



Source: Gorka Gil for ArtistsforClimate.org

Sustainability and Climate Commission (SCC)

Exhibit A - Proposal

April 2024



THE BUREAU OF
**PLANNING &
SUSTAINABILITY**

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Background

City of Portland climate action plans

In 1993, the City of Portland became the first US city to adopt a climate action plan. Since then, the City has released many iterations of [climate action plans and declarations](#). The City of Portland and Multnomah County produced climate actions plans in 2001, 2009, and 2015. Then, the City adopted: the 100% renewable energy by 2050 resolution in 2017, climate preparation and resiliency plans in 2014 and 2018, environmental justice and equity frameworks in 2016 and 2017, and the Climate Emergency Declaration in 2020. The Climate Emergency Declaration heightened the level of awareness of climate change crises and disasters. It mandated yearly progress reports and became a framework for the current City climate action plan as the [Climate Emergency Workplan](#) for 2022-2025. This current plan is implementation of the Portlanders’ aspirations from the Climate Emergency Declaration, and is process-oriented and focused on reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

This proposal describes how the next iteration of the City’s climate action plan and other documents and projects will work through a new oversight body: the [Sustainability and Climate Commission \(SCC\)](#). SCC will be supported by key City staff and leadership, and in turn, SCC will be able to support City staff working on and implementing climate and sustainability initiatives across service areas, bureaus, and offices. Together, the City of Portland can become a global climate action leader.

“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



Former Planning and Sustainability Commission

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 became more than one commission could 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 as it is mandated by state statute.

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

City of Portland charter reform

The City of Portland [Charter Commission](#) made up of 20 community leaders reviewed and recommended changes to the City of Portland Charter (City's Constitution) from December 2020 to December 2022 in two phases. [Phase I](#) passed by Portland voters in November 2022 as [Ballot Measure 26-228](#), included City of Portland structure and election process for city elected officials. This began the [citywide transition](#) into the new form of government for 2025. For climate, the ballot included in the responsibilities of the Mayor and City Administrator to advance climate change and environmental justice initiatives.

“[The Mayor and City Administrator must] Advance the City’s efforts to mitigate the human-made climate crisis and prioritize environmental justice initiatives.”

