

# GREEN NEW DEAL OVERSIGHT BOARD

**2026** Budget Recommendations



**Seattle**  
Office of Sustainability  
& Environment



**Green  
New Deal**

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*Image of the GNDOB at their 2024 Annual Retreat.*

May 21, 2025

Dear Honorable Mayor Harrell and Esteemed Council,

On behalf of the Green New Deal Oversight Board (GND Oversight Board), thank you for your ongoing commitment to advancing climate and environmental justice. We are eager to share our recommendations for the 2026 Endorsed Budget with you. At a time when our federal government is undoing critical climate work, creating a volatile economy, and rolling back commitments to justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion—and international climate negotiations continue to fall short—it is abundantly clear that climate and environmental justice solutions must happen at the local level. Addressing climate change is not optional. Our recommendations are not costs, they are investments that meet the urgency of our time and are essential to building a thriving, equitable, and resilient Seattle.

Mayor Harrell, we applaud your leadership as a climate champion throughout your time in office. We were glad to hear your remarks at the recent Environmental Justice Fund Celebration Event that focused on the power of community solutions and we are especially energized by your recent Executive Order (EO) to update the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP). As our Executive Committee member, Emily Pinckney, shared in her remarks at your EO signing, "This new Climate Action Plan is more than a policy. It's a promise. A promise to act boldly, to act together, and to act justly." We also commend City Council for dedicating \$6.5 million in funding toward Indigenous Led Climate Initiatives. This is an important step forward in addressing climate change and achieving equity. Advocating for Indigenous-led climate work remains a priority of this Board. Commitments to action and then following through on those actions in collaboration with community and Tribal partners, is what makes Seattle a global climate leader.

And, there is still more work to do.

Our Board—composed of community leaders, Tribal and labor representatives, youth, environmental justice advocates, and technical experts—ensures that Seattle’s climate policies and investments center justice and advance equitable outcomes. We are committed to co-creating the next phase of climate action with you, and we are especially excited to collaborate on the new CAP’s three focus areas: climate adaptation, eliminating pollution, and building an equitable clean energy economy rooted in union labor. We are uniquely positioned to support the City throughout the planning process to ensure communities who are disproportionately burdened by the climate crisis benefit from the actions that are outlined in that plan while we make progress toward reaching the City’s climate goals.

Our budget recommendations are rooted in the reality of our current moment. We understand the severity of this year’s budget deficit at the local and state levels, and that we are no longer able to rely on federal funding. We also know that climate solutions lead to multiple benefits that address many of the hardest challenges Seattle’s communities are experiencing such as displacement, affordability, and safety. As the climate crisis worsens, residents of our city are increasingly facing dangerous and costly extreme weather events

like hazardous air quality due to wildfire smoke, temperature drops and spikes, and flooding. These weather events are threats to public safety. The longer we wait to invest in climate resilience, the higher the cost, and the greater the risk to our communities at a time when our social safety nets are eroding. Conversely, investing in climate resilience is an investment in public safety, and our recommendations focus on solutions that will protect our communities from climate threats and position our City well for state Climate Commitment Act dollars at a time when we likely will not receive assistance from our federal government.



*Image of Board Members Emily Pinckney, Steve Gelb, Nancy Huizar, Debolina Banerjee, and Hannah Lindell-Smith at Executive Order Signing on Earth Day 2025.*

With the urgency of this moment in mind, we offer four community-informed budget recommendations to advance climate justice and ensure Seattle remains a national leader in equitable climate action. We urge City leadership to:

### **Recommendation 1: Continue to Invest in Budgeted Programs That Are Delivering Climate Justice Outcomes**

The GND Oversight Board supports continued investments in existing City programs that are already reducing emissions, building resilience, fostering community leadership, planning for a



climate resilient future, and delivering measurable benefits to frontline communities. Specifically, we recommend sustained and expanded funding for the following City climate justice initiatives:

- The Building Emissions Navigator Program
- The Municipal Energy Efficiency Program (MEEP)
- Clean energy apprenticeships
- Greening our city, while creating green jobs
- Returning the Environmental Justice (EJ) Fund back to its 2023-2024 budget
- Providing additional funding for Seattle’s Climate Action Plan (CAP) update
- Community assemblies and community-led research

### **Recommendation 2: Honor Commitments Made for the Payroll Expense Tax to Fund Climate Justice Investments and to Leverage Alternative Funding Sources**

Seattle’s ability to deliver transformative climate action relies on protecting the City’s Payroll Expense Tax (PET) for its intended uses. The PET is the first and only City revenue source that funds community-led solutions that advance equity, reduce pollution, and take steps toward ensuring community resiliency in the face of climate change—all of which advance the City’s topline priorities of public safety, public health, local economic development, affordable housing and anti-displacement measures, and good governance. Additionally, PET-funded projects and initiatives have already helped the City scale up our climate investments via the State’s Climate Commitment Act (CCA) at a time when federal funding is waning. Continue to invest PET dollars into climate action to leverage more funding.

