rooted in values
guided by vision

community-driven climate justice framework for multnomah county

Artist: Paola De La Cruz

July 2023

acknowledgements

table of **contents**

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The Community-driven Climate Justice Framework ("The Framework") for Multnomah County is the culmination of community stories, surveys, and shared visioning, developed in deep collaboration between frontline community-led organizations, community leaders, and local government. Frontline communities are defined as those that experience the impacts of climate change first and most intensely. People in frontline communities are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), low-income, immigrants and refugees, women and gender non-binary people, LGBTQ+, and/or people who are further marginalized through their experiences of disability, incarceration, houselessness, and limited English proficiency, among other factors.

Artist: Paola De La Cruz

The Framework presents a new model that shifts away from the traditional government planning process by centering the voices of frontline communities...

The Framework reflects a snapshot of the work that has been done to date toward developing the first-ever Climate Justice Plan for local government and the community in Multnomah County. It will serve as the foundation for the plan itself, supporting community-driven solutions around an enduring and positive collective vision for climate justice for 2030 and beyond that is rooted in community values and shared power.The Framework presents a new model that shifts away from the traditional government planning process by centering the voices of frontline communities and further analyzing community data to identify emergent themes, values, and a vision for the Climate Justice Plan. It will be a foundation for community members and organizations who have a role and responsibility in organizing, and advocating for climate justice in Portland and Multnomah County.

laying the groundwork for climate justice

Artist: Paola De La Cruz

For decades, frontline communities have been instrumental in the movement against environmental racism. Through tireless organizing, relationship building, and advocacy, BIPOC-led environmental groups and frontline communities have worked to respond to environmental injustice — *they* are the climate justice experts.

The last several years have seen major legislative policy wins to advance an environmental justice movement that places communities at greatest risk of harm at the forefront. These victories were delivered in large part by the advocacy, organizing, and energy of coalitions composed of and led by environmental justice communities, culturally specific organizations, and community members.

In 2018, frontline communities, in coalition with environmental justice groups, led a successful campaign to create the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF). PCEF commits long-term funding and oversight to ensure that climate actions reach everybody in Portland, especially low-income communities and communities of color. With over 65% of support from Portland voters, PCEF is a first-of-its-kind initiative. PCEF offers funding that targets clean energy projects, transportation decarbonation,

regenerative agriculture, green infrastructure, and developing the climate action workforce. It's one of the first programs to prioritize communities that are often left out of the climate conversation with continuous support. Although PCEF is implemented by the City of Portland, oversight of investments is managed by a community board.

And in 2021, frontline communities from across the state built and led a powerful coalition with environmental organizations, local governments, renewable energy advocates, and public health groups to urgently push for legislation that ensures a more just and equitable transition to clean energy that benefits environmental justice communities. The coalition's Oregon Clean Energy Opportunity (OCEO) campaign helped secure bipartisan support in the Oregon state legislature to pass three bills that, together, are already making a meaningful difference: the Energy Affordability Act (HB 2475), Healthy Homes (HB 2842), and 100% Clean Energy for All (HB 2021). These bills provide utility bill discounts and home health upgrades to low-income households, and set electric utilities in Oregon on a path to fully decarbonize by 2040, with

strong labor standards for the clean energy projects that will help us get there. These generational policy accomplishments were only possible with BIPOC environmental justice leadership.

> These generational policy accomplishments were only possible with BIPOC environmental justice leadership.

Despite these significant victories, the climate crisis continues to have severe impacts on Multnomah County communities. During the Labor Day fires in 2020, an air quality index (AQI) pinned in the "hazardous" range lingered for days on end as the entire region was blanketed in severe, thick smoke. Suburbs south of Portland were on high alert and ready to evacuate; residents whose homes were in the fire's path streamed into an evacuation center that had been setup at the Oregon Convention Center. For the first time ever, Multnomah County and the City of Portland raced to establish clean air shelters and distributed N95 masks to those who could not protect themselves from the hazardous air, including but not limited to those experiencing homelessness.
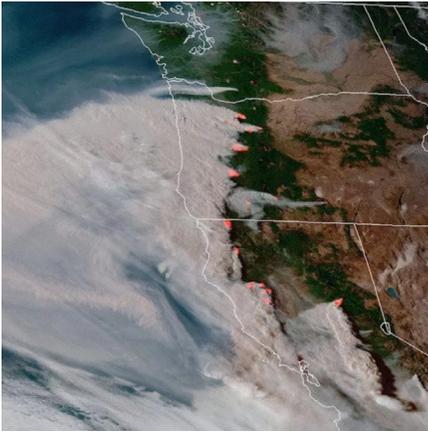
An image from NOAA's GOES-17 satellite on September 8, 2020, of the smoke and heat signatures from western U.S. wildfires.

The Cascadia Street Outreach team delivers water and care items to people in record breaking heat.

The following year in June 2021, a five-day record-shattering heat dome that brought temperatures as high as 116° Fahrenheit resulted in the deaths of 69 people in Multnomah County. The heat dome disproportionately impacted older adults, farmworkers, people living in multi-family buildings, people experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and people living in neighborhoods with fewer trees and excess pavement. In some low-income, low tree canopy neighborhoods temperatures as high as 125° Fahrenheit were recorded. The next summer provided little relief, as the county endured its longest-ever stretch of severe heat in July 2022, leading to four more heat-related deaths. In total, 77 people died in Multnomah County from heat in 2021 and 2022, when previously the average number of heat related deaths in all of Oregon was zero.

The conditions we experienced in successive years made it painfully clear: We are living in a changed climate. What these and other local and global severe weather events highlight is that a warming planet is leading to a destabilized climate more likely to produce extreme weather conditions. It's also clear that people who have contributed the least in terms of fossil fuel pollution — whether here in Multnomah County, in the Global South, or elsewhere — are the people with the most vulnerability to climate extremes.

The recent spate of important policy victories is tempered by the fact that the climate crisis is getting worse, and even more urgent action is needed. To make progress on making our community more equitable, more resilient, and less polluted, it's clear not only that communities and government need to work together, but also that the solutions and expertise of frontline communities — those that are experiencing the first and worst impacts of the climate crisis — should be at the center of planning efforts.

Artist: Paola De La Cruz

what does climate justice mean?

Racism and climate change have the same root cause: an economy built on the over-extraction of natural resources and exploitation of human labor. Climate justice addresses the impacts of this economic system that creates not only a society dependent on fossil fuels, but myriad concurrent injustices within Black, Indigenous and other communities of color, and communities with the least power and resources.

In a climate just world, frontline communities — communities that have borne the burden of disinvestment and suffered at the expense of fossil fuel-intensive and racist policies — are not only protected from additional burden, but are thriving from efforts to address climate change.

Artist: Nia Musiba

Artist: Nia Musiba

climate justice is...

This language emerged from the 2020 Climate Justice by Design Initiative (see page 13 to learn more).

Reparative

We are healing community, nature, and our relationship to one another.

Action must address the historic harm created by fossil fuel-intensive economies, as well as green investments that have excluded or served to destabilize frontline communities. We aim to do this through investments that create opportunity, access, and improvements for the health, safety, and prosperity of all communities.

Resilient

We are empowered to collectively face the challenges of climate impacts and injustice.

Action must generate solutions rooted in frontline community priorities, needs, and leadership. Governance processes must shift toward more consistent community building, partnership, and democratic problem-solving in the face of these challenges so that we can be more prepared to respond nimbly and effectively.

Innovative

We co-create liberatory solutions that reframe long-standing challenges into generative new possibilities.

The systems that we currently operate in have been limited in their ability to produce the type of climate solutions that produce just outcomes. Action must challenge what are considered normal and traditional ways of working, as well as expectations for the kind of change that is possible. Action can and must produce new and improved relationships, institutions, and systems. Our Climate Justice Framework starts with the knowledge that because this unjust, inequitable system was designed, a just and equitable system can also be designed.

Historically, communities that are most impacted by climate changes have been excluded from discussions about climate solutions. On their own, neither government nor community has the resources to solve the challenges of climate change and its related inequities.

To build accountable change at scale we must find ways to shift the power dynamics behind how the work is done. So this process seeks to create a "third space" where relationships between community and government can be established and strengthened, and together we will co–create solutions for redesigning and transforming our systems to build a more just future.

EQUITABLE GOVERNMENT

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE

COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE

the need for a community-driven plan

Typical government planning is normally done by a small team of experts with specific credentials and academic degrees and can be very exclusive. Community-driven climate justice planning flips the script and treats frontline communities impacted first and worst as experts who are also closest to the most creative and innovative solutions.

