff liaisons.

BPS staff also recommends the SCC organize both its membership expertise and work by climate focus areas. The recommended focus areas below align with the City's focus areas in prior [Climate Action Plans](#) and the current [Climate Emergency Workplan](#):

- Buildings and homes
- Climate resiliency
- Energy and renewable
- Environmental justice and equity
- Urban forest, natural systems, and carbon management
- Urban form and transportation
- Waste prevention, recycling, and solid waste
- Youth

**“The intertwined challenges of climate change, social inequality, economic volatility, degraded natural systems and the rising cost of living demand an integrated response that goes far beyond cutting carbon.”**

— Climate Action Plan 2015, City of Portland & Multnomah County

# Engaging with SCC

The Sustainability and Climate Commission will report to the Chief Sustainability Officer (see [Amended Exhibit A](#)) and will utilize tiered decision making for its work:

- **Tier I** – Staff acts with SCC approval.
  - Examples of actions include Deputy City Administrators (DCAs) briefing the SCC on implementation strategies for previously agreed-upon workplans from service areas, accepting progress reports, or holding joint meetings with another commission.
- **Tier II** – The Chief Sustainability Officer works with Deputy City Administrators to bring forward proposals from service areas to SCC for recommendations, refinements, and alignment with established climate goals.
  - Decision-making authority remains with City Council, the Mayor, and/or City Administrator; however, SCC recommendations will strongly inform decisions.
  - Gives public forum for debate on the issues at the SCC.
  - Addresses the charter reform charge for the City Administrator and Mayor to address the human-made climate crisis.
- **Tier III** – The Chief Sustainability Officer works with Deputy City Administrators to bring work from SCC to City Council, the Mayor, and the City Administrator for final action and decision making.
  - Gives public forum for debate on the issues at the SCC.
  - End goal is defined (*i.e.*, ordinance, resolution, report).

For significant projects – those that require a recommendation by SCC to City Council, the Mayor, and/or the City Administrator for final adoption – DCAs and other staff will engage with the SCC to inform its development. The decision to provide a recommendation to City Council, the Mayor, and/or City Administrator and the form of that recommendation (*e.g.*, report, official communique) will be made by the SCC. This could mean recommending actions to be taken by City Council, the Mayor, some specific offices, or departments, and potentially some combination of purview over community organizations, businesses and nonprofits. Actions could range from general recommendations, reviews of past and current programs and policies, advocacy roles to other decision-making bodies that are in line with the City’s climate goals, and potentially setting new policies, rules or programs.

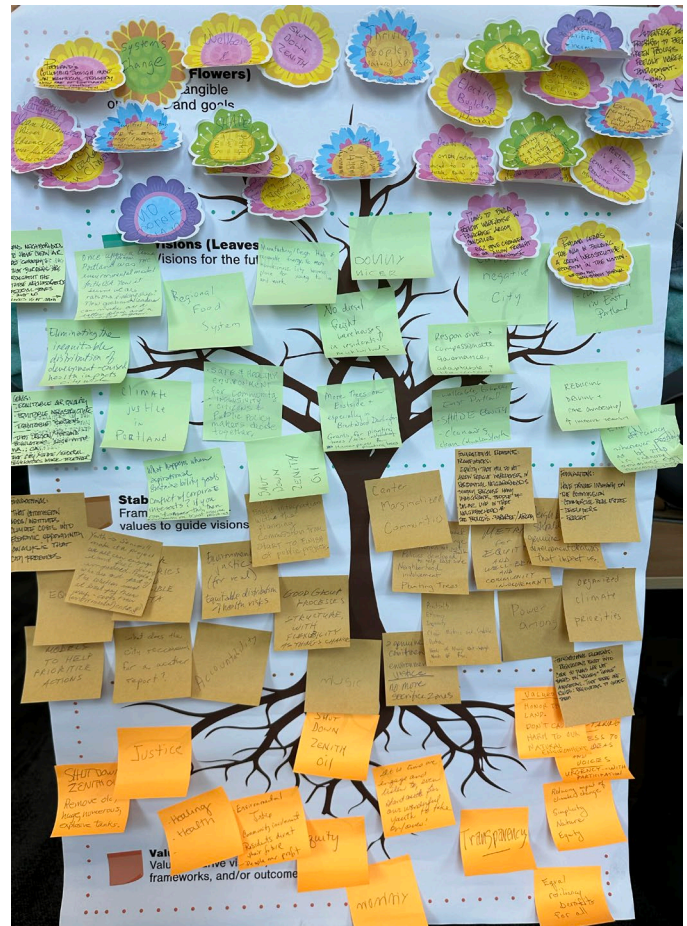
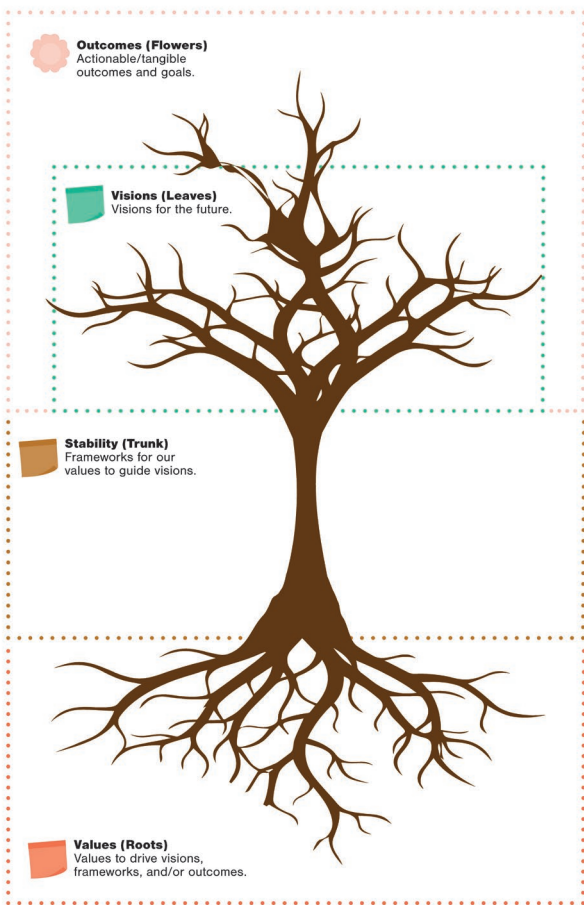
## Internal collaboration