— Ballot Measure 26-228, Exhibit A, Passed by Portland voters in November 2022

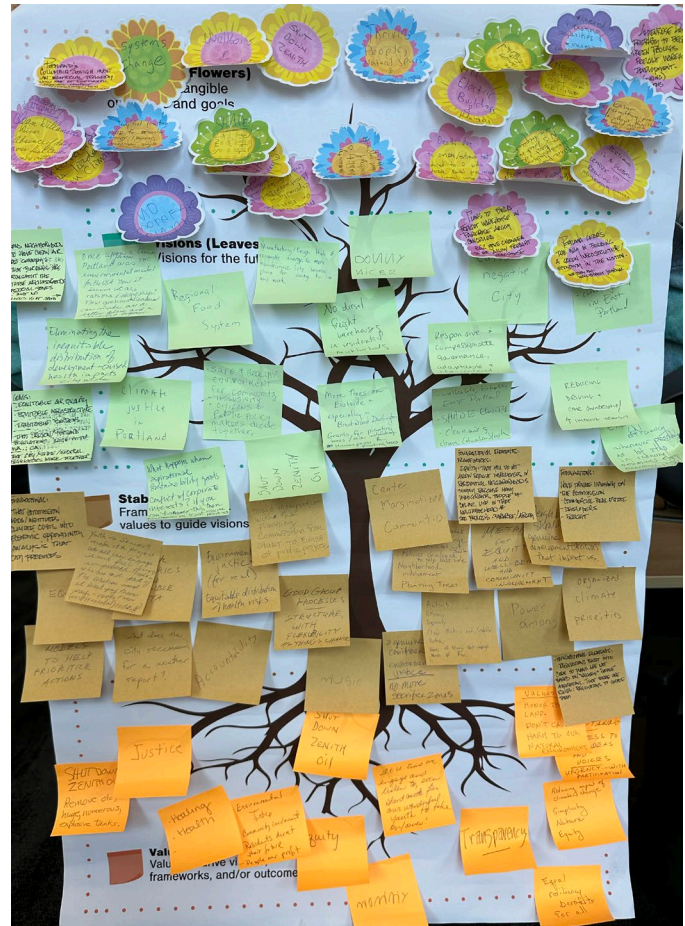
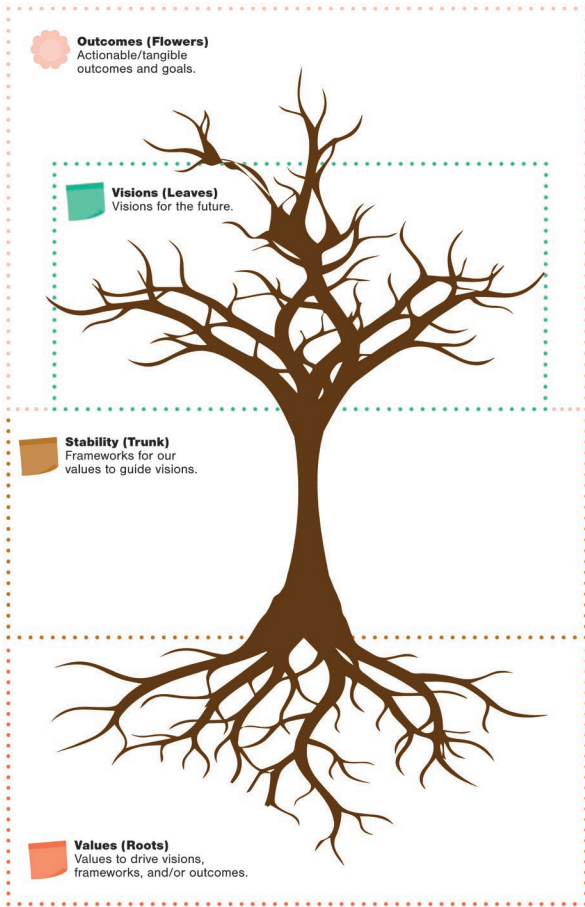
[Phase II](#) of the charter reform referred nine proposals to Portland voters in November 2024, and six proposals to City Council to refer them to the ballot as-is, modify them, or do nothing. One of the proposals to City Council includes environmental justice as one of the core values of the City, and requires the City to assess climate impact of its decisions, and establishes the right to a healthy environment.

During both phases, the Charter Commission committed to robust [community engagement](#). In phase I, almost eight percent of all public comments were related to climate and environmental justice. Themes included needing urgent action and establishing a climate oversight commission. When the Charter Commission started working on phase II in June 2022, they created a [Climate and Environmental Justice Subcommittee](#) and hosted two [listening sessions in September 2022](#). The key themes from these events included again that bold climate action is needed, climate change is felt by Portlanders, and vulnerable populations should be given priority. For reform, some ideas were to establish a climate assembly that has the authority to refer policies directly to the voters, include environmental justice in City Core Values, and involve the community via clear and accessible pathways.

In this document, we propose how the Sustainability and Climate Commission can provide the opportunity for the Mayor and City Administrator to address their charge to the human-made climate crisis and environmental justice. SCC will be a climate oversight body that is made up by community members, offer a place for public forum on climate and sustainability initiatives, and provide transparency and accountability that the City will act on those initiatives.

Public & City staff engagement to develop SCC

City staff hosted one [in-person](#) and two [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 this SCC proposal. Commenters expressed they want to see Portland as a global climate action leader, that is resilient to climate emergencies. To achieve that, they voiced SCC should be an accountability body that pushes forward climate action urgently, and City staff should be given proper capacity, resources, and funds to accomplish these initiatives.