In traditional top-down planning, community engagement can be seen as a box to check and can end up tokenizing community members. It does not prioritize activating sustained community leadership or building authentic long-term partnerships. Often, community members and community organizations are expected to volunteer and are typically not compensated for their time to fill out surveys or be a part of open houses and focus groups, which is a burden for working households with limited time and income. With this conventional planning approach, solutions are rarely developed collaboratively and fail to draw from the wisdom of frontline communities. Emphasis and authority are given to quantitative data over qualitative data and personal stories.

Artist: Nia Musiba

The 2015 Multnomah County / City of Portland Climate Action Plan (CAP) sought to address some of these concerns through the organizing of a CAP Equity Working Group made up of several frontline organizations and County and City staff. At the time, this approach was thought to be an innovative and community-responsive model, which included compensation for the frontline organizations' participation, a focus on building relationships and capacity, and starting from community priorities instead of government goals. However, in surveys of participants after the project, the County and City learned that this effort was largely a tokenizing experience due to the power imbalances between the CAP Equity Working Group and a larger, more powerful CAP Steering Committee made up of mostly mainstream, dominant culture organizations. In addition, without a concerted effort to invest in the approach after the adoption of the CAP, relationships were not maintained and the frontline organizations instead focused on community-based organizing efforts. These missteps and other missed opportunities have set local climate work

> *Community-driven climate justice planning provides an alternative, where communities impacted by climate change come together to define the challenges they face, create a shared vision, and build solutions.*

back, and have shown the need for a new model of community-centered, deeply collaborative, accountable, and sustained planning.

Community-driven climate justice planning provides an alternative, where communities impacted by climate change come together to define the challenges they face, create a shared vision, and build solutions. Community-driven planning is about self-determination for BIPOC communities. Replacing the exclusionary practices of top-down planning necessitates creating more capacity in our communities to develop our own solutions and plans.

A cultural shift in local government

In 2020, the City of Portland, Multnomah County, and community-based organizations came together to participate in Climate Justice by Design (CJxD). CJxD established a "third space" for local governments and frontline organizations to advance several goals, including: building spaces where community and government show up as equals; recognizing the unique roles that each other plays in affecting change; and identifying opportunities where collective impact can address the climate crisis. Participants saw that formalizing the work of CJxD in a shared planning effort would be impactful.

In 2022, Multnomah County and the Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC) established a Climate Justice Plan Executive Committee to guide the planning effort. CCC and Multnomah County had developed a strong partnership through co-leading the CJxD process (with support from consultants Kapwa and studio b:ask), and were co-applicants for foundation grant

A more just, healthy, and resilient community

Process
Climate Justice by Design

Output
Climate Justice Plan

support for both CJxD and the Climate Justice Plan. CCC is uniquely situated to play a lead role in local and state climate justice organizing as it is a coalition of a number of justice-oriented community-based organizations. The Executive Committee included community leaders and representatives from community-based organizations and local government, with community capacity support from foundation partners Meyer Memorial Trust and Partners for Places, and from Multnomah County and the City of Portland.
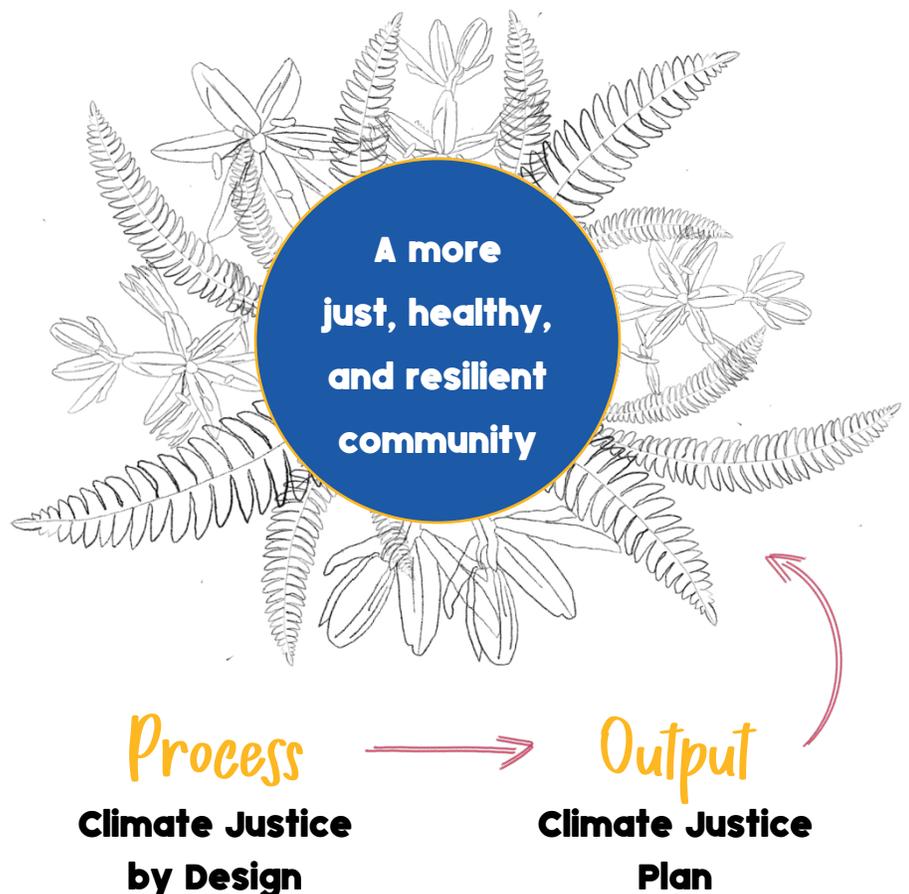
To build on the authentic relationships established under CJxD and to ensure the effort moved at the speed of trust, the Executive Committee started with a foundation of shared values and tools to help ensure co-creation and power sharing in decision making. This included giving each organization (or individual for unaffiliated community) a single vote in decisions, creating parity between government and community partners. Voting used a simple methodology (see below) to surface concerns and allowed for any of the organizations to hold an issue if there were significant disagreements.

Thumbs up
I enthusiastically agree. I do not need to have further discussion during this meeting.
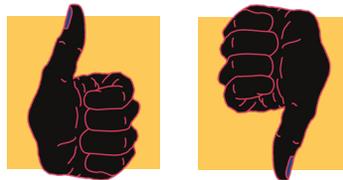
Thumbs down
I disagree or need clarity. I need to have further discussion during this meeting.

Thumbs sideways
I agree, and I also have qualms or questions. I do not need to have further discussion during this meeting.

Open hand
I strongly disagree. More in depth conversation and follow up is necessary before I can vote again.

The purpose of an equity-centered climate plan is to rethink the way our community can thrive by pairing local government, community-based organizations, and philanthropy together to enhance local capacity to build equitable and sustainable communities. Connecting community members, local lawmakers, service providers, and funders supports the formation of relationships rooted in a shared vision for our community to be better prepared for the impacts of the climate crisis, while also reducing pollution and healing natural systems.

The development of this Framework, and ultimately, the Climate Justice Plan uses the National Association of Climate Resilience Planner's (NACRP) Framework as a guide. The NACRP is a national network of community-driven planning facilitators, grassroots members, and allies that fosters effective climate solutions through training, peer learning, and capacity building.

A space to vision and lift community voices

A key principle of community-driven planning is the use of community data to shape the priorities and outcomes of the work. Often, quantitative data from long-established sources (for example, Census-derived American Community Survey data) are relied on to assess the strengths and challenges of a given community. While valuable, this type of data can miss critical components that community data can show: notably, how community members see and experience the issues being considered. Lived experience can provide insights into the root causes of issues and provide a pathway to more effective solutions. This is why the Climate Justice Plan process has prioritized community data, gathered through community-led processes, alongside traditional qualitative sources of data.

Throughout the course of the climate justice planning process, CCC engaged frontline community members through several different methods, including 130 online surveys, 27 community interviews, and a focus group of 12 participants.