Briefing SCC is at the discretion of the Chief Sustainability Officer or their designee, in consultation with the Assistant City Administrator, or their designee, and the Climate Commission Coordinator. Consulted staff also recommend the SCC collaborate with other advisory bodies, such as the [Planning Commission](#), [Design Commission](#), and [Urban Forestry Commission](#) and others when applicable.

# Transparency, access, & accountability

The SCC will be transparent to the public by providing long runways of information and discussion with stakeholders. All meetings will be publicly accessible with clear communication and opportunities for public comment. To stay accountable, the SCC will follow through with actions and follow up on concepts and work and recommend processes for evaluation of past policies and programs.

City staff hosted [in-person](#) and [virtual](#) events to prompt the community, stakeholders, and area partners to explore their climate-action values and vision for Portland’s climate future via the activity shown below. The [feedback](#), including over 200 comments, informed the formation of this SCC proposal.





# How commissioners will be appointed\*

Like all City advisory bodies, members of the public must apply through the City's Advisory Bodies Program. Applications will then be reviewed by the Climate Commission Coordinator and other staff with subject matter expertise that aligns with the SCC's focus areas and with recommendations to the Chief Sustainability Officer, then to the Mayor for appointment to the SCC with City Council approval. Our current understanding is that a wholistic review of City advisory bodies and their processes, including any potential stipends for participation, are under review and the intention is to be in alignment with that guidance.

SCC applications will be reviewed and chosen with the proposed focus areas in mind. Staff will seek to appoint some commissioners with subject matter expertise across the eight focus areas as much as possible.

\*Subject to City's Advisory Bodies Program requirements.

## City staff SCC liaisons

Following the trend of other climate commissions, staff recommends that the Deputy City Administrators are appointed as ex-officio SCC members, or a designee of their choosing, to help bridge climate efforts across bureaus and offer a foundation for the City's internal affairs.

If a future council committee has a nexus for the focus areas of SCC, members of that council committee may serve as ex-officio members. Any additional City staff liaisons will be reviewed and chosen with the proposed focus areas or role in mind.

**“Recognizing that sustainable development, democracy and peace are indivisible is an idea whose time has come... We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and, in the process, heal our own... The time is now... Give back to our children a world of beauty and wonder.”**

— Wangari Maathai, 2004 Nobel Prize Lecture

# Acknowledgements

We extend many thanks and appreciation to all those who contributed as authors, editors, thought partners, workshop participants, and community members.

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**City of Portland Climate Preparedness Group**, including staff from: Bureau of Development Services (BDS), Bureau of Environmental Services (BES), Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS), Office of Government Relations (OGR), Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R), and Portland Water Bureau (PWB).

**BPS staff**, including Eli Bonilla, Harmonie Dashiell, Wing Grabowski, Marco Mejia Yopez, Julie Ocken, Magan Reed, the Climate and Energy team, and the Solid Waste and Materials Management team.

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**EnviroIssues**, especially Sarah Omlor.

## External Working Group members\*:

- Tana Atchley Culbertson, *Nesika Wilamut*
- Jackie Kirouac-Fram, *Rebuilding Center*
- Kristin Leiber, *Lloyd EcoDistrict*
- Bryan Lewis, *environmental advocate and volunteer*
- Micah Meskel, *Bird Alliance of Oregon (fka Portland Audubon)*
- Tim Miller, *Oregon Business for Climate*
- Damon Motz-Storey, *Sierra Club Oregon Chapter*
- Sara O'Brien, *Willamette Partnership*
- Sasha Pollack, *Multnomah County Sustainability Commission*
- Beth Vargas Duncan, *Portland Haulers Association & Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association*

\*Organizational affiliation given for identification purposes only.

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**About City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability**

The Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) develops creative and practical solutions to enhance Portland's livability, preserve distinctive places, and plan for a resilient future.