### **Recommendation 3: Reconsider and Fund High-Impact Recommendations from Previous Years**

The GND Oversight Board has recommendations from past budget cycles that remain unfunded, but remain critical to addressing service gaps, enhancing existing programs, and strengthening neighborhood-level resilience.

- Invest in the implementation of early actions in the forthcoming Community Climate Resilience Framework
- Create a Healthy & Sustainable Homes Navigator Program
- Fund a Seattle Public Utilities-led study on restoring culturally significant natural sites
- Connect and enable Women- and Minority-Owned Business (WMBE) contractors to access existing support programs

## Recommendation 4: Advance Strategic, Low-Cost Projects

The most efficient and effective solutions begin with understanding the full scope of the problem. That includes assessing feasibility, risk, and building a foundation for broader change. We recommend the City study the following to expand climate innovation:

- The risk and impact of extreme weather on mechanical infrastructure in buildings
- Opportunities to recover waste energy from Seattle's existing infrastructure

See the attached addendum for further details for each of our budget recommendations.

Thank you again for your leadership and for your continued partnership with the Green New Deal Oversight Board. As you said at the recent Environmental Justice Fund Celebration, Mayor Harrell, "Some of the best work we can do is not only fighting for clean air, water, or food security; we are also fighting for the next generation...That will be our legacy." We are grateful for your leadership and look forward to working with you to enact these priorities that reflect both the urgency of this moment and the vision required to shape a just, livable future.

Sincerely,



Emily Pinckney



Nina Olivier



Peter Hasegawa

Green New Deal Oversight Board Executive Committee

## ADDENDUM

### Further Details for Each Budget Recommendation

#### Recommendation 1: Continue to Invest in Budgeted Programs That Are Delivering Climate Justice Outcomes

#	Investment	Further Details	Requested Amount
1a.	<b>Sustain funding for OSE's Building Emissions Navigator Program</b>	Prioritize support for building owners that directly serve frontline communities to build on the existing Building Emissions Navigator Program. The grant program provides coaching, project management, and capital support for under-resourced nonprofit and affordable multifamily housing providers that need their buildings to comply with the Building Emissions Performance Standard (BEPS).	<b>\$4.5 Million</b>
1b.	<b>Continue to invest in the Municipal Energy Efficiency Program (MEEP)</b>	Continue to invest in MEEP to support upgrades of City-owned community-serving buildings, such as libraries and community centers, for clean energy and climate resilience. Ensure these investments are prioritized for facilities in frontline communities.	<b>\$1.5 Million</b>
1c.	<b>Continue to fund clean energy apprenticeships that build equitable pathways to climate careers</b>	Continue to create climate career pathways for individuals that are underrepresented in the trades connected to clean energy, especially in priority hire zip codes. Focus on supporting youth, people of color, the LGBTQAI+ community, and women. Ensure there are pathways to union jobs and support targeted local hire practices.	<b>\$1.5 Million</b>
1d.	<b>Continue to Green our City, while also creating Green Jobs</b>	Continue greening strategies while also creating career pathways in urban forestry with equitable hiring pathways using targeted local hire and low barriers to access. Ensure critical urban forestry work is funded if the US Forest Service funds are rescinded and invest in the implementation of strategies from the forthcoming Tree Canopy Equity Plan. Prioritize investments in frontline communities, which include communities at risk of displacement and priority hire zip codes.	<b>\$600,000</b>

1e.	<b>Return funding for the Environmental Justice (EJ) Fund back to its 2023-2024 budget</b>	The EJ Fund continues to create an <a href="#">enormous impact</a> in advancing public health, safety, and climate resilience for our communities. The growing pool of applications for the EJ Fund has far surpassed available funding as more and more organizations sought funding for their community-led efforts to advance environmental and climate justice. Investments in community solutions to the climate crises are an integral component to ensuring Seattle's residents who have the fewest resources have what they need to adapt to a changing climate.	<b>\$2.2 Million</b>
1f.	<b>Provide additional funding for Seattle's Climate Action Plan (CAP) update</b>	The CAP update is an excellent opportunity to engage and educate the public around our City's climate goals and actions. The City must have a clear understanding of community needs to ensure the CAP addresses those needs. Additional funding should support early actions that provide benefits to frontline communities, robust equity-centered engagement throughout the process, economic impact study for CAP actions, and clear communication of plan outcomes with communities once the plan is adopted.	<b>\$200,000</b>
1g.	<b>Sustain investments in community leadership through community assemblies and community led research</b>	Continue to fund strategies for community leadership and policy co-creation, such as community assemblies and community-based participatory research. Community assemblies have already been successful in streamlining City planning processes by generating clear recommendations from communities about how to use our City resources to design plans, policies, and programs to efficiently and effectively meet those needs.	<b>\$100,000</b>