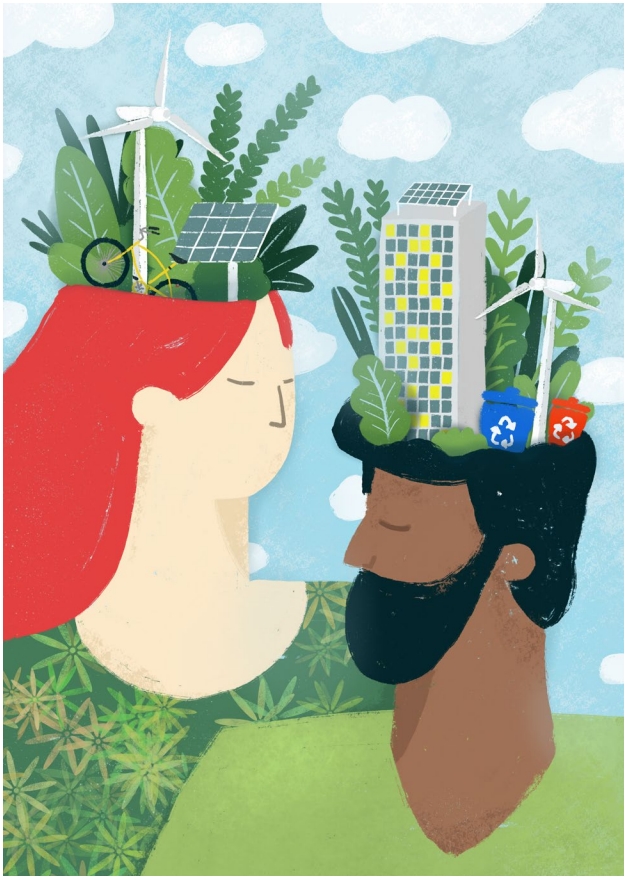
BPS staff also held four workshops with key community members to form a working group to inform this proposal (see Acknowledgements). They helped design SCC structure, function, and processes with the City organization, external bodies, and the community. The workshop activities depicted SCC processes for potential projects, programs, and policies that may be seen by the SCC. The same workshops were given to two City staff groups in a condensed format. Additionally, the Chief Sustainability Officer and the Climate Commission Coordinator, a position created within BPS to design the SCC, briefed various City staff and leadership from over 12 City bureaus, offices, or groups about the SCC proposal.

The SCC proposal draft was open for [public comment](#) for 30-days in March 2024 and received 24 comments. Overall, 83% of public comment was in favor of creating a new climate advisory body as SCC, and 58% of comments referenced other City climate documents. Additionally, comments received reflected that SCC must: have clearer authority, urgently push forward climate action, support City staff to achieve climate goals, and clearly measure and evaluate progress. The Chief Sustainability Officer and the Climate Commission Coordinator updated the SCC proposal draft into this final version, and showcased the updates at [public events](#).

Goals

The new Sustainability and Climate Commission 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 overview

The Climate Commission Coordinator 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 commission that is made up of 20 community members, including four youth commissioners. Commissioners will be recruited in areas of expertise. Additionally, SCC will have non-voting City staff liaisons.

BPS staff 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 action plan as the [Climate Emergency Workplan](#):

- Buildings and homes
- Climate resiliency and adaptation
- Energy and renewables
- 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

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 SCC Coordinator and other staff with subject matter expertise that aligns with SCC focus areas to provide recommendations to the Chief Sustainability Officer, who then provides their recommendation to the Mayor for appointment to the SCC with City Council approval.

SCC applications will be reviewed and chosen with the proposed SCC focus areas and [City of Portland Core Values](#) in mind. Staff will seek to recommend commissioner appointments of those with subject matter expertise equally across the eight focus areas as much as possible.

Our current understanding is that a holistic 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.

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

City staff SCC liaisons

Following the trend of other climate commissions (Appendix A), Deputy City Administrators, or a designee of their choosing, will be appointed as ex officio, non-voting SCC members (Appendix B). Their membership will help bridge climate efforts across service areas and bureaus and offer insight into the City's internal affairs.