THE BUREAU OF **PLANNING  
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# Appendix A – Other climate advisory bodies research summary

## Number of members, staff liaisons, & focus areas

14 climate advisory bodies within the US were researched – nine city-level, two county-level, and three state-level. Of those, five exist in Oregon – three city-level, one county-level, and one state-level. Advisory body member numbers range from five to 192, with five advisory bodies using both voting and nonvoting members. For three of the advisory bodies with both voting and nonvoting members, the nonvoting members are advisory committees categorized by focus areas for further research and input (i.e., public assembly bodies). Nine of the advisory bodies have staff liaisons – two as volunteer, appointed nonvoting members, three as volunteer, appointed voting members, and five as staff liaison positions in their job description (i.e., paid positions with other duties besides serving as staff liaisons). When there are staff liaisons, the number of positions (paid or volunteer) range from one to 21. Majority (11) of the advisory bodies categorize their work into focus areas (e.g., buildings, energy, transportation, justice/equity, etc.), categorizing into three to nine focus areas.

## Who they advise

Of the nine city-level advisory bodies, five advise only their city councils and mayors, one advises only a specific city department (i.e., climate, sustainability, and/or environmental offices), two advise both their councils/mayors and city departments, and one advises their council/mayor and community entities. Of the two county-level advisory bodies, one advises their county Board of Supervisors, and the other (Multnomah County) advises the entire county and their Board and Office of Sustainability. Of the three state-level advisory bodies, two advise the entire state, and the other (Oregon) advises state and local government, businesses, nonprofits, and residents.

## What actions are part of their charge

Four of the climate advisory bodies can only provide input, recommendations, research, and reviews to specific climate action plans and programs. Four advisory bodies provide input, recommendations, research, and reviews for general/any climate action plans and programs. Four advisory bodies provide input and recommendations, and can also pass rules, processes, policy, programs, and/or city ordinances. Two advisory bodies provide input and recommendations and can also play an advocacy role.

<b>Advises</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Members</b>
City of Sacramento & West Sacramento	Sacramento Commission on Climate Change	192
Office of Climate Action, Sustainability & Resiliency	Denver Sustainability Advisory Council	134
State of New York	New York Climate Action Council	35
County Board of Supervisors	Los Angeles County Youth Climate Commission	25
State/local government, businesses, nonprofits, residents	Oregon Global Warming Commission	25
State of Hawai'i	Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission	20
Mayor, City Council	Los Angeles Climate Emergency Mobilization Commission	19
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	Chicago Climate Committee	18
Multnomah County, Board and Office of Sustainability	Multnomah County Advisory Committee on Sustainability & Innovation	13
City Council, community entities	Ashland Conservation & Climate Outreach Committee	11
City Council	Forest Grove Sustainability Commission	10
City Council	Ashland Climate Policy Committee	9
Environmental Department, mayor, Board of Supervisors	San Francisco Commission on the Environment	7
Mayor, City Council, executive departments	Honolulu Climate Change Commission	5

<b>Group</b>	<b>Actions</b>
Sacramento Commission on Climate Change	Recommendations, advocacy, accountability, education for city Climate Action Plans
Denver Sustainability Advisory Council	Recommendations, promote/communicate sustainability, connect people
New York Climate Action Council	Draft/implement Climate Action Scoping Plan
Los Angeles County Youth Climate Commission	Recommendations, provide ideas
Oregon Global Warming Commission	Recommend statutory/administrative changes, policy, others
Hawai'i Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission	Promotion, recommendations on climate strategies
Los Angeles Climate Emergency Mobilization Commission	Provide reports, recommendations, establish guiding principles, develop procedures
Chicago Climate Committee	Guidance/support, review, input for comprehensive climate plans
Multnomah County Advisory Committee on Sustainability & Innovation	Evaluation, recommendations, analyze and review plans and programs
Ashland Conservation & Climate Outreach Committee	Educate, advocate; recommendations on strategies, actions, programs
Forest Grove Sustainability Commission	Provide research, gather information, advisory, create sustainability workplan
Ashland Climate Policy Committee	Recommendations, monitor, manage process; City Ordinances, rules, process changes
San Francisco Commission on the Environment	Sets policy & programs, recommendation
Honolulu Climate Change Commission	Gather science/research/information, recommendations

# Appendix B – Art and inspirations

## Artists for Climate

Artists for Climate is a collection of open-license art about climate change from 1,432 artists and 95 countries. Art about climate change can increase public awareness, impart a deeper understanding of climate change and crises, facilitate collective grieving, and inspire hope for the future. Art influences both enacting social change and documenting it. We used Artists for Climate to demonstrate the power of art within the global community and the shared goal of urgent climate action.

## Wangari Maathai

In 2004, Wangari Maathai became the first environmentalist and first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. [Her Nobel Lecture](#) is quoted in this proposal to give perspective of where we are in time and on the international stage. Climate change has been a longstanding global fight, and we must honor the innumerable fighters and their work. Wangari Maathai witnessed the needs of communities around her, and empowered those communities to find solutions via interconnectedness with their environment. Let's draw inspiration from Wangari Maathai – we all can contribute to the solutions, we can make lasting change, we can win the climate change fight.