## Recommendation #2: Honor Commitments Made for the Payroll Expense Tax to Fund Climate Justice Investments and to Leverage Alternative Funding Sources

#	Investment	Further Details	Requested Amount
2a.	<b>Ensure PET funding is aligned with its original intended uses</b>	<p>To do this, we recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Green New Deal Oversight Board will craft a clear criteria for what qualifies as a Green New Deal - aligned investment to avoid funding misalignment. The Board will share that criteria with the City Budget Office and other appropriate City Staff. In the 2025 proposed budget there was an example of this misalignment: the funding for staffing and planning for Sound Transit's West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions. While the Board supports affordable and accessible alternative transportation initiatives to help address the climate crisis, this ST3 project does not geographically focus its impact on or provide benefits to frontline communities and neighborhoods.</li> <li>2. Pursuing additional progressive revenue streams to shore up the budget deficit and waning federal funds. The Board is aligned with the Mayor's stated interest in additional revenue sources and recommends that the City pursue new, equitable sources of funding to help fill budget gaps without compromising essential climate and equity investments. These efforts should prioritize taxing the wealthiest individuals and corporations who have long benefited from structural inequities and cause the most environmental damage.</li> <li>3. Ensuring strong community oversight of PET-funded programs. We look forward to collaborating with the PET Oversight Council, once formed, to uphold transparency, accountability, and alignment with the PET law's intent.</li> <li>4. Use current PET investments to aggressively pursue additional funding, such as state Climate Commitment Act dollars.</li> </ol>	<b>9% of PET</b>

## Recommendation #3: Reconsider and Fund High-Impact Recommendations from Previous Years

*The Board recognizes that much of the work highlighted in the investments below are interdepartmental. We hope to work with CBO to understand the total amount required to carry out these investments.*

#	Investment	Further Details
3a.	<b>Invest in the implementation of early actions in the forthcoming Community Climate Resilience Framework</b>	The Community Climate Resilience Framework focuses on supporting: 1) community connection and cohesion through education, training, and planning; 2) building resilient community places through building upgrades; and 3) effective City coordination throughout the implementation of resilience strategies within the City, in partnership with community and regional partners 4) funding a staff role to advance these efforts.
3b.	<b>Create a Healthy &amp; Sustainable Homes Navigator Program</b>	Provide funding to expand existing City liaison programs to connect low-income residents with the full suite of City home-related upgrade services to help residents access retrofits and resources that reduce climate risk and improve health.
3c.	<b>Funding a Seattle Public Utilities-led study on restoring culturally significant natural sites</b>	Fund a study at Seattle Public Utilities which identifies paved-over streams, wetlands, and possible other areas of cultural significance in Seattle which could be daylighted and restored for Indigenous cultural preservation, heat wave mitigation, urban flooding management, water pollution reduction, and salmon recovery.
3d.	<b>Connect women- and Minority-Owned Business (WMBE) contractors to existing support programs</b>	Invest in increasing technical capacity and equitable equipment access for frontline WMBE contractors to accelerate the transition to clean energy and increase the capacity to complete green infrastructure projects. This program would connect and enable contractors to access the following existing resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted funding for training programs and technical assistance to ensure compliance for technical and business regulations (e.g., BEPS and prevailing wage) and new state and local government programs</li> <li>• Low- to no-interest leases or grants for business and project equipment</li> <li>• WMBE contractor tools and resource libraries</li> <li>• Cash incentives to purchase electric vehicles and electric bikes for business purposes</li> <li>• Connect supportive organizations with WMBE businesses to enable and empower contractors to maximize the benefits from existing programs</li> </ul>

## Recommendation #4: Advance Strategic, Low-Cost Projects

*The Board wants to partner with City departments to help inform, design, and determine the funding needed for these studies. This work can be added to the Board's work plan to ensure the Board's assistance.*