Demographics of participants by race/ethnicity and gender identity

Race/Ethnicity

Black, 46.3%
Hispanic, 13.0%
Mixed Race, 11.7%
Native, 10.4%
Asian, 9.5%
White, 4.8%
NHPI, 4.3%

Gender Identity

Woman, 62.6%
Man, 20.9%
LGBTQ+, 6.6%
Non Binary, 6%
Two Spirit, 2.2%
Trans, 1.6%
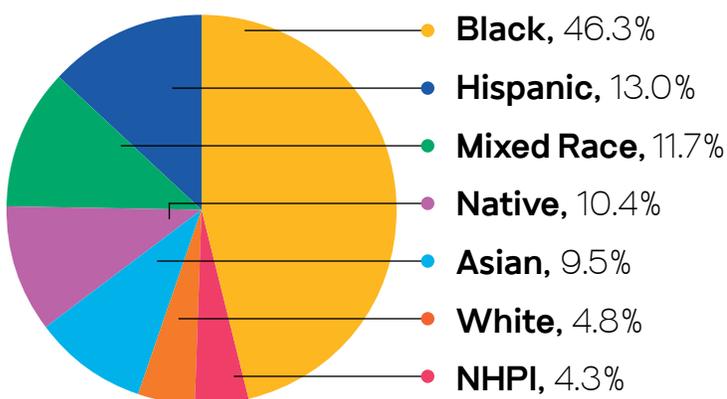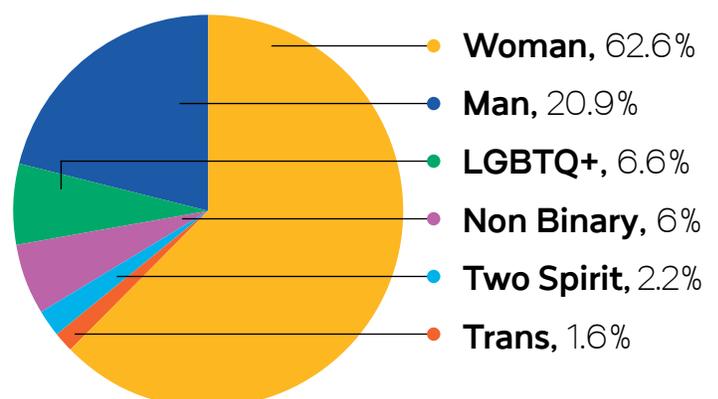
The vast majority of those who participated in the engagement activities led by CCC identified as Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Participants identifying as Black were most heavily represented, constituting approximately 46% of those engaged. In terms of gender identity, women were most heavily represented, constituting approximately 63% of total participants.

Impacts of extreme weather events

Participants shared about the physical, mental, and financial impacts that extreme weather events had on themselves and their communities.

Extreme heat caused significant physical discomfort for many, which was exacerbated by a lack of air conditioning or fans. Most of the people who were interviewed reported not having access to air conditioning in their homes during the 2021 heat dome, when temperatures reached as high as 116° Fahrenheit in Multnomah County (see "Cultivating Justice In A Changing Climate: A Collection Of Stories and Art Rooted In Multnomah County's Communities Of Color" zine, page 19).

Residents find refuge at a Multnomah County cooling center in June 2021 during the unprecedented and deadly heat dome.

"Me and my family were impacted by that heat wave because we didn't have air conditioning and we still don't. It's also not in our budget to have it." – Interview Respondent

Focus group participants spoke about the discomfort of not having air conditioning during the heat dome. Some participants stayed in their homes without air conditioning, while others were able to stay with friends and family who did have air conditioning. Notably, a participant who had air conditioning shared the mental impact of the extreme heat event, describing the guilt that they felt thinking about all of those who did not. Concern was also expressed about elders in the community and how they were faring in such conditions. Following the heat dome, one participant shared that they used all of their savings to purchase an air conditioner.

Artist: Nia Musiba

Artist: Nia Musiba

"Community elders that we would see walking around, we didn't see them during the heat. We might know them, but not know if they're ok or how to reach out."
— Focus Group Participant

Participants also shared about recent ice storms and wildfires. One participant shared that they had a visceral "I need to run" reaction as wildfires encroached upon the Portland metro region.

Numerous participants mentioned the financial impacts of severe weather events. For some, the cost of AC units themselves and/or the higher electricity bills that came with their use were significant barriers to staying safe and healthy while temperatures climbed.

People experienced similar challenges during the intense snow and ice storms in early 2021 and 2023. Some residents had central heating in their homes, but inadequate insulation in older homes forced them to also use space heaters,

which tended to drive up their electricity bills. Additionally, hazardous driving conditions due to snow/ice and extreme temperatures impacted their ability to work, resulting in missed days.

"My grandfather works outdoors at a nursery, so some days he would come home early, which effectively lowers his pay."
— Focus Group Participant

Participants overall expressed the need for more utility assistance programs. As these extreme weather events have shown, access to efficient cooling and heating technology is central to community climate resilience. While using box fans and space heaters and opening windows at night can help, they can only offer minimal relief from the sweltering heat or blistering cold. The work of increasing access to cooling and heating must also go further to include affordability; heaters and air conditioners are not useful if families cannot afford to use them.

The built environment is what's all around us — the buildings, streets and parks in our neighborhoods, the transit system and streets, the electricity and water systems, and the quality of our air. It is the infrastructure that makes up the places where we work, live, and play, and the ways we get around them.

CCC's community engagement processes provided insight into the daily lives and built environments of community members of color in Multnomah County. While some rely on public transportation, most residents noted concerns with recent violent incidents on public buses and trains, leading them to opt to drive instead, even if transit is accessible.
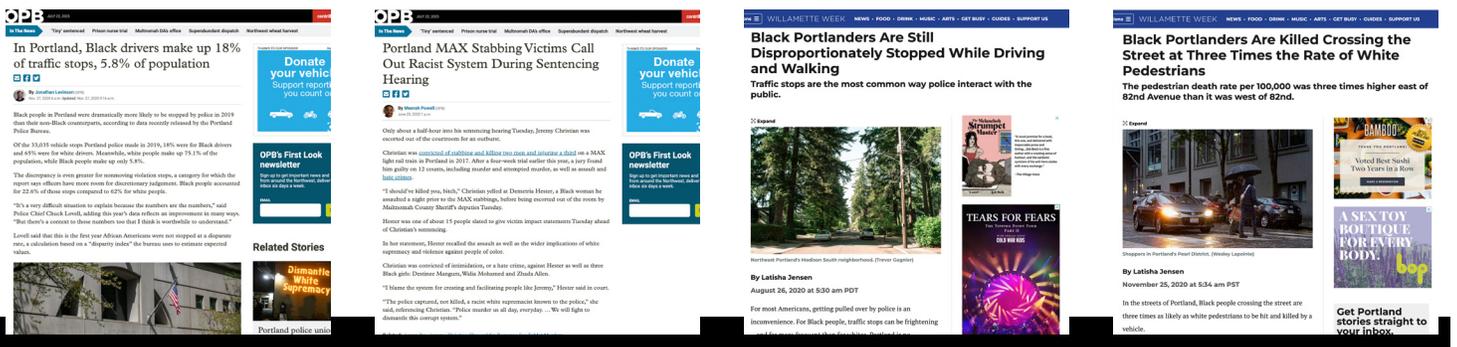
Screenshots of news coverage relating to the intersection of race and the built environment.

Other safety concerns that influence decisions to use public transportation included inadequate lighting, uncovered bus stops, long distances to transit stops, and a lack of sidewalks in predominantly BIPOC communities, particularly in Portland neighborhoods further out from the city center, as well as east Multnomah County (see "Cultivating Justice In A Changing Climate: A Collection Of Stories and Art Rooted In Multnomah County's Communities Of Color" zine, pages 13, 15, and 17). However, some people mentioned that they would consider taking the bus if it were more accessible and transfers were easier.
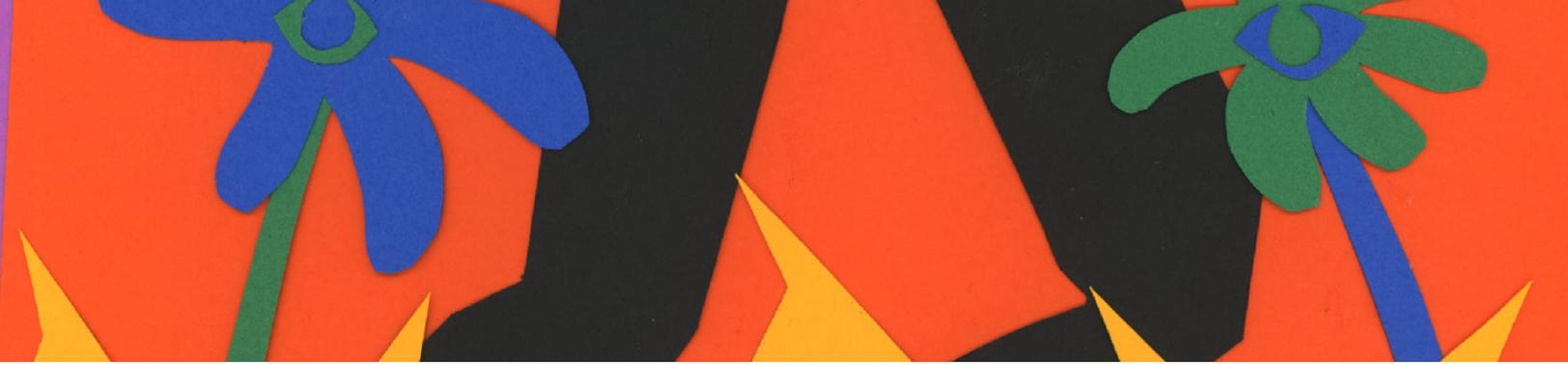
Artist: Nia Musiba

Respondents also expressed health concerns about being on crowded buses and trains due to COVID-19. Walkability was also a concern, because some residents live in neighborhoods that don't have sidewalks, forcing them to "walk near the shoulder of the street."

"I live a few minutes away from the 82nd transit line, which is very accessible. However, it is not reliable and I don't really feel safe going on it... I also take evening courses, so I feel unsafe relying on public transit and prefer driving to campus."
— Interview Respondent

A Trimet bus travels on Portland's 82nd Avenue, which is part of an area where residents have faced safety challenges and historic inequities.

Respondents desired neighborhood features like public pools, fountains, shady parks, and cooling centers for staying cool. It was commonly expressed that their neighborhoods need more trees, especially mature trees that can provide shade (see "Cultivating Justice In A Changing Climate: A Collection Of Stories and Art Rooted In Multnomah County's Communities Of Color" zine, page 9). Among these features was the desire for safer public spaces, especially at local parks and cooling centers.

A popular North Portland destination is Peninsula Park, which includes a fountain and splash pad.

"We're losing tree coverage and yards with lawns and other plants to concrete boxes that generate a lot of heat." — Interview Respondent

Staff of Multnomah County's Bienestar de la Familia program hand out cooling kits in Northeast Portland's Cully neighborhood.
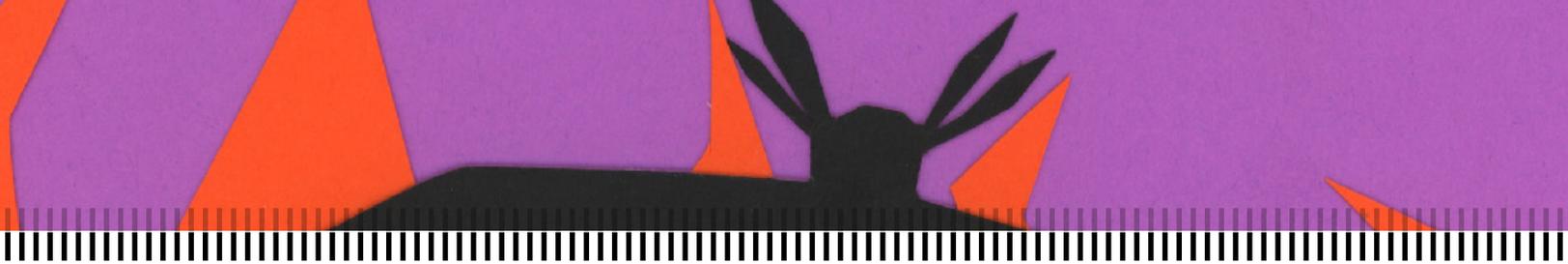
Most respondents lived near major sources of pollution, such as auto body shops, major freeways, manufacturing plants, dry cleaners, and other industrial areas, leading to concerns about poor air quality (see "Cultivating Justice In A Changing Climate: A Collection Of Stories and Art Rooted In Multnomah County's Communities Of Color" zine, page 11). Moreover, some respondents, especially those who have pre-existing health conditions, shared their fears over future wildfires and their impacts on health. Water quality, including the cleanliness and drinkability of water, was also mentioned.

Proximity to sources of pollution

Percent of respondents who live near each source of pollution
Source: Tahn Analytics

Source	Percent
Gas stations	73.28%
Major freeways	58.02%
Auto body shops	55.73%
Large commercial manufacturers	31.30%
Dry cleaners	29.77%
Other	16.03%
Power plants	15.27%
Battery processing facilities	11.45%
Oil refineries	6.11%
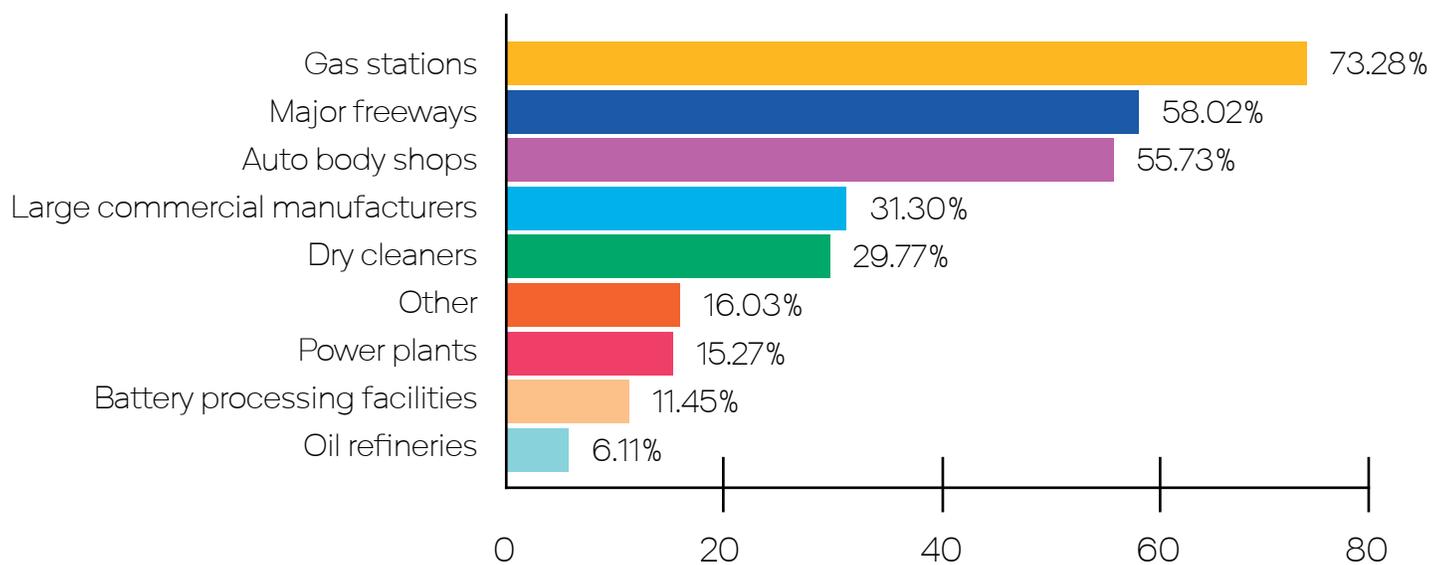
While some participants were unaware of either local sources of pollution or their potential health impacts, they were interested in learning more. In addition to these environmental concerns, residents noted social challenges such as rising homelessness and the gentrification of their neighborhoods. Participants highlighted the impacts of the housing crisis, including difficulties reaching and utilizing bus shelters and feeling unsafe to visit public spaces such as parks due to the rise in encampments. The displacement of communities of color through the gentrification of their neighborhoods adds stress and a sense of disconnection from their neighbors as people are physically isolated from their networks of support.

Participants were asked about the role of government in dealing with the climate crisis. Overall, participants expressed frustration with opaque government processes and the general inaccessibility of government for community members. One participant noted the use of inaccessible language and a "legalese" way of speaking.

Artist: Nia Musiba

Participants also mentioned the importance of investing in the public good and creating systems that center community wellbeing rather than private profit.

Participants spoke about the need for government intervention to ensure that landlords provide safe and healthy housing. One participant noted the importance of incentivizing rental property owners to make improvements to their buildings without raising their tenants' rent, mentioning that "there are some people who can't afford a rent increase."

Participants noted the need for more community education about government processes and how they could influence government.

Overall, participants recognized the crucial role of community in holding government accountable. They expressed the need for more community advisory committees and for real action that goes beyond listening sessions.

"They don't talk like people. None of us are dumb, how is it that we don't know this?"

"It's about the public good, helping each other. That's how we're gonna survive... Stop investing in these things that are harming the Earth and invest in the public good and create systems that support people."

"We need grassroots organizing, teaching people how to lobby. Just because they're in office doesn't mean we can't keep holding them accountable. We're the constituents and they represent us. This is our power. We elected them, so who's really in control? We need to harness our own power and stop letting them sit idle and do things that don't benefit us. We need to learn how to raise our voices."

environmental justice zine

The "Cultivating Justice In A Changing Climate: A Collection of Stories and Art Rooted In Multnomah County's Communities Of Color" zine weaves together community stories, art, and environmental justice indicator maps. The major goals of this zine project were to bridge the gap between storytelling (i.e., "community data") and maps (i.e., "dominant data"), and make climate data more accessible. We firmly believe that data is a powerful resource that should be harnessed by communities to drive our work and influence policy.

This zine features maps created by Multnomah County Environmental Health based on 11 scientifically based environmental health indicators that communicate where in Multnomah County people experience environmental injustice.

The publication also features the work of local BIPOC artists illustrating environmental themes. The connection between storytelling and art is deeply rooted in the environmental justice movement. Art is an opportunity to visualize the hopes and dreams that we have for our communities of color.

By combining community stories and maps, the zine creates a fuller picture and deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Multnomah County's communities of color, while also highlighting how climate resilience is flourishing in these communities.

CULTIVATING JUSTICE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE:
A collection of stories and art rooted in Multnomah County's communities of color

July 2023
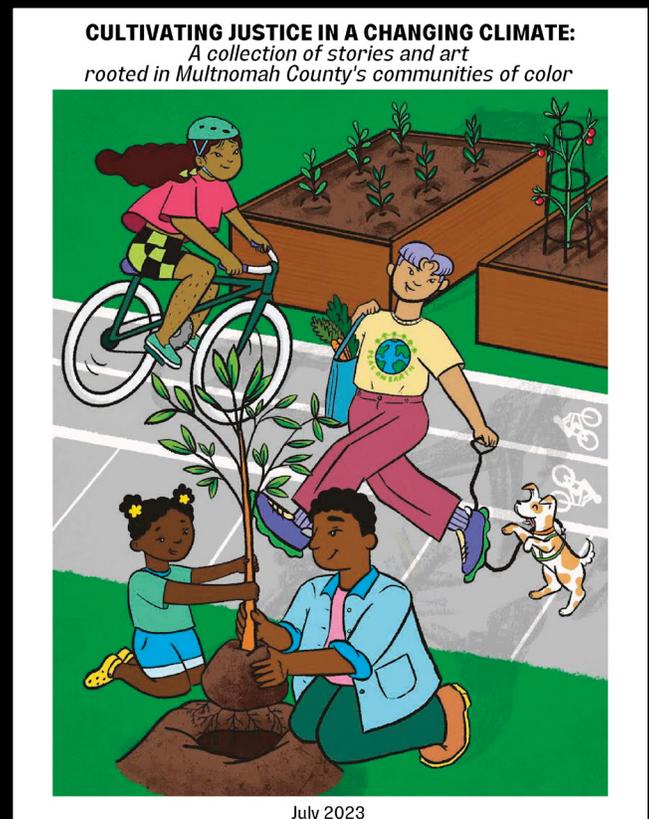
Artist: Jax Ko

This project is a collaboration between Coalition of Communities of Color, community organizer J'reyesha Brannon, Unite Oregon, Multnomah County, and other community members.

Scan to check out the full zine!

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Jax Ko
Jax Ko is a first-gen Korean-American non-binary femme artist based in Portland, Oregon. They're a freelance illustrator, graphic designer, muralist, stylist, & professional crybaby.
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Nia Musiba
Nia Musiba is an ant loving, asparagus hating multidisciplinary creative that lives and eats and sleeps and creates work and makes new friends in Portland. Nia has a lifelong commitment to diversifying art and design spaces which has manifested in community-based projects, public art, and taking up space within her personal practice in an attempt to inspire others who hold marginalized identities to do the same.
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Paola De La Cruz
Paola interweaves digital and analog media, patterns, stitching and shape-based illustrations to evoke intimacy while challenging the themes of cultural identity, coming of age, and interpersonal growth.
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Ree Artemisa
Ree Artemisa is a self taught chicana artist. Her work focuses on themes of community, her heritage, BIPOC enjoying nature and LGBTQIA representation. They currently live and work in Portland, Oregon.
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4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Art cover by Jax Ko

A COLLABORATION WITH:
Coalition of Communities of Color | uniteoregon | Multnomah County

3

Jax Ko

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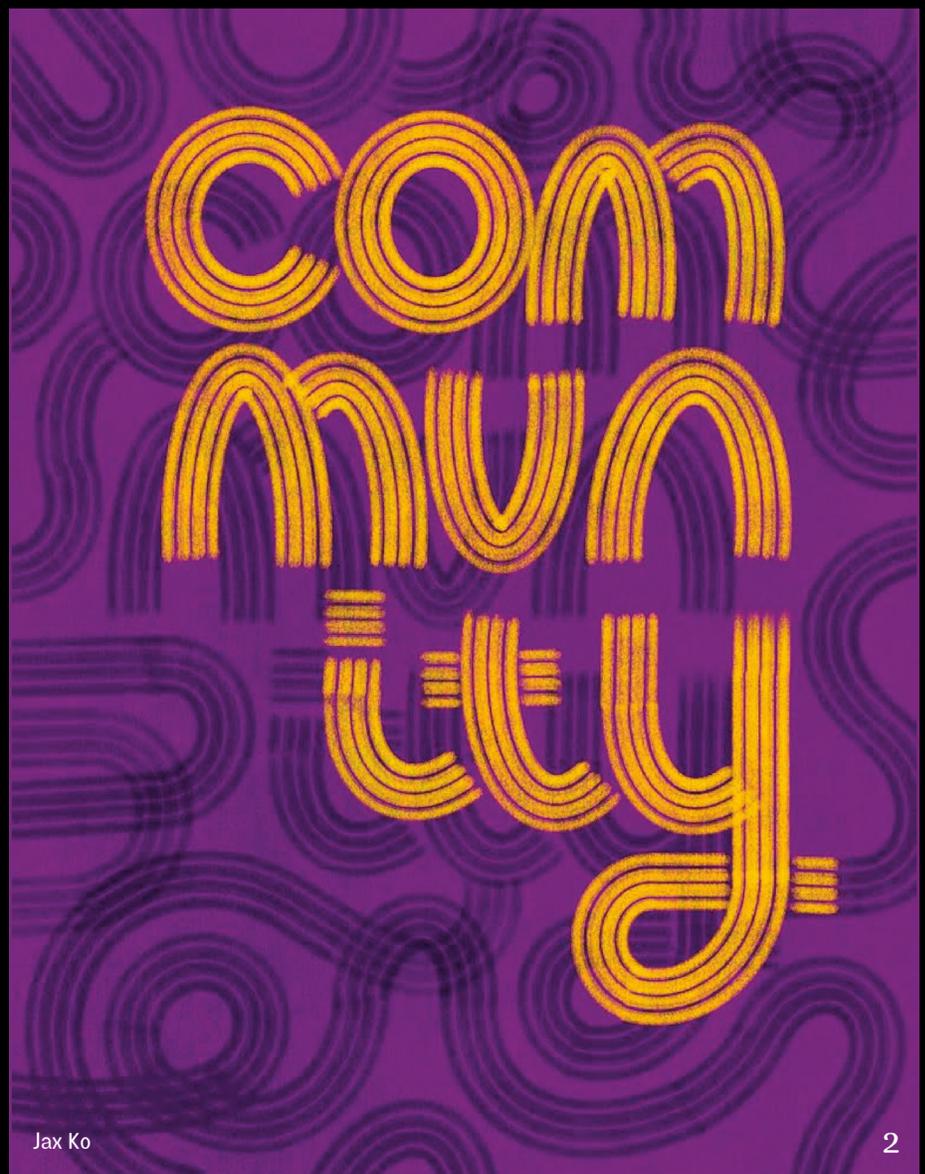
climate justice convening on earth day

On April 22, 2023, community members, advocates, and policymakers came together at the June Key Delta Center, Portland's first-ever "living building," to envision the future of our communities and plot the work ahead. Located in a historically Black neighborhood and owned by the Portland Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the June Key Delta Center was built on the site of a former gas station and now serves as a space for the community to gather. Designed to function as a self-sufficient, regenerative ecosystem, the building embodies the values and principles of climate justice.

This Earth Day Convening was the culmination of months of planning by the Climate Justice Plan Executive Committee. The agenda was inspired by the National Association of Climate Resilience Planners' Vision, Power, and Solutions Framework.

Photography by Izzy Ventura Meda, Executive Director of Familias en Acción
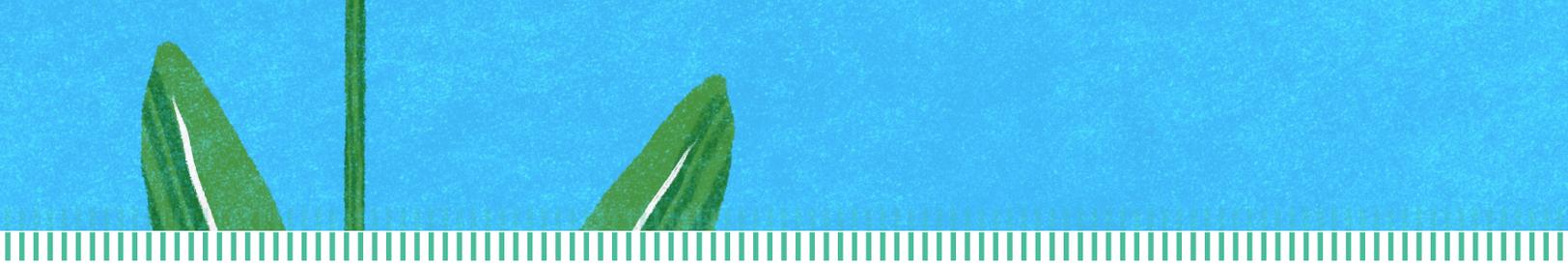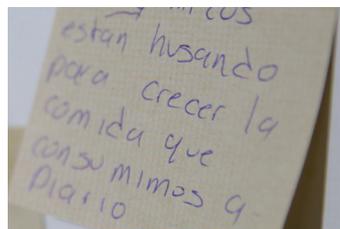
Photography by Izzy Ventura Meda,
Executive Director of Familias en Acción

Members of CCC's Environmental Justice Team are participants in National Association of Climate Resilience Planners Facilitator Credential Program, and divided the day's agenda into sessions focusing on each of the components: vision, power, and solutions.

The day started with a guided exercise to prompt participants to visualize the world in 100 years — how neighborhoods are structured, how decisions are made, and how we work together. Aspects of this vision were written on leaf-shaped sticky notes and placed on an image of a tree that was projected on the wall. Participants were then asked to name the values that we must be rooted in for our vision to come to fruition, which became the roots of the tree.

The group was then asked to think about the short-term actions that have been completed or underway, and the long-term strategies that need to be developed to move us from our present-day reality to the vision that they imagined. These became the seeds and trunk of the tree, respectively.

By the end of the convening, the tree visually reflected the findings from the day and represented the collective goals for our communities and the steps we need to take to get there.

YOU CANNOT CHANGE ANY SOCIETY UNLESS YOU TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT, UNLESS YOU SEE YOURSELF AS BELONGING TO IT AND RESPONSIBLE FOR CHANGING IT.

★GRACE LEE BOGGS
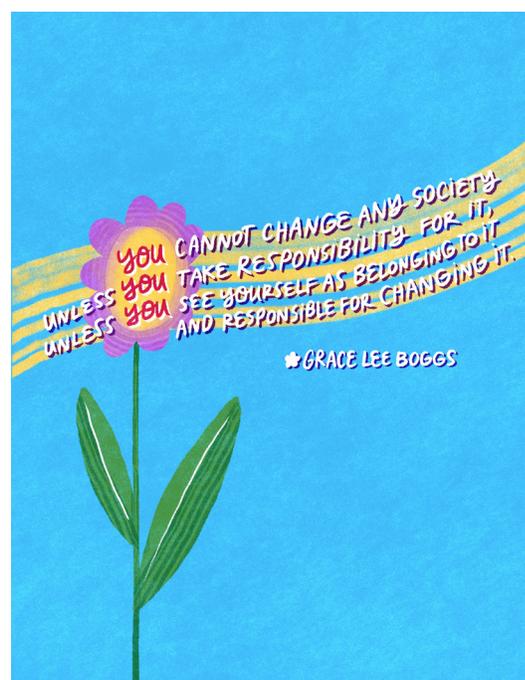
Artist: Jax Ko

Visions

The tree leaves are components of our vision for our world over the next 100 years. The leaves reflect our goals for how we collectively make decisions and structure our communities.

- Center Indigenous leadership
- Community-centered food systems
- Decentralized power
- Land Back
- More time to pursue passions and leadership
- Centering the most marginalized in workforce development
- Housing for all
- Community-led safety
- Ecological restoration
- Increase public transit and active transportation
- Connected, walkable cities

Long-Term Strategies

The trunk of the tree includes strategies for long-term efforts to help us achieve our vision. These actions and solutions will grow from short-term strategies.

- Divesting from fossil fuels
- Environmental education in schools
- Youth leadership
- Community land trusts
- Land banking
- Tax reforms and wealth redistribution
- Center Indigenous representation in decision-making
- Worker-owned cooperatives
- Free transit
- Publicly-owned utilities
- Collaborative policy design

Values

Our vision is rooted in these values, which also guides our work. Our overall vision and the long- and short-term strategies we employ to achieve it stem from the values held by our communities.

- Community care
- Coexistence
- Lifting voices
- Connection
- Basic needs met
- Liberation
- Justice
- Healthy environment and clean air
- Solidarity
- Housing for all
- Economic justice

Short-Term Strategies

The seeds are short-term strategies that need to be sown before our vision can come to fruition. Our communities are already leading the way on many of these strategies.

- No transit fare increase
- More accessible community gardens
- Increase tree canopy
- Funding small organizations and groups
- Community capacity-building
- After school wraparound services
- Increase culturally-specific research and policy
- Increase community solar projects
- Participatory budgeting
- Health and temperature standards for affordable housing
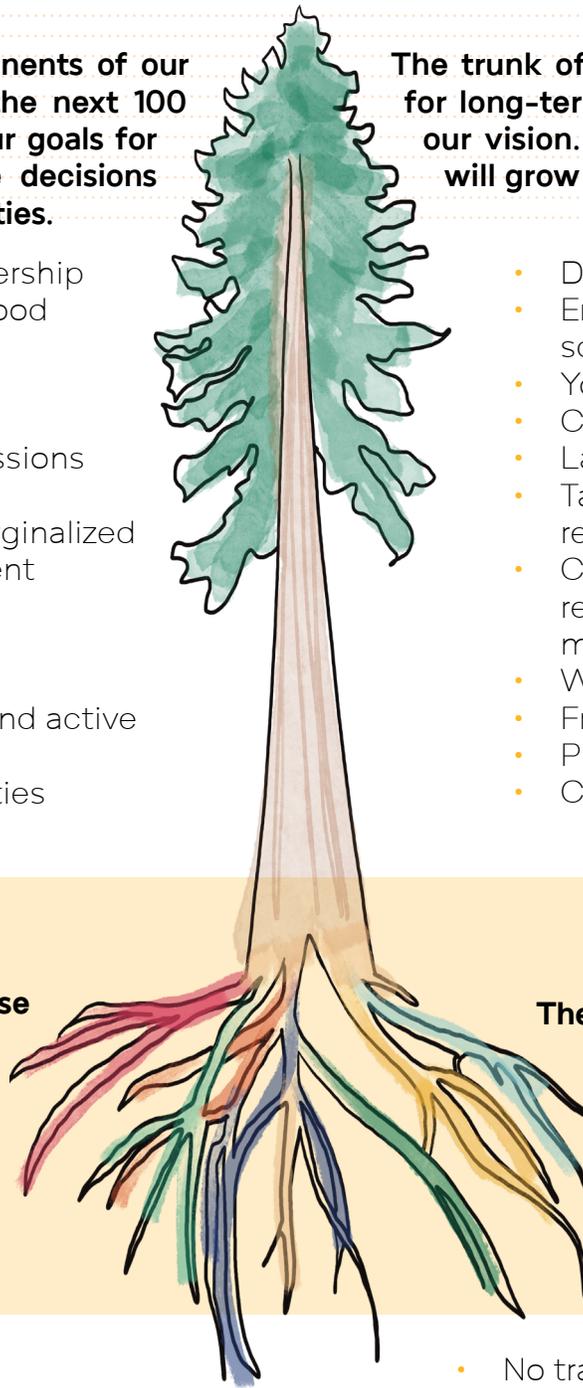
Artist: Jax Ko
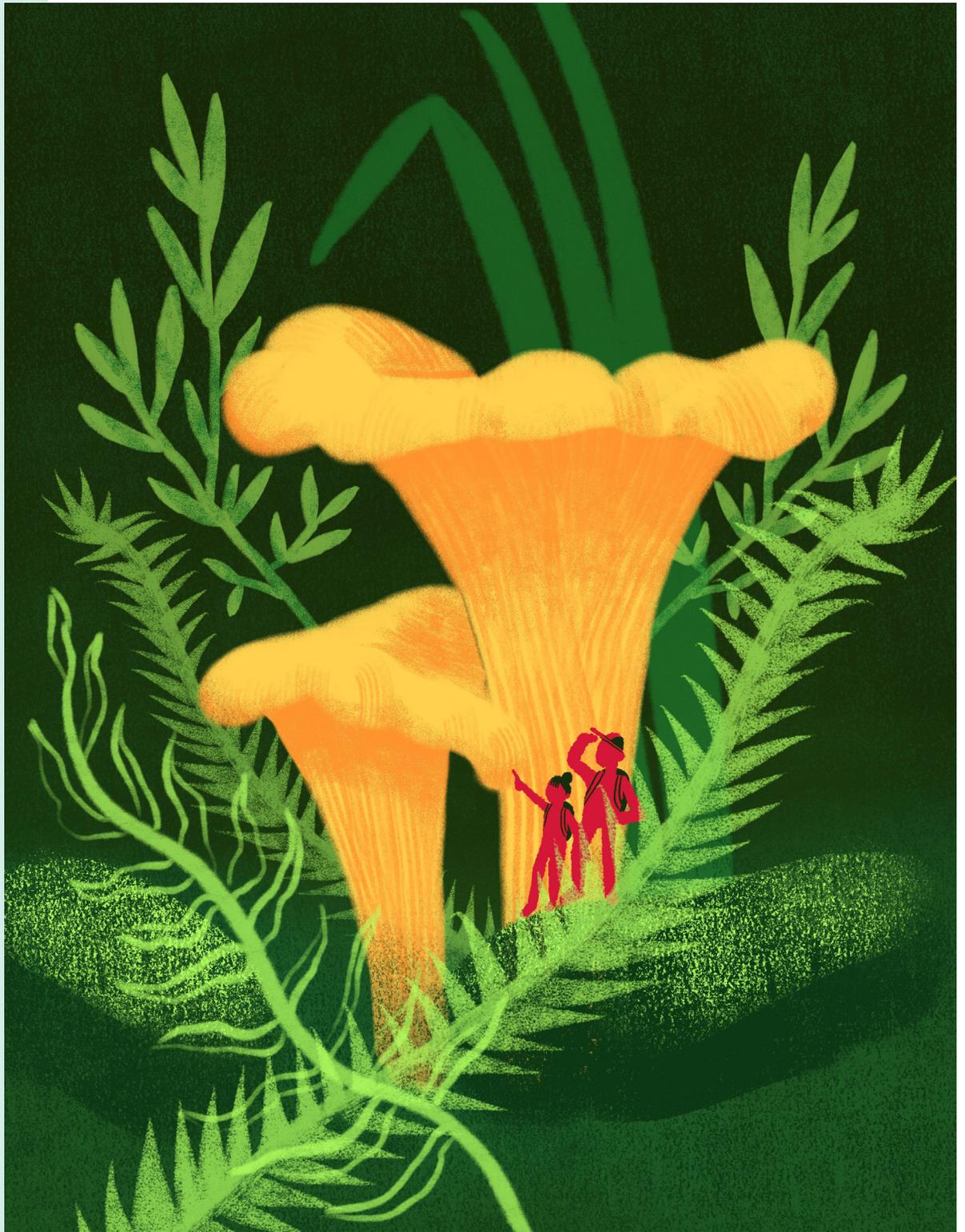
Photography by Izzy Ventura Meda,
Executive Director of Familias en Acción

Artist: Ree Artemisa

The current moment calls on us to build the power of frontline communities in a way that reflects the values that guide our work. What is needed for us to implement the solutions and strategies that move us towards our vision for the future? What needs to be invested in to increase the capacity of communities and groups to participate, engage, organize, and lead? After our tree came together (see above), participants took a moment to look at it and reflect on these questions and conversations about power-building from earlier in the day.

Everyone is valuable and a critical part of our communities, and the climate crisis requires us to leverage our strengths and skills and to coordinate our efforts. After a discussion about our collective needs, we then reflected on the roles each of us and our organizations play in the movement for environmental justice.

Identifying and addressing our needs is critical to building community power to meet real community priorities. The process to create a Climate Justice Plan will continue to expand upon our past power-building efforts while also recognizing the power we already have.

Everyone is valuable and a critical part of our communities, and the climate crisis requires us to leverage our strengths and skills and to coordinate our efforts.

Artist: Ree Artemisa

Healthy leaders and healthy organizations

Reflecting community values, participants identified the need for more provision of care and compensation for movement leaders and for storytelling work. The stress experienced by advocates, activists, and organizers leads to turnover, which in turn harms the strength of groups and organizations. Our movement needs more time for rest and to be in community.

Continuing in the spirit of care, participants noted the need to address mental health and trauma among members of our communities before building community power or cultivating opportunities for community ownership. They also added the need to ensure that those who are vulnerable to retaliation due to their immigration status are protected when speaking truth to power.

Leadership and decision-making

Participants also determined that the movement for environmental justice requires more youth leadership, which was a common thread throughout the convening. Many community leaders recognize the need to build young leaders as a means to sustain this work.

Community power is also built by participatory decision-making where the community plays a leadership role rather than an advisory one. Still, strong organizational leadership that is accountable to the community is an important factor in creating the conditions that support community decision-making.

Artist: Ree Artemisa

Our roles

As everyone has an important part to play in movements for justice, attendees then reflected on the roles they and their organizations play in this larger ecosystem of environmental justice. Many participants saw themselves and their organizations as resource sharers, educators, and catalysts for community mobilization. Some also saw themselves as helping expand training programs for community members to gain skills and enter the workforce.

As we continue to strategize and build the community we want to live in, we must be thoughtful about not only increasing our collective capacity, but also our individual capacities to engage in this work.

Throughout the process of gathering and analyzing community data, themes that reflected common ideas, values, or insights from across different people and communities arose. These "emergent themes" help articulate what additional considerations and concerns of the community need to be elevated.

The following emergent themes were found among the data and insights collected at the Earth Day convening, and were identified through a qualitative analysis conducted by a subset of Climate Justice Plan Executive Committee members. These themes also draw upon important community-led planning efforts in Multnomah County that were completed over previous years (see: "Relevant Community Plans," page 34). These themes begin to shape a vision for the future that will guide the priorities of the Climate Justice Plan.

Artist: Ree Artemisa

Racial, social, and economic justice are the core values that drive this work.

Indigenous leadership, experience, and knowledge in climate solutions and approaches to land stewardship and restoration are centered and embraced, and government honors, respects, and abides by treaty obligations with Tribal Nations.

Everyone experiences a deep feeling of physical and emotional safety, and has access to mental health resources.

Decision-making is participatory, shared, and uplifts community voices to address systems change and build community power.

Decentralize wealth and power through government accountability, systems change, and collaborative community ownership for people most impacted by wealth inequality.

Everyone is a part of strong, inclusive, and intergenerational communities connected by shared community spaces, food systems, and cultural celebrations.

Everyone breathes clean, healthy air and are resilient to extreme temperatures regardless of who they are or where they live.

Everyone is surrounded by and connected to nature, parks, and green infrastructure.

Access to healthy, culturally specific food and a thriving local food system including food pantries, community gardens, and urban agriculture.

Safe, healthy, and permanently affordable housing that promotes community connection and economic opportunities.

Everyone can use affordable, accessible, reliable, and safe active transportation connected to walkability and bikeability.

Invest in education, entrepreneurship, and workforce development opportunities; ensure youth have equitable access to services and support.

Everyone has affordable energy and access to new technologies, and community-based energy and resilience projects are resourced.

Artist: Ree Artemisa

the path ahead
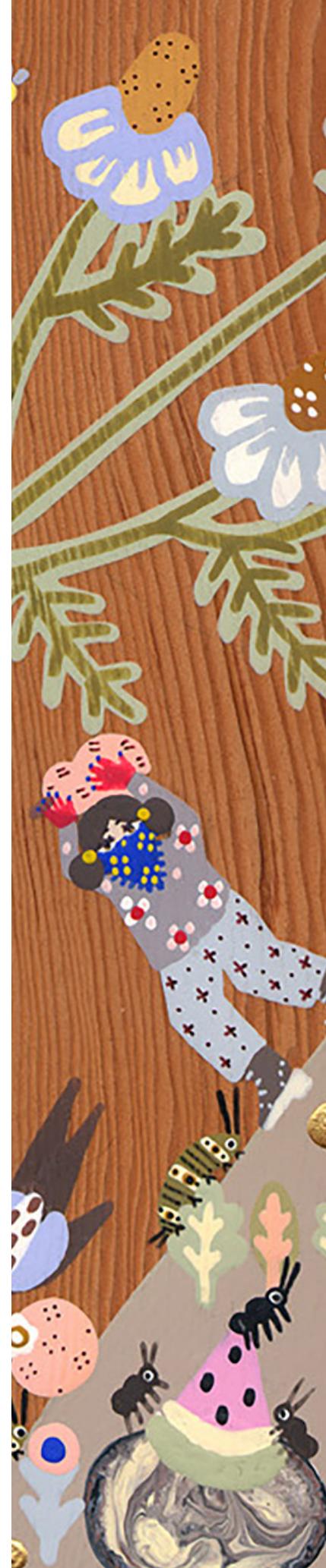
A Steering Committee made up of a broad representation of individuals and organizations who can speak to the experience and perspective of frontline communities, along with local government staff, will guide this next phase. This committee will co-create the Climate Justice Plan based on the Climate Justice Framework, using the findings from the convening, community surveys, the Environmental Justice zine, interviews, and other sources. They will develop solutions and identify the roles of local government collaboratively. Critically, the expertise, wisdom, knowledge, and experience found among Steering Committee members will inform the plan and what's included in it, as well as how additional community members are engaged. The plan will ultimately serve as the climate agenda for Multnomah County government, a tool for community leaders to coordinate organizing efforts and identify areas where there is synergy between community needs and government support.

Artist: Ree Artemisa

The committee is intended to function as a space for stakeholders to gather and connect the work of past and current climate justice projects. It will be essential to map opportunities for frontline communities to impact policy and leverage resources. The Steering Committee will guide and be mutually accountable for the plan development process, and will ensure that the project remains true to the values articulated in the Framework.

> The plan will ultimately serve as a tool for community leaders to coordinate organizing efforts, and identify areas where there is synergy between community needs and government support.
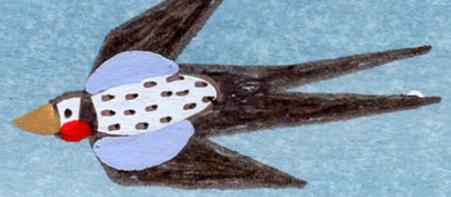
Recognizing that the Steering Committee cannot represent the full breadth of community perspectives, an intentional effort to connect with additional frontline community spaces will be prioritized. In addition, a number of "tables" will be established to allow for broader participation in the process. While all perspectives will be welcome, these table discussions will be guided by the values and vision of the Framework.

The actions identified in the Climate Justice Plan will also be cognizant of the power and responsibilities of local government and community. As noted above, community and government play different but overlapping roles. To match the ambitions identified, the plan will need to recognize appropriate opportunities for advocacy, funding, programs, and policy that will help create the envisioned community, as well as the limitations that may need to be addressed or overcome.

An important part of the Climate Justice Plan will be an intentional strategy for leading with racial equity in ongoing implementation, iteration, and accountability. Black, Indigenous, and other people of color have long been excluded from the environmental movement; the community-driven plan will recognize power imbalances and steward an increase in the awareness of systemic racism.

Artist: Ree Artemisa

While we work toward a long-term vision, we must and will be nimble and adaptive in how we reach our goals and sustain progress. The Climate Justice Plan will be a living document co-created by community and government. Through ongoing engagement and learning with and from partners, we will continue to iterate over time our shared commitments and strategies to advancing climate justice in Multnomah County.

resources

Artist: Jax Ko

Relevant Community Plans

Find more information on Multnomah County's Climate Justice Plan website.

- Afro-Ecology Movement Report, 2018

  Imagine Black (formerly known as PAALF), Africa House

- Community-based Assessment of Smart Transportation Needs in the City of Portland, 2018

  Portland State University (PSU), OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon (OPAL)

- Environmental Justice Indicators Storytelling Zine, 2023

  Coalition of Communities of Color (CCC), Multnomah County Environmental Health

- Living Cully Community Energy Plan, 2018

  Living Cully, Verde

- On the Frontlines of Climate Change: Voz Environment and Justice Framework, 2017

  Voz Workers Rights and Education Project (Voz)

- The People's Plan, 2016

  Imagine Black (formerly known as PAALF)

- State of Black Oregon, 2015

  Urban League of Portland

- Tyee Khunamokwst - "Leading Together": Cross-Cultural Climate Justice Leaders, 2016

  Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), CCC, OPAL

- Zero Cities Project Report, 2017

 Build/Shift
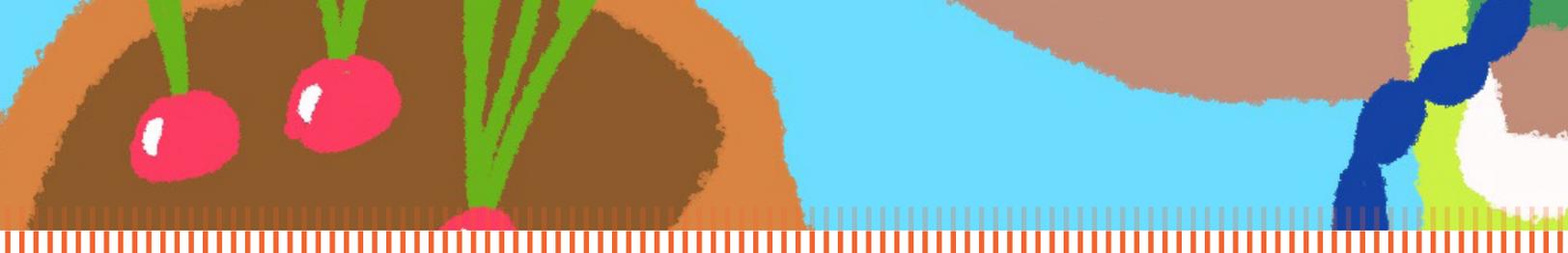
resources

Artist: Jax Ko

Relevant Data

- [Climate Emergency Work Plan Progress Report](#), 2023

  City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

- [Multnomah County Climate Action Plan](#), 2015

  City of Portland, Multnomah County

- [Multnomah County Economic Justice Policy Blueprint](#), 2023

  Multnomah Idea Lab (MIL)

- [Multnomah County Heat Vulnerability Index](#), 2023

  Multnomah County Health Department Environmental Health

- [Multnomah County REACH Transportation Crash and Safety Report](#), 2022

  Multnomah County Health Department Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH)

- [Regional Climate Health Monitoring Report](#), 2021

  Multnomah County Health Department Environmental Health

- [Summary of 2021 Multnomah County Carbon Emissions and Trends](#), 2023

  City of Portland, Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

WE NEED JOY AS WE NEED AIR
WE NEED LOVE AS WE NEED WATER
WE NEED EACH OTHER
AS WE NEED THE EARTH
WE SHARE

—MAYA ANGELOU

Artist: Jax Ko

Developed and supported by:

Multnomah County

City of Portland, Oregon · 1851

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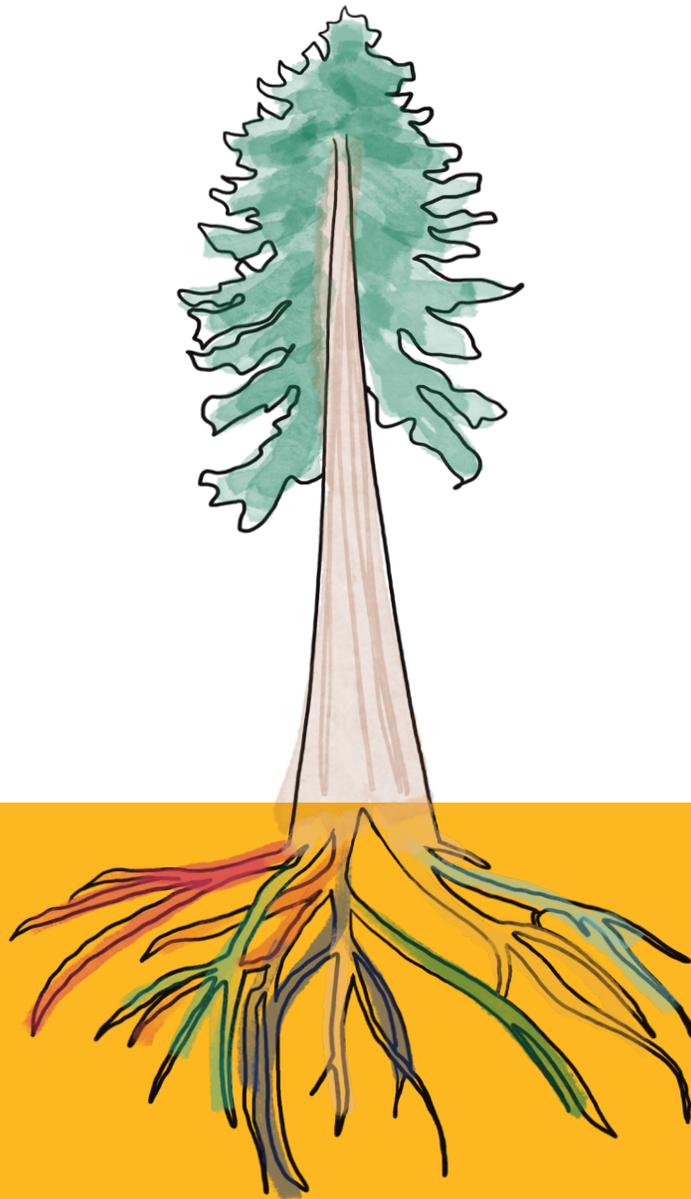
Find this community-driven climate justice framework online.