If a future council committee has a nexus with SCC (*e.g.*, climate, any of the SCC focus areas, budget, etc.), members of that council committee may serve as ex officio members to SCC. Any additional City staff liaisons will be reviewed and chosen with the proposed focus areas or role in mind.

Engaging with SCC

Functions

The Sustainability and Climate Commission will report to the Chief Sustainability Officer (see Appendix B) and will utilize tiered decision-making for its work:

- **Tier I – LEARN & PLAN**

Staff educates SCC, acts with SCC validation, and provides SCC with updates. SCC learns and collects information – from City staff and any other applicable bodies. Examples of actions include:

- Deputy City Administrators (DCAs), or their designees, briefing the SCC on implementation strategies for previously agreed-upon workplans from service areas.
- Accepting progress reports.
- Holding joint meetings with another commission.

- **Tier II – DO & EVALUATE**

The Chief Sustainability Officer works with Deputy City Administrators, or their designees, to bring forward proposals/projects from service areas to SCC for work: recommendations, refinements, and alignment with established climate goals.

- Gives public forum for debate on the issues at the SCC.
- Decision-making authority remains with City Council, the Mayor, and/or City Administrator; however, SCC work and evaluations will strongly inform decisions.
- Addresses the charter reform charge for the City Administrator and Mayor to advance mitigation of human-made climate crisis.

- **Tier III – ACT**

The Chief Sustainability Officer works with Deputy City Administrators and their offices to bring work from SCC to City Council, the Mayor, and/or 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).
- City Council for policy and budget decisions.
- Mayor and City Administrator for implementation decisions.

For significant projects – those that require a recommendation by SCC (Tier II) to City Council, the Mayor, and/or the City Administrator for final adoption (Tier III) – DCAs and other staff will engage with the SCC to inform its development. The decision to provide documentation to City Council, the Mayor, and/or City Administrator and the form of that documentation (*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 setting new subcommittees, policies, rules, or programs.

Internal collaboration

Briefing and work agenda for 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 SCC Coordinator. Deputy City Administrators or their designee will bring briefings and work to SCC, in collaboration with the Chief Sustainability Officer and SCC Coordinator. SCC will hold joint meetings or share information with other advisory bodies, such as the [Planning Commission](#), [Design Commission](#), and [Urban Forestry Commission](#) when applicable and at any or all of the above tiers.

The Climate Commission Coordinator will be reclassified to a permanent position as the ongoing SCC Coordinator. Their duty will be to coordinate with City staff and leadership to set agendas, execute meetings, and problem-solve for the SCC. They will report to the Chief Sustainability Officer and work with the Deputy City Administrators, the Mayor and City Council offices, City Attorneys, other advisory bodies coordinators, and other City staff to support the SCC. They will also keep meeting records, archive documents, and prepare any documentation for filing (*i.e.*, Tier III).

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 and response. To stay accountable, the SCC will follow through with actions and follow up on concepts and work, and evaluate past and current policies and programs and recommend processes for those evaluation outcomes.

“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

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Envirolssues, especially Sarah Omlor.

External Working Group members*:

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- 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.*

Portland community members, especially those who engaged in the SCC [community kickoff](#), [community conversations](#), [proposal public comment](#), and [proposal open houses](#).

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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.



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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.

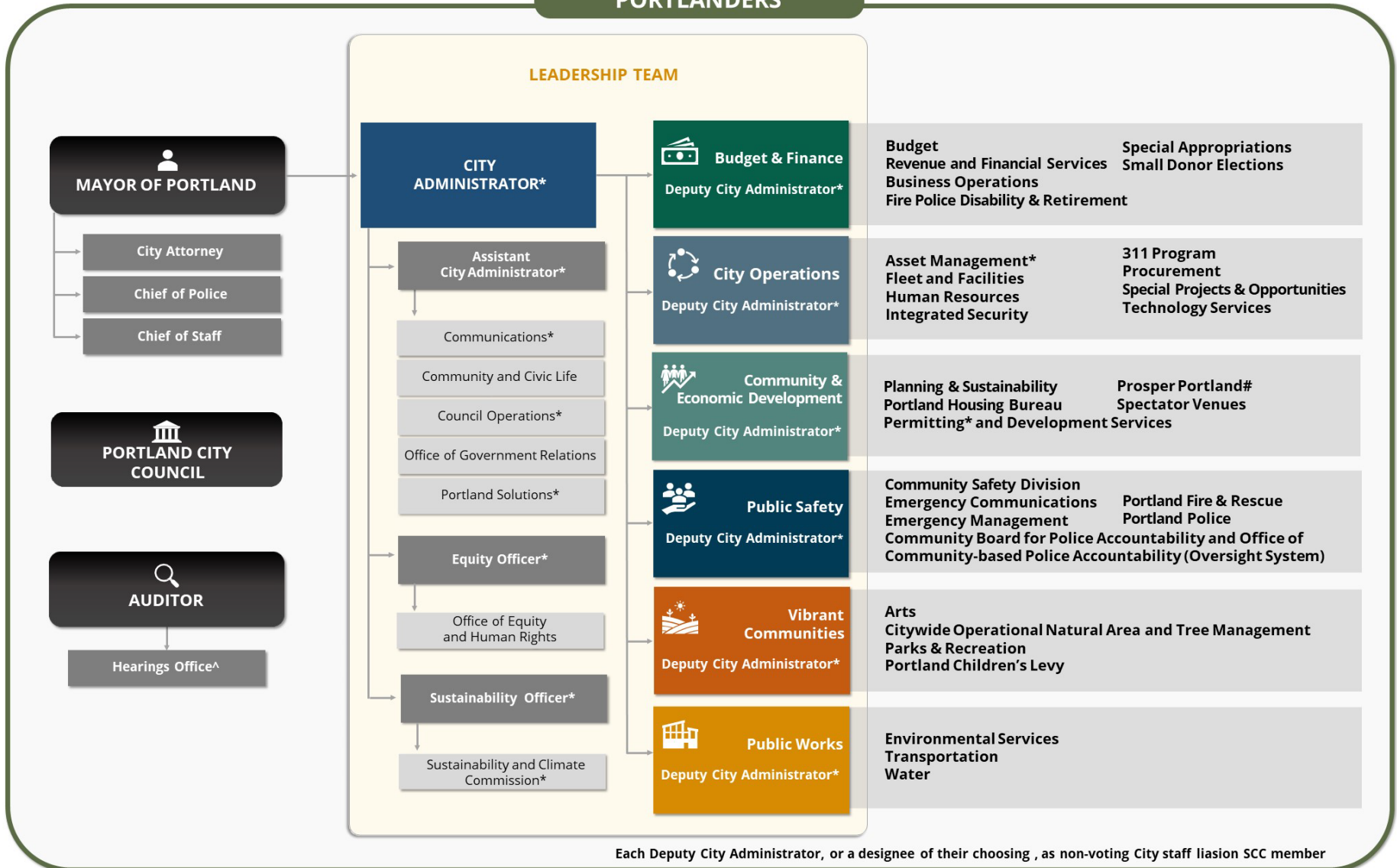
Advises	Group	Members
City of Sacramento & West Sacramento	Sacramento Commission on Climate Change	192
Office of Climate Action, Sustainability & Resiliency	Denver Sustainability Advisory Council	134
State of New York	New York Climate Action Council	35
County Board of Supervisors	Los Angeles County Youth 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

Group	Actions
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 – SCC in City of Portland organization

Sustainability and Climate Commission (SCC) - Amended Exhibit A

CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON
Proposed Organizational Chart
CITY ORGANIZATION



Key
 * New program/function pending ongoing assessments
 # Reports to the Prosper Portland Commission
 ^ Return pending budget approval

Appendix C – 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.