#	Investment	Further Details
4a.	<b>Launch a study to understand the risk and impact of extreme weather on mechanical infrastructure in buildings</b>	The GND Oversight Board is uniquely equipped to identify emergent climate issues that arise in our communities. Our job is to partner with the City to address and creatively find solutions to these problems as they emerge. One issue we would like to bring to the attention of City leadership and find a solution for, is the recent phenomenon of frozen and bursting pipes. During the January 2024 cold snap, a burst pipe at Madison Middle School forced a shift to remote learning, and flooding at Seattle University displaced students. These instances highlight the growing risk of climate-related infrastructure failure amid the increase in extreme weather events. We do not fully understand the impact and the risk of bursting pipes to Seattle's communities. This study will help understand the full scope of the problem and assess the potential impact of utilizing mechanical insulation inspections as a solution. Mechanical insulation inspections assess whether pipes and ducts carrying hot or cold fluids are properly insulated and protected. Proper insulation prevents pipes from bursting and ensures pipes are operating efferently.
4b.	<b>Launch a study to identify additional opportunities to recover waste energy from Seattle's existing infrastructure</b>	We know that manufacturing and refining industries produce and emit large amounts of heat byproducts into the atmosphere. This pollution disproportionately impacts low-income and BIPOC communities that have historically resided near industrial areas due to the lasting legacy of redlining. These byproducts are also unused, wasted energy that could be harnessed and used for electric generation, heating, and cooling the homes and businesses nearby. Instead of wasting this energy source, let's harness it. Industrial heat energy recovery is a promising way to generate clean and sustainable energy that utilizes existing infrastructure. There is already an example of this in Seattle. <a href="#">The South Lake Union sewer heat recovery system</a> uses wastewater heat to provide hot water and space heating as part of its zero-net-energy design. This will supply 70% of the Alexandria Center campus's heating needs and the 303 Battery Street residential tower. This is a tested and innovative way to reduce pollution, generate affordable clean energy, and invest in climate-resilient power sources with other use cases in <a href="#">British Columbia</a> and <a href="#">Portland</a> .

		<p>Projects like these also align with <a href="#">City Light's IRP goal</a> of expanding in-territory power generation to prepare for major anticipated load growth in the next 20 years. Furthermore, reducing our energy imports is also a powerful way Seattle can stand in solidarity with communities and Tribes fighting to protect their lands from resource extraction.</p> <p>It is important to identify additional ways to generate energy from unused wasted sources to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and lower greenhouse gas emissions while providing essential and sustainable services to residents most impacted by industrial pollution.</p>
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# BOARD MEMBERSHIP



Name	Board Seat
Debolina Banerjee	Environmental Justice Representative
Lizzie Baskerville	Frontline Representative
Steve Gelb	Workforce Training Specialist
Camille Gipaya	Youth Representative
Peter Hasegawa	Labor Union Representative, <b>Executive Committee Member</b>
Rachel Heaton	Tribal Representative
Eunice How	Environmental Justice Representative
Nancy Huizar	Frontline Representative
Hannah Lindell-Smith	Youth Representative
Emily Myers	Labor Representative
Nina Olivier	Greenhouse Gas Reduction Specialist, <b>Executive Committee Member</b>
Andrea Ornelas	Labor Representative
Emily Pinckney	Greenhouse Gas Reduction Specialist, <b>Executive Committee Member</b>
Matt Remle	Frontline Representative
Stephanie Ung	Frontline Representative
Jess Wallach	Greenhouse Gas Reduction Specialist
Keith Weir	Labor Representative
Ken Workman	Tribal Representative



## KEY DEFINITIONS

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### FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES

The communities that experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks due to exposures, greater vulnerability to environmental hazards, or cumulative impacts from multiple stressors; these include Black people, Indigenous peoples, sovereign tribal nations, communities of color, immigrants, refugees, youths, elders, houseless people, disabled people, LGBTQ+ people, people with low and no income, and people who work in outdoor occupations.

### FOCUS AREAS

The geographic areas, defined broadly by zip code or neighborhood, where communities of color, immigrants, refugees, people with low-incomes, and limited-English proficiency tend to live, which are also areas highly impacted by socioeconomic and environmental challenges.

## MISSION STATEMENT

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The Green New Deal Oversight Board connects frontline community-led voices and the Seattle City government to eliminate Seattle's climate pollution by 2030, while resolving racial, social, and economic inequities. We do this by:

- Recommending systemic changes and budget priorities to the Mayor, City Council, City departments, and advisory boards.
- Supporting departmental planning and implementation.
- Coordinating efforts with City departments and related advisory groups pursuant to [Ordinance 125926](#).

## CORE VALUES

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The Green New Deal Oversight Board adopted the following values which guide the way we enact our mission.

- We act with mindful urgency to accomplish our vision and mission.
- We listen to and are guided by frontline communities.
- We engage, consult, and obtain consent from impacted tribal nations. We practice having an open mind and cultural humility.
- We seek to build trust and reliability with respectful, honest, caring, and transparent interactions within and outside the Green New Deal Oversight Board.
- We are guided by accurate information, science, and community experience and insight.
- We seek to creatively solve problems and conflict by addressing the root causes and will not accept false solutions that continue extractive practices and/or prioritize profits over communities.

**City of Seattle, Office of Sustainability & Environment**

Tel: 206-256-5158 | [equityenviro@seattle.gov](mailto:equityenviro@seattle.gov